



Volunteer in Guatemala to Work with Indigenous Children - Learn Spanish, live and work with an indigenous community and explore Central America

Översikt

This is one of GVI's most popular volunteer projects, owing to the exceptional volunteer feedback it receives. Volunteers live with a local family in the beautiful bustling colonial town of Antigua, Guatemala, and travel everyday to work with indigenous communities nearby. Education is not free in Guatemala and much of the population lives below the poverty line, so GVI, along with leaders of the indigenous communities, has built schools that are free to attend. By working in these, volunteers will make a real personal difference to the lives of underprivileged children.

Projektet

Please note: GVI's education projects in Guatemala are unique to Global Vision International. All funding of these projects comes directly from Global Vision International and all volunteer contributions are 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 Mayan Communities

The indigenous Maya 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 – San Andrés Itzapa and Santa Maria de Jesus – to improve the standard of education for the indigenous people of the area. Both communities are within a 45 minute journey from Antigua, through lush mountain scenery and typical Guatemalan villages.

GVI's aims lie first and foremost in education, paying particular focus to literacy and educational reinforcement for the children of each community. What extra money the families have goes towards primary education for the boys, with girls are often being sadly neglected. Illiteracy rates are high and the standard of education for those that do go to school is low, with many having attended for just a couple of years before being unable to continue due to economic constraints or being sent to work in the fields. Coupled with this, there is a lack of knowledge in basic hygiene and nutrition. Global Vision International, with the full support of the indigenous leaders of the communities, aims to tackle these issues in many different ways through education.

When it comes to teaching, we work very closely with the leaders of the communities, to the extent that we eat with them each day to discuss any issues. Before initiating each project, the leaders put together an idea of areas of education to be addressed, which include basic literacy, numeracy and education reinforcement; paying particular to maths and English. Further areas include Spanish grammar, geography and sciences. We have a Guatemalan teacher putting together basic lesson plan structures for the volunteers to follow and elaborate on so that the children receive the required education.

Thanks to volunteer donations and contributions, over 250 children in our San Andrés Itzapa project and over 150 children in our Santa María project now attend National School for half-days (the standard timetable). However, due to large class sizes, erratic timetables, and the lack of education among the children's parents, reinforcement is of paramount importance, so the children receive their 'passed' certificate at the end of the year. We plan to have all the children in both our San Andrés Itzapa and Santa María de Jesús programmes attending national school over the coming years.

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.



En tjej från en av byarna

En volontär berättar

"As my school year came to a close and summer set in, I realized that I wanted to do something significant with my time. I enquired here and there, searching for quite some time before stumbling onto the GVI website. After sifting through so many travel/volunteer abroad websites that just never panned out, I was slightly wary of what the Guatemala project claimed to offer: The opportunity to live in Antigua, a UNESCO World heritage site. Room and board with a host family while learning Spanish with a one on one tutor, seemed hard to believe. That coupled with the claim that there was a coordinated educational project in need of assistance seemed too good to be true. I quickly emailed to check. Dom reassured me that this project was in fact real and had been functioning well for the past 3 years. So within 3 weeks I was packed and on a plane to Guatemala expecting the worst and hoping for the best.

On every level the project surpassed my expectations and hopes. To begin with, the opportunity to learn a completely new language was something spectacular, broadening my abilities to better understand those from a very different and enriching culture. Right from the beginning my host family warmly treated me as part of their family, allowing me to comfortably settle into what became my home away from home. And this was in addition to the fact that I had yummy platanos (fried plantains) for breakie every morning. Taking a speeding 'chicken bus' up the mountain to Itzapa with a group of volunteers who all possessed an affinity for singing along to cheesy 90's songs was always a nice kick start to what would be a great day at school. And then there were the kids and my class who astounded me everyday. How could 40 some odd children run down a hill at full speed with arms in open embrace for their teachers without at least one injury occurring? With their smiles and hugs and their little personalities they made frustrations of day-to-day lessons become more manageable. Thursday, 'Dia del Arte' was my favorite day because the kids got to explore their creative side while showing off their final products to the teachers. However, Friday 'Sports Day', came in a close second, mostly due to the fact that the volunteers also dubbed it 'Ice Cream Day' our delicious reward for trying to keep up with the kids at El Campo.

One part of this project, which I hadn't anticipated at all, was meeting and getting to know Elena Siquinajay de Suy, the local indigenous leader, and her family. Everyday before lunch I would go down to her house and chat with her and her daughters while they taught me the art of making the perfect tortilla. It was during these times together, that I realized the common bond everyone shared in the project and when our seemingly stark physical and cultural differences became a mere afterthought. Every one of us had come together in one way or another to help empower the children through education. This is what really mattered and indeed what happened each and everyday at Itzapa. Accordingly this is what made my 8-week stay so wonderful and fulfilling though making the goodbyes all the more difficult."

Julia Rao

Vilken skillnad gör detta projekt?

A substantial part of the fee goes towards the day-to-day running costs of the projects themselves throughout the year, which includes rent, electricity, local salaries, fruit and other food for the children, educational materials for classes, monthly birthday and other celebrations, painting and maintenance. We currently pay for over 400 children to attend National School, as well as our own schools. Of these, almost 50 children entered Secondary School and 8 entered College. Included in your fee is one scholarship per child, per year.

Höjdpunkter

Living with a host family in Antigua; learning Spanish (optional); teaching literacy and numeracy to indigenous children in remote communities in GVI schools; going on an adventure weekend at Lake Atitlan (optional) to enjoy activities including hiking, biking and kayaking, opportunities for Salsa Classes and further travel.

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 and project work is carried out in communities all within a one hour journey from the town.

Ute i fält

Living with local families in comfortable but 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.

Förkunskaper

No formal teacher-training is required as each volunteer will be supported by GVI project managers or existing volunteers for the first few days. Teaching manuals, resource books, the Guatemalan curriculum and many other teacher resource books are available for the volunteers' use. A weekly meeting is held in the communities to discuss structure, swap ideas and to work on the following week's classes. A BBQ is also held for everyone to get together and unwind before the weekend!

50 trees will also be planted on the volunteer's behalf during the planting season, usually June, July and August, in the surrounding areas of San Andrés Itzapa and Santa María de Jesús – regions which are desperately in need of some reforestation.

Spanish classes are ESSENTIAL for those Volunteers with no previous Spanish experience and highly recommended for those who want to brush up on their Spanish language. The Spanish course is 40 hours, with the first week dedicated to Spanish Classes, practice and homework. After the first week, you will work full time in the community and finish off your classes after work, which gives you a chance to ask your teacher about words and phrases you have confronted whilst teaching. The Spanish courses available in the school range from beginner and intermediate, to advanced levels. The classes have an emphasis on grammar and conversation

Livet på projektet

Volunteers work on their project from Monday to Friday. Your days begin early, to eat breakfast with your host family before you meet up with the other volunteers (usually up to six per community) to catch the transport to the relevant project site, arriving to start classes by 9.00am. There is a break mid-morning for a fruit snack for the children, then classes continue to 12.00pm, when volunteers will eat with a local family in the community, plan lessons and relax. Classes then restart with new children at 2pm, with the fruit break mid-afternoon, to finish at around 4pm, when the volunteers all return to Antigua a little after 5pm.

Volunteers have the option to take their own class or assist other volunteers until they feel they could take their own class. It is hoped that a new volunteer will work with an experienced volunteer for 1-2 weeks, with the aim to take over that class once the experienced volunteer has left. Each class size can range from 5-20 children, depending on the collective ability or the attention needed by the children. Lessons range from basic literacy and numbers to educational reinforcement, help with homework and English, games, sports and other activities. Full records are kept of each child's progress on a monthly basis, to facilitate the volunteer changeover and allow continuity of the child's education process.

Tillval

For a small fee you can choose to take an unforgettable trip to Lake Atitlán, led by professional guides. The first day involves driving a couple of hours up to the drop-off point high above the Lake, unloading the bikes and speeding down around 40km to Panajachel, where you take the boat to a beautiful lakeside hotel for R&R! The next day the kayaks are taken out to a point around the lake, from where you will hike back a couple of hours to the hotel, before heading back to Antigua.

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.

Lek är en viktig del av jobbet



Foton från projektet



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