



# GRINGO HANDBOOK

---

## **Bienviendos!**

Welcome to Guatemala and thank you for choosing to serve with us here at Hands of Hope International. We hope the following information will be useful for you and your team in preparation for the upcoming trip.

### ***LODGING AND TRANSPORTATION***

Our Host Facility is located in San Cristobal, just outside of Guatemala City. The location is at Access Church Guatemala. During your stay on campus, you will sleep in dormitory style rooms with bunk beds. Each side has multiple bathrooms and showers; male and female rooms are separated. Each dormitory has a common area with a kitchenette. We will provide sheets, blankets, pillows and towels for your stay.. *\*Please review the 'Items to Bring' list for everything you need.*

Your stay will include all meals; breakfast, lunch and dinner. Breakfast is served every morning at 7:00am with dinner being served at 5:30pm. Items for a sack lunch will be provided for your team, but you will be responsible to prepare the lunches before that day's departure.

We will arrange pick up and drop-off for your team, to and from the airport; along with scheduling all of your transportation needs throughout the week. When you arrive at the airport, please look for the driver/person with the 'Hands of Hope' sign and they will take care of your luggage and the arrival to our host facility.

After your arrival to the host facility, we will meet for a Welcome and Review with the entire group. Other notes about your stay: personal snacks are allowed in your dormitory; free Wifi service available on campus; other amenities are available (basketball, ping pong, meeting rooms, balcony, etc). Tobacco and alcohol use are prohibited.

### ***LOCATION AND WEATHER***

The climate and environment in the mountains of Guatemala feels like Spring year round averaging 70 degrees each day. We only have two seasons, a dry season (November-April) and a rainy season (May-October). During the rainy season, you can expect some rain fall during the afternoon almost everyday. Please make sure that your team prepares for the time of year you will arrive.

Most of our outreach locations will be around 7,000 feet above sea level, so please ensure that your team drinks plenty of water before arrival (about two weeks prior) and while serving here

in Guatemala. The water is not safe to drink. Please bring a water bottle with a filter to use during your stay. Another topic of discussion is the lack of bathroom facilities around the country, especially out in the village areas. You are allowed to flush toilet paper while on campus but it is prohibited everywhere else in Guatemala. The sanitation is below average and most, if not all buildings, are not designed with the proper septic system to handle this type of waste. All toilet paper is to be placed in trash bins. Likewise, many village areas may not even have a restroom available, so be mindful of that before leaving campus for the longevity of your day.

We highly recommend that you do not consume any food from street vendors and only drink your personal filtered water or purchase drinks in a bottle. Even while on campus, do not drink or use the tap water (even for brushing your teeth). It is common for visitors to experience mild stomach aches/issues. The Items to Bring list suggests for groups to bring medications like *Pepto* or *Imodium AD*.

The majority of restaurants and coffee shops that you will visit in Antigua are safe. A map of Antigua will be provided for your team with the designated locations. Be sure you grab your map and enjoy your visit.

### ***CULTURE PREPARATION***

The main language is Spanish. Guatemala is home to over 21 indigenous languages, mostly from all of the Mayan Indian tribes. We will provide your team with a commonly used Spanish “cheat sheet” to study and use during your stay.

Guatemala is considered an undeveloped country with extreme poverty in many areas. People have limited resources for life sustaining items like food and clean water. Many women and children that you will encounter have been abused and/or neglected. Please be respectful and mindful of this during your outreaches. Spending time with them and hearing their personal stories can be very emotional. Make sure that you and your team prepare for these types of encounters. One of the hardest things to do while serving here in Guatemala is to realize the problem is so big that you can't solve everyone's issues. But God! You can however make a huge difference in just one person by providing needed resources and praying with them - ultimately showing them the love of Jesus. Our team will host a 'Mission Debriefing' before your departure. This will help ensure your team's adjust to what they have experienced in Guatemala as they transition back to the U.S.

We understand everyone's initial intent is to serve and be a blessing to those in need here in Guatemala. However, they will bless you more than you could ever imagine in return. This will be an exciting trip for you and your group. Our prayer is that everyone will have a life changing experience to carry back with them... and we trust this will happen.

We look forward to building God's kingdom together with your group soon!