

Guatemala

Awareness Trips



Table of Contents

Welcome	3
Trip Dates	3
Sample Itinerary	4
Costs You'll Need To Cover	5
What We Provide	6
Health & Mobility	7
Immunizations	8
Weather and Climate	8
Safety While Traveling	9
Guatemala Traveler Comments	10
How Do I Sign Up For A Trip?	11
Frequently Asked Questions	12

Welcome

Awareness trip travelers describe the experience as rewarding, eye-opening, energizing, impactful and humbling. They say they've grown in awareness and that their perception of poverty has changed.

Whether it's to meet sponsored friends or simply experience the beauty of another culture, awareness trips offer an adventure like no other. During a trip we want to reach across borders, learn from one another and have fun. Travelers will see how contributions are used to support and empower families, and for most the highlight will be getting to meet their sponsored friends.

Trips are open to sponsors and non-sponsors. Some people travel solo, while others bring friends and family members to share the experience. Our travelers range in age from 6 to 70-plus. Families with children (6 and older), whether sponsors or not, are welcome. The minimum age for the November trips is 12.

Trip Dates

February 10-16, 2024

September 21-27, 2024*

April 20-26, 2024

November 16-22, -2024*

August 3-9, 2024

***Note:** The (*) trips include strenuous activities. This special trip will provide the unique opportunity to learn from Unbound families and staff as they share their skills, talents and traditions. Activities may include agricultural work, planting trees or partnering with working on an Agents of Change project. Together we hope to change society's perception of poverty one experience at a time by working together with families and learning from their expertise. Read the Health & Mobility section for requirements.

Space is limited! Apply as soon as possible. Check our website or call us regarding availability. We are reserving some spaces for first-time travelers so they can experience Unbound firsthand. Summer trips and those that take place during school breaks fill up quickly.

Sample Itinerary

On your trip, you'll be welcomed by the local staff who will be your hosts for the week. You'll visit the homes and communities of sponsored friends and learn about their joys and challenges while experiencing the beauty of the people.

A detailed schedule will be sent two weeks prior to departure. Unbound will make every effort to offer the opportunity to attend Catholic Mass on Sunday.

Day 1: Travel to Guatemala City, the capital of the country. Local Unbound staff will welcome you at the airport. Stay the night in the capital.

Day 2: Depart for San Lucas Tolimán, located three hours away, in the highlands of Guatemala on the shores of Lake Atitlán.

Days 3-4: Experience the diverse, traditional cultures of Guatemala. Take a boat ride across stunning Lake Atitlán to visit a community where Unbound works. Be welcomed into homes to better understand the goals of a family and the challenges of living in Guatemala. Average bus rides are two to four hours daily.

Day 5: Everyone's sponsored friends will gather for the day at the Unbound Regional Center. Enjoy the day with your sponsored friend.

Day 6: Return to Guatemala City. The group will stop in the colonial capital of Antigua on the way. Spend a few hours sightseeing and have lunch on your own. Spend the night in the capital at a hotel near the airport.

Day 7: Local Unbound staff shuttles travelers to the airport for their flight home from Guatemala City.

Costs You'll Need To Cover

Fees other than those set by Unbound are subject to change.

- 2024 Unbound trip fee: **\$1,300 per person**
- Roundtrip airfare between your home airport and Guatemala City, Guatemala (GUA): **prices fluctuate**
 - Make your airline arrangements only after your registration is confirmed and you receive the trip coordinator's written instructions for scheduling your flight. You can research airfares online or through a travel agent.
- Passport book (must be valid for at least six months beyond the end of your intended stay, with a minimum of one blank (unstamped) passport page)
- Immunizations as recommended by physician: **costs vary**
- Travel health insurance: **costs vary**
- Personal expenses related to ending my trip following a COVID-19 diagnosis during the trip. For example: medical, lodging, food, and flight change expenses.

What We Provide

- The opportunity to meet your sponsored friend
- Lodging and transportation costs for your sponsored friend, chaperone and local staff
- Planned group activities
- In-country ground transportation
- Lodging. While in Guatemala, you will stay in simple accommodations at our facility in San Lucas Tolimán, with the first and last nights spent in a hotel in Guatemala City. Solo travelers will be assigned a private room unless otherwise requested. While running water for showers is available, it might not be heated.
- Meals and bottled water. Since tap water is unsafe for drinking, we will provide ample bottled water throughout the trip. Alcoholic beverages are not included in the trip fee, but there may be occasions when you will have the opportunity to purchase them. Meals are eaten with the group and will be simple fare from the local cuisine.
- Interpreters. Unbound will provide interpreters throughout the trip.
- Memories that last a lifetime

Health & Mobility

Please contact a trip coordinator with doubts or concerns.

- ✓ Participants must be able to walk for one half mile on hilly and uneven terrain, such as dirt paths and cobblestone streets. Travelers must have good balance.
- ✓ Participants must be able to climb and descend stairs, which will be encountered regularly. There are multiple sets of stairs throughout the lodging facility. Rooms in San Lucas Toliman are on the first and second floor. There is no elevator. There are a limited number of ground floor rooms available upon request.
- ✓ All Unbound trips to Guatemala take routes along winding, mountainous roads, which can cause motion sickness. On average, groups travel by bus for two to four hours daily. Vehicles are not equipped with a bathroom. Instead, there are breaks every few hours. There may be opportunities to ride in the back of a pick-up truck.
- ✓ Altitude: You should be aware of the risks of altitude illness and how altitude can affect certain medical conditions. Although you will sleep at 5,064 feet above sea level, during the day the group may visit areas at elevations as high as 9,800 feet above sea level or as low as 1,000 feet above sea level. Consult with your doctor to see if this will affect you.

Additional requirements for the November trip:

- ✓ Participants must be able to walk at least one mile on uneven terrain including up and down steep, narrow dirt paths, while carrying tools.
- ✓ Participants may do agricultural work that will require squatting and bending over repeatedly, lifting and carrying things such as tools, bags and buckets.
- ✓ Participants will be on their feet working in the sun at elevations as high as 9,800 feet above sea level.
- ✓ Worksites could be on steep hillsides where good balance is necessary.
- ✓ Minimum age is 12 years old instead of six.

Immunizations

Unbound does not require travelers provide proof of a COVID-19 vaccination for trips to Guatemala.

Consult your doctor or local health department for immunization recommendations based on your health history. Staff members of Unbound are not qualified to offer advice on immunizations. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/travel has country-specific recommendations. You can also contact them by phone at (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). We recommend speaking with a medical professional as soon as possible, as some immunizations are time sensitive.

Weather and Climate

Guatemala enjoys mostly consistent temperatures year-round. In San Lucas Tolimán, the average temperature has highs in the upper 70s and lows in the mid-50s. The rainy season runs from late May through the end of November. During this time, it typically rains for a couple of hours in the afternoon and overnight. Minor tremors are common in Guatemala and may occur during the trip. The weather may vary dramatically based on the elevation.

Safety While Traveling

Unbound cares about your safety, and the safety of your sponsored friends and our staff. Local Unbound staff members are your hosts during the awareness trip and accompany the group. Our local staff is from the destination country and lives there. Our social workers visit the neighborhoods, towns and countryside regularly and are aware of safety concerns. Because of their unique qualifications and background, our local staff is responsible for putting together the schedule of activities for your trip and choosing the locations you will visit. The members of the communities are excited to welcome sponsors.

Nobody can guarantee safety. International travel carries inherent risks, and we understand the realities in the countries where we work. We monitor current events, weather conditions, political situations, guidance offered by the U.S. State Department and other available resources. We're in regular communication with our local staff members and stay current on security matters. We've cancelled trips when we've deemed it prudent based on local conditions.

All Unbound travelers are expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct and other rules outlined in the Travel Agreement found in the registration materials.

Unbound is proud of our history of safe and enjoyable trips and we look forward to having you join us!

Guatemala Traveler Comments

Would you recommend an awareness trip with Unbound to others?

"Yes. Give yourself the opportunity to meet and see with your own eyes the impact your contribution is making."

-Marlene, sponsor for 2 years

"I absolutely, without hesitation, would recommend a trip to everyone. I went on the trip by myself and knew no one before I left and it was a wonderful experience. It is a great opportunity to travel by yourself. I had everything planned for me and was never alone. I feel so lucky to have experienced a little bit of what their daily lives are and it is impossible to put into words everything I saw and learned while in Guatemala."

-Sarah, sponsor for 8 years

"I felt so incredibly safe and cared for! I would travel the world with Unbound!"

-Jennifer, sponsor for 7 years

"For me, it was a wonderful learning experience and truly, an opportunity to grow with people of another culture. It was a great joy to experience the joy of giving and receiving in such a loving atmosphere."

-Gwen, sponsor for 7 years

How Do I Sign Up For A Trip?

All travelers are required to submit a registration packet. There are two registration packets, one for travelers 18+ years old and one for those who are 17 and younger at the time of the trip. You can download a registration packet from our website at www.unbound.org/trips, call our (800) 875-6564 number or send an e-mail to trips@unbound.org to request that one be e-mailed or mailed to your home address.

Complete, step-by-step instructions on how to register are included in the registration packet.

Space is limited! Apply as soon as possible. Check our website or call us regarding availability. We are reserving some spaces for first-time travelers so they can experience Unbound firsthand.

Summer trips and those that take place during school breaks fill up quickly.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What do you do on an awareness trip?

A. Our local staff meet travelers at the airport and host our group for the length of the trip. Sponsored members and their families welcome travelers into their communities and homes, and activities and celebrations demonstrate the impact of our program to families living in poverty. Travelers will see how contributions are used to support and empower families, but for most the highlight will be getting to meet their sponsored friends.

Whether it's to meet sponsored friends or simply experience the beauty of another culture, awareness trips offer an adventure like no other. Awareness trip travelers describe the experience as rewarding, eye-opening, energizing, impactful and humbling. They say they've grown in awareness and that their perception of poverty has changed.

Q. Will I meet my sponsored friend, and how much time will we spend together?

A. This is one of the primary reasons we offer trips, and we will do everything possible to make this happen! If you are a sponsor, you will spend a day during the trip with your sponsored friend, a member of their family and a staff member. Your sponsored friend will travel from their area to meet you, and your time is often spent at a park or recreation area. In extremely rare circumstances, the ability to travel, health or other unexpected situations prevent a visit from happening. For this reason we cannot make guarantees.

Q. Who can go on an Unbound awareness trip?

A. Trips are open to both sponsors and non-sponsors, and our travelers range in age from 6 to 70-plus. Some people travel solo, while others bring friends and family members to share the experience. Families with children (6 and older), whether sponsors or not, are welcome.

Q. Is airfare included?

A. Airfare is not included.

Q. Should I bring my friend a gift?

A. Sponsored friends and their families greatly anticipate these visits, and your presence is, in itself, a special gift. Exchanging gifts is common in many cultures. If you wish, you may bring simple gifts for your friend and for the family. Check the trip preparation guide included with your confirmation packet for gift ideas.

Q. I don't speak the language, is that an issue?

A. Don't worry, Unbound provides interpreters throughout the trip.

Q. How strenuous are the trips?

A. The days begin early and are filled with activities. The trip can be rigorous, as rest time is limited. You may travel long distances in a bus or van and may be gone all day visiting communities, sometimes in very warm weather. Participants should be able to climb stairs and walk on uneven terrain such as dirt paths or cobblestone. The amount of walking varies by trip. A trip coordinator would be happy to talk to you about any concerns you have about your ability to participate.

Q. Will my health insurance cover me in another country?

A. Consult with your medical insurance company prior to traveling to confirm whether your policy applies in a foreign country. If your policy does not cover emergency expenses including a medical evacuation, we urge you to consider the purchase of temporary travel insurance. Many insurance plans, including Medicare, do not cover treatment outside of the U.S. You can obtain further information on travel insurance from a travel agent or through research on the Internet.

Unbound strongly urges travelers to have trip cancellation and trip interruption insurance to help cover the costs associated with isolation due to a COVID-19 diagnosis.

Q. What happens if a traveler tests positive for COVID-19 during the trip?

A. Travelers that test positive for COVID-19 during the awareness trip will not be allowed to continue to join trip activities and must end their participation in the trip. The traveler will be responsible for all additional expenses, which may include meals, additional transportation, medical expenses and lodging. Unbound strongly urges travelers to purchase trip cancelation insurance. Travelers should also budget for or purchase trip interruption insurance to help cover the costs resulting from early departure from a trip.

Note: Travelers cannot lodge at Unbound dormitories after testing positive for COVID-19. This is relevant to trips to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Costa Rica. Unbound will transport the individual to a hotel near the airport, which accepts COVID-19 diagnosed guests.

Q. Where can I get more information?

A. You may email your questions to trips@unbound.org or call a trip coordinator during business hours at (800) 875-6564.