

Guatemala: Children of the Maya

Be part of a living Mayan culture



Highlights

- Volunteer at a Mayan school
- Journey across sacred Lake Atitlan
- Attend a ceremony with a Mayan shaman
- Explore ancient archeological ruins
- Shop at the largest indigenous craft market in the hemisphere



Guatemala: Children of the Maya

Guatemala is the beating heart of the Maya – a 4,000 year old civilization rich with history, art, and culture. Holidays and ceremonies are filled with ancient pageantry and traditions, and the weekly markets are ablaze with vivid colors of handmade clothing and tapestry.

Amid breathtaking mountain scenery, learn first hand about how Mayan traditions have evolved over time in response to a combination of globalization, civil wars and subsequent peace accords and how the Maya have fought to preserve their culture. Students will gain a true understanding of the issues and challenges faced by the Mayan community in current day Guatemala. Students will learn how grassroots leaders are working with these communities to address issues of cultural preservation.

The program is based in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, four hours from the capital city. Quetzaltenango, known by locals as “Xela” (shay-lah) is a town with very strong Mayan culture and is the home of the Xelaju people who still maintain their traditional culture and language while experiencing the effects of modernization. It is an authentic, cultural journey.



10-day Program

June 25 – July 4, 2012

July 7 – July 16, 2012

July 19 – July 28, 2012

July 31 – August 9, 2012

Tuition: \$1,999

Max. size: 22 students

Service hours: 20

Location: Quetzaltenango

Community Service

You will spend the week volunteering at a local school refurbishing it and working with the Mayan children. The school is unique in that it is run by Mayan teachers and actively promotes indigenous language and culture. You will fix up the school by painting or building the school as well as organizing games with the students. In addition, you can share your talents doing arts and crafts, playing sports and games, and teaching basic conversational English.

Hands-on Learning

Rural Guatemala is the perfect place to learn first-hand about living Mayan culture. We will meet a traditional shaman who will teach us about Mayan cosmology, and also learn about medicinal plants used by the Quiche people of the region. You'll dive into Guatemala's rich culture by learning how to make the colorful indigenous textiles, how to play the local music and even soak up art by indigenous painters. You will meet with grassroots leaders to learn about the challenges the Mayan community faces to preserve their heritage in the face of globalization.

Adventure

Xela is located near many important cultural treasures. We'll visit the famous Mayan ruins at *Iximche* and also participate in a traditional ceremony with a Mayan shaman. We will visit Antigua, a charming colonial town with gorgeous colonial architecture and cobblestone streets, Lake Atitlan, which rests at the foot of three massive conical volcanoes, and Chichicastenango with the largest Mayan craft market in the world.

Lodging

The GLA Home Base is a lodge on the outskirts of Xela surrounded by beautiful mountains and fields offering a peaceful escape for students. Students live in gender-segregated rooms with two to three bunk beds, depending on the size of the rooms. Two students will share a room; rooms are clean and have a private bathroom and showers with hot and cold water.

Tuition

Tuition includes all in-country expenses including lodging, meals, hotel in Antigua, transportation, all activities and entrance fees, community service materials, all excursions, backup medical insurance, and experienced program leaders.

Tuition does not include the following: international airfare, internet usage at internet café, \$3 airport tax upon departure, souvenirs, snacks, laundry, phone calls, or medical expenses.

Program Schedule

***Disclaimer: Actual order of activities will vary by program session.** The day by day itinerary detailed below is typical for what you can expect to experience, but not set in stone as work and activities vary depending upon the needs of our local community partners, various celebrations and customs, as well as the weather. This itinerary is designed to give you an example of what a day to day schedule would look like and provides a clear idea of the program experience. It may be changed during the summer as staff see fit and on the ground circumstances and opportunities change our course.*



Day 1: Students will arrive at La Aurora International Airport in Guatemala City (Airport Code: GUA). GLA staff will meet the students at the airport and we will travel as a group to the colonial town of Antigua.

Day 2: In the morning, we will meet with local Mayan families who will teach us the ancient customs of the Mayan wedding ceremony. After the interactive seminar you will have the opportunity to make tortillas and see how coffee was traditionally roasted. There will be time to do some shopping and to purchase textiles and other souvenirs. Afterward, we will visit the ancient Mayan ruins of Iximche, the old capital of the Mayan Kaq'chikel kingdom. At the ruins we will have a short presentation on "Mayan Culture," and our Mayan guide who is a local anthropologist will share stories about this site. Students will enjoy the beautiful lush scenery on their drive north as their welcomed to new home base in Xela. After getting settled and eating dinner at the home base, students will have a Spanish crash-course and then brainstorm and make plans for the upcoming service work.

Day 3: We will begin our community service project at the local school in the morning from approximately 8:00 to noon. We will have a meeting with the students and teachers to discuss our project and learn more about their school. In the afternoon the group will travel to the oldest Christian church in Central America, *Iglesia de Salcaja*, to learn about the time of colonization in this part of the world. Next, we will take part in a hands-on textile workshop taught by local experts. In the evening we'll watch a movie about the plight of they Mayan people.

Day 4: We will continue working on our community service project with the local school. In the afternoon, we will learn the art of Marimba, the national instrument of Guatemala, and try out our dance skills. In the evening, in order to gain some context about the community we are in, a guest speaker will share his personal experiences of life during the civil war in the 1990s and the genocide against the Mayan community.

Day 5: After a morning of community service, we'll visit an inspirational and delicious Mayan women's cooperative that makes chocolate to earn a living. We will return to our home base and have time to get online and catch up with family back home. After dinner, we will participate in a leadership workshop.

Day 6: We will continue our service work at the village school. We will spend the afternoon visiting a sacred mountain in our area and have a local Mayan teach us about Mayan cosmology and we will meet a traditional Mayan shaman and participate in an ancient religious ceremony. After dinner we will watch a documentary on cracking the Mayan code.

Day 7: We will complete our final morning of our community service projects and say goodbye to the students at the school. In the afternoon, we will travel to visit an organic coffee farm and learn about coffee production and sample the goods. After dinner, we will have a salsa dancing workshop.

Day 8: Today we'll drive to Lake Atitlan, the sacred lake of the Mayans and one of the ten most beautiful lakes in the world. We will spend the day enjoying activities around the lake. We'll take a boat ride out to one of the Mayan villages on the other side of the lake, go for a hike while surrounded by the incredible scenery. We'll spend the night in a lakeside hostel.

Day 9: We'll leave Lake Atitlan early in the morning to travel to Chichicastenango, the site of the largest Mayan craft market in the hemisphere. Artisans from all over the country come to this open air market on Sundays. It's truly a sight to behold. After the markets, we will spend our last afternoon exploring the colonial city of Antigua and conclude with a farewell dinner and final reflection of our time in Guatemala.

Day 10: After breakfast and goodbyes, we will travel to the airport to begin our journey home.

About Global Leadership Adventures

Global Leadership Adventures, established in 2004, is the premier international community service-learning program for high school students. Students come back transformed.

GLA is unique because of its focus on leadership development and first-hand learning about global issues. Students learn first hand from social pioneers around the world who are creating positive social change in their communities.

Students are taught to use their heart, as well as their head, to become agents of positive change across borders.

GLA has been featured in:

The New York Times

seventeen

BALTIMORE TIMES ONLINE

The Boston Globe

