



For those people without much time who want to volunteer, why not build a stove for some of Guatemala's neediest families?

Översikt

This unique project enables volunteers to experience a new culture first-hand, by taking part in voluntary work on community construction projects near Antigua, Guatemala. GVI, along with leaders of the indigenous communities, has developed short-term manual projects to improve the standard of living for hundreds of indigenous families in rural Guatemala. Volunteers can choose to help to build energy-efficient stoves for cleaner air and less wood consumption.

10 hours of one-on-one Spanish classes are included, along with a half-day adventure such as mountain-biking, climbing or hiking. Within a week you will have funded, worked on and completed each individual project greatly improving living standards for one family.

Projektet

Please note: our education and community projects in Guatemala are unique to Global Vision International. All funding of these projects comes directly from Global Vision International and volunteer contributions, included in the programme fee. We receive no other outside source of income, apart from that raised through GVI and volunteer contributions. Suffice to say, without this funding from GVI and the volunteer contributions, the projects simply would not exist.

Working with Indigenous Maya Communities

The indigenous Maya communities in Guatemala make up a huge percentage of the population, yet many live off of just \$1 a day. Global Vision International is currently working with two indigenous communities in Guatemala, the San Andrés Itzapa and Santa Maria de Jesus, both which live within a 45 minute bus ride from Antigua, through lush mountain scenery and typical Guatemalan villages. Our aims are first and foremost to improve the standard of living of hundreds of indigenous families, who often live in extreme poverty. Global Vision International, with the full support of the indigenous leaders of the communities, aims to tackle these issues in many different ways through basic funding of simple, but essential, physical sustainable projects. Once the initial starting phase has been funded and completed, it can be continued for many years without further funding, helping the families become self-sustainable and even start micro-businesses to increase the family income.

Global Vision International currently has education projects in Guatemala, funded and run by volunteers:

San Andres Itzapa

In October 2003, with the help of the indigenous leader, Elena Siquinajay Suy, GVI set up the Pajaro de Fuego (Phoenix) project. On a piece of disused land we renovated two buildings, with the help of volunteer donation money, into suitable teaching areas for over 60 children. In 2005, due to an increased number of children, we also rented out an abandoned house for more classrooms and at the start of 2008, rented further space as the number of children passed over 300 split into nine different classes, both in the morning and afternoon. Thanks to volunteer donations we were able to act quickly to help over 80 families affected by Hurricane Stan in October 2005; providing shelter, basic food supplies, medicine, clothing, water, cooking utensils, livestock and reconstruction.

Santa Maria de Jesus

In July 2004 we set up our next project in Santa Maria Jesus – an indigenous community on the foothills of Volcan Agua – with the help of Santiago Colin providing first time education to many children whose ages range between 5-13. In 2005, due to the increased number of children we opened our second project in another house, and now give education to over 200 children.

Here are some facts which highlight the problems facing the indigenous populations in rural Guatemala and why the individual projects are so important:

A Few Facts About Air Pollution

* More than one-third of humanity, 2.4 billion people worldwide, use solid fuels, including wood, dung and coal for their energy needs.

* Solid fuels have been used for cooking since the beginning of time and when used properly, they can be an effective way of heating a home or cooking a meal. Unfortunately, due to economic, political and cultural factors, most families today use what is referred to as a three stone fire, which is three round stones surrounding a wood fire, over which a metal plate is placed for cooking. Coupled with poor ventilation in most homes, this is leading to high levels of indoor air pollution.

* Smoke in homes from these cook stoves is the fourth greatest risk factor for death and disease in the world's poorest countries.

* Worldwide, 1.6 million annual deaths, predominantly women and children, are caused by indoor air pollution, including one million children's lives each year (more than malaria or AIDS).

* Children under the age of 5 account for 56% of deaths from Indoor Air Pollution.

* The main killer caused by indoor air pollution is called acute lower respiratory infections (ALRI). Pneumonia, serious burns and eye infections are other health risks. Many women go blind in their forties due to smoke from the cooking fires.

* Women typically spend between three and seven hours per day by the fire, longer when fires are also used for heating the home. Children under the age of five are also particularly at risk, because they spend most of their time with their mothers; often very young ones are strapped to their mother's body. The impact this length of exposure has on small children is exacerbated by a number of factors:

* Children's airways are smaller, therefore more susceptible to inflammation.

* Their lungs are not fully developed until they are teenagers, so they breathe faster.

* Also, their immune systems are not fully developed – a process that may be further delayed by malnutrition. These facts mean that children absorb pollutants more readily than adults and also retain them in their system for longer.

* Another major problem from these cook stoves is depleting resources and the time necessary to collect the firewood.

* Up to 85% of the energy generated by a three-stone open fire is wasted, which is a real problem considering that poor families spend up to 20% of their income on solid fuels and/or spend one quarter of their time gathering wood.

* In most societies it is also the women's responsibility to provide the biomass fuel. The time cost alone, in rural areas, can be extreme. Estimates range from two to twenty hours per week spent collecting fuel, and the distances covered over difficult terrain can be considerable. In Nepal, for example, women can walk over 20 km per journey in search of wood. This level of work not only reduces the amount of time women can spend on other activities, such as earning money or resting, but it contributes to a range of additional threats to health and wellbeing.

* Often, if the mother cannot collect the wood, it is the responsibility of one of the daughters in the family, thus taking away from time that could be spent in the school.

Tidigare volontärer berättar

”Emilia and I had such a great time in Guatemala last summer. From the moment that Rufus picked us up at the airport, we knew that we in for a great experience. We enjoyed exploring Antigua, a really lovely city. Getting to know Dom and Doreen and all of the volunteers, and living with a local family made us feel as if we really belonged. The Spanish immersion helped a lot in being able to communicate, and I have been practicing my Spanish at home since then. And I tried to keep up with Emilia at the Salsa dancing lessons!

By far, the best part of our week there was going to Santa Maria de Jesus to build the stoves. Even though Emilia was only 16, she was quite insistent that she could build her own stove, and she went off confidently with Juan, one of the local masons. The families are so grateful to have a stove to cook on instead of an open fire, its amazing to see what a difference something so simple can make in their lives. Emilia has a stove there now with her name on it, and also the pride of her accomplishment. She mixed cement, cut rebar, and got to know the family she was helping. They gave her a cloth the woman had made herself, and she had lots of hugs with the children.

As a surgeon, it was a good experience for me to do some preventive medicine activity – such basic needs. Meeting Santiago and seeing all that he does for his community, and helping with sports day with the school children were fun, and we felt that we got a little glimpse into the community there. We both want to return, and I am sure that when Emilia is old enough to come back for a much longer time, she will want to also teach in one of the GVI schools.

Thanks for all that you do. We hope to see you all again!”

Lisa Bailey och Emilia Calma

”We did indeed have an outstanding time of it, I think building those stoves was one of the best things I have ever done. I really enjoyed the entire experience from beginning to end. Our whole family did, and we got to get to know the wonderful people of Guatemala and you guys and the village folks. Louis has an engineering background and was quite taken with the ingenuity and simplicity of the design of the stoves and just loved getting down and dirty and doing some good hard, back breaking work. Both our girls want to come back there and work all summer next year. Of course, they are both too young but I certainly see them returning when they are 18, to teach in the school and certainly build a stove or two while they are there. I loved that we ended up having a goofy competition between mom and daughter and dad and daughter. I was quite surprised that we kept up with Louis who usually can work circles around most people, having grown up on a ranch. I think myself and Savannah just didn’t want to look bad so we worked extra hard to keep up, if you will. All in all, our silly competition made it more fun. We absolutely loved our families that we did the stoves for. I had quite the conversation with the grandma of the second family, she looked to be at least 80. She said that one of the mom’s had died and one of the husbands abandoned his wife and kids in the extended family that was living there. I took some gorgeous pictures of her, she was very cute and took off her head wrap to clean herself up so that she would look better for the pictures.

It was fabulous meeting Dom and everyone and we all thank you for what you guys are doing and the difference that you are making in the world!!!!!!”

Familjen LeJeune-Stodieck

Vilken skillnad gör detta projekt?

From an economical standpoint with the stoves, the families will only have to collect or buy up to a third of the firewood they used to, and spend less on medicines for chronic lung illnesses. Environmentally, the deforestation of trees is essentially reduced by two-thirds per family. Medically, with no smoke inhalation due to the chimney, the health of the families is greatly improved.

Höjdpunkter

Working side-by-side with indigenous families and in indigenous communities; starting and finishing each chosen project within one week; one-on-one Spanish classes; an adventure trip which includes a volcano hike or mountain bike ride; and being based in Antigua.

Plats

Guatemala is one of the jewels of Central America, packed with ancient ruins, active volcanoes and intriguing Mayan culture. Volunteers live in the beautiful old Spanish colonial town of Antigua. Project work is carried out in communities all within a one hour journey from the town.

Ute i fält

Living with local families in Antigua in comfortable but semi-basic accommodation allows for an enriching cultural experience and the valuable opportunity to practice your Spanish! All accommodation provided is private and includes three meals a day (apart from Sundays). Lunch is eaten in the communities with a local family during the week.

Glada barn roar sig med det som finns till hands



Livet på projektet

Volunteers will work with their chosen individual project until it is finished, which will be within one week. The first two days will be dedicated to the Spanish Classes. Following this, days start early with eating breakfast with the host family, before travelling to the relevant project site and arriving to start work at about 8am. You will then work with the family for whom you are funding and working on your project until late afternoon, before traveling back with the other volunteers, arriving back in Antigua at around 5pm.

Each project/task is designed to be started and finished within one week. GVI and leaders of the communities have conducted numerous surveys, investigations and meetings to find out what the community leaders and families really want and need. It should be noted that the following projects have been approved by members of the communities.

The following project areas are ones we have decided are most needed and beneficial for the local indigenous families to confront the problems mentioned above.

Economic stove building

Almost all indigenous families use wood-burning stoves to cook. With your funding and work, we can build one stove for one family within a week. You will be funding all the materials and local masonry work. You will work alongside a local mason and the family, mixing cement and constructing the stove from start to finish.

Facts on the Stoves

- * They are simple wood-burning stoves made from cement, block and bricks that encase the fire and provide a chimney to vent smoke out of the home.
- * They cut down the amount of smoke and carbon dioxide in the home by 70%.
- * They use 75% less firewood than three-stone fires thus saving resources and time used collecting firewood.
- * They add 10-15 years of life to every person in the household.
- * They protect small children from major burns and women from losing their eyesight prematurely.
- * In September 2000, the member states of the United Nations unanimously adopted the Millennium Declaration that set in place the Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty by 2015. The stoves greatly contribute to the goal of reducing child mortality by two-thirds by 2015.

Adventure

Included in your package is a half-day guided adventure activity, whether this is rock climbing, mountain biking or hiking in the surrounding areas around Antigua. You, along with a professional guide, will have time to mountain bike or hike around the surrounding areas of Antigua and beyond. If biking isn't your thing and you prefer the heights, you will be guided on some of Guatemala's best rock climbing cliffs.

There are also plenty of opportunities in Antigua for cultural tours, museums, coffee and Macadamia nut plantations, volcano hikes, yoga, cookery and salsa classes, which have proved very popular with previous volunteers and also relaxing spas for those wanting to pamper themselves after a hard week's work! Guatemala is an incredible place for weekend travel, with the stunning Semuc Champey, the laid back Livingstone, the awe-inspiring Mayan ruins at Tikal or just the pure beach life of Monterrico! Honduras, El Salvador and Belice are also good weekend trips.

Foton från projektet



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