

Guatemala: Spanish, Service & Mayan Culture

Learn Spanish while living in a Mayan community.



Highlights

- Take your Spanish to the next level
- Weekend on sacred Lake Atitlan
- Ceremony with a traditional Mayan shaman
- Visit ancient archaeological ruins
- Meaningful volunteer work at rural schools
- Hike to the crater of a dormant volcano
- Explore exciting works of indigenous art
- Sample coffee straight from the source on an organic coffee plantation



Guatemala: Spanish, Service & Mayan Culture

Step directly into the 4,000 year old world of the Maya: a civilization rich with history, art, culture, and breathtaking mountain scenery. In Guatemala, you'll learn firsthand about how Mayan grassroots community leaders are working to preserve their culture and get a glimpse of the complex relationships between Central America and the rest of the world.

This GLA Language Program integrates Spanish into all aspects of the program – community service, excursions, and cultural events. It is an experience you cannot get sitting in a Spanish class back home in school. At GLA, the world is your classroom.

21-day Flagship Program

June 27- July 17, 2012
July 20 – August 9, 2012

Duration: 21 days

Tuition: \$4,399

Max. group size: 30 students

Service hours: 50

Location: Quetzaltenango (Xela)

Community Service

You will spend the week volunteering at a local school refurbishing it and working with the children. The school is unique in that it is run by Mayan teachers and actively promotes indigenous language and culture. You will help out fixing up the school 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

Learning Spanish is best when you'll be able to practice it with native speakers in everyday conversation. We use a *unique immersion curriculum* that combines classroom time with using spoken Spanish in the community - during community service, cultural activities or excursions. No prior knowledge of Spanish is required; you'll be placed according to your ability. You will receive about 40 hours of Spanish instruction over the three weeks.

We will also learn about the local culture through hands-on workshops with musicians, artists, weavers and even meet a traditional shaman who will teach us about Mayan cosmology.

Adventure

Through the three weeks, we'll embark on a range of adventures and visit many small towns and villages along the way. Over the weekends we'll visit Lake Atitlan, the Mayan market town of Chichicastenango, archaeological ruins at *Takalik Abaj*, organic coffee farms, and the sacred Laguna Chicabal, located at the top of a dormant volcano. During the weekdays, we'll meet with traditional music group, visit a Mayan artist's studio, try our hand at weaving colorful textiles and meet inspirational grassroots leaders. At the end of the program, we'll spend a day in the charming colonial town of Antigua.

Lodging

The GLA Home Base is a lodge on the outskirts of Xela offering students a peaceful escape as they are surrounded by beautiful countryside and majestic mountains. Students and staff live in gender segregated rooms in our house with 2-3 bunk beds per room depending on the size of the room. The Home Base is modest yet very comfortable for students. Students will not have internet access at the home base but will be able to use an internet café once a week.

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. Guatemala will challenge you as students are expected to work hard and really be present for all that we do. You will get hot, dirty and bug bitten along the way, but your contribution to the rural community and to each other will positively impact everyone involved.*

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 where we'll spend the night.

Day 2: In the morning, we will meet a group of Mayan women who will teach us the ancient customs of the Mayan wedding ceremony. After the interactive experience 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. Students will enjoy the beautiful lush scenery on their drive north to their new home base in Xela. After getting settled and eating dinner at the home base, students will brainstorm and make a lesson plan for the children they will be working with at community service.

Day 3: After a hearty Guatemalan breakfast we will go on a city tour to get a sense of the layout of the city of Xela. After lunch we will have a formal orientation to Global Leadership Adventures and to the program. Next we will participate in a series of ice-breakers designed to help us get to know one another. After dinner, we will have our first leadership workshop. We will discover why each of us chose this experience and develop relationships with our new friends.

Day 4: After breakfast we begin our community service project at the local school from approximately 8:00 to noon. We will meet with the students and teachers to learn about the school. After lunch, we have our first Spanish class - each student will take a Spanish placement test. Based on both a written and oral test, students will be divided into three classes; beginner, intermediate and advanced Spanish. In the evening, a guest speaker will present to us the history of Guatemala.

Day 5: We continue our community service project in the morning. After lunch, we will travel to Tonicapan to explore this historic area known for chocolate and pottery. We will participate in a pottery workshop and even try our hand at making some functional art. Afterward, we will sample some delicious, natural hot chocolate at a local establishment frequented by local Maya. After dinner we'll watch a movie about cracking the Mayan code.

Day 6: We will continue our service work at the local school, and follow it with our first Spanish class. Spanish class will be a mix of classroom instruction and going out into the community to speak with the locals. After dinner we'll have a leadership workshop.

Day 7: In the morning our service work will resume. After lunch, we will participate in a leadership workshop and check-in with all that we have seen our first week. We'll also have time to visit an internet café to send messages back home. After dinner, we will participate in a salsa dancing workshop. Students will be able to practice the local rhythms.

Day 8: Students will travel to Lake Atitlan and enjoy one of the country's most spectacular lakes surrounded by majestic volcanoes... truly an unforgettable sight. After a tour of the lake, we will have time to swim and hike as we take in the spectacular views. We will kayak or boat to three separate indigenous villages surrounding the lake and see how locals preserve their culture in this now heavily touristic area. We will spend the night in Panajachel in a hostel along the lake.

Day 9: In the morning we will drive to Chichicastenango which is the largest Mayan craft market in the hemisphere. Students will have the opportunity to check out this vibrant marketplace and purchase souvenirs for family back home. After lunch we will drive back to our home base in Xela. After relaxing from our weekend adventure we will check in and participate in a leadership workshop and then end the night by watching a film about the plight of Mayan women who travel to the big city in search of a better life.

Day 10: After breakfast, we will head back to the local school for our service work. We will have time to do laundry and use the internet to connect with family back home. After lunch, we will have Spanish class and continue progressing with the local language. After dinner, we will watch a film on the Guatemalan civil war. This will shed light into the recent history of the country and the implications on the indigenous Maya who were directly affected by the war. Afterward, there will be time for discussion and free time.

Day 11: After community service in the morning, we will travel to a local orphanage. We will spend the afternoon volunteering our time with local children. We will learn about the challenges orphans face in Guatemala and most importantly be a friend and role model to these kids. In the evening, in order to gain some context about the community we are in, we will learn about the civil war in the 1990s and the genocide against the Mayan community from a local guest speaker who will share his personal story.

Day 12: We will return to our service sites and really start to feel connections with the local people as we near the end of our second week. We will also begin to really see the goal of our projects as they start to take form. After service, we will have Spanish class and explore the local town and utilize our language skills. After dinner, we will have a leadership activity.

Day 13: After community service in the morning, we will learn the art of Marimba, the national instrument of Guatemala, and try out our dance skills in this interactive workshop. After dinner, we will be joined by a guest speaker who will teach us about Mayan cosmology and traditional religious beliefs.

Day 14: Service work will continue in the morning. In the afternoon the group will travel to the oldest 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 textile workshop taught by local experts. Afterward, on the way back to the GLA Home Base we will stop by another church, San Andres Xecul, the famed yellow Guatemalan cathedral. After dinner we will head out on the town in Xela and attend a cultural show or activity.



Day 15: We will wake early and travel to Lake Chicabal to hike and explore. This lake is an ancient crater, and is considered the center of Mayan cosmology, and Mayan traditionalists still use the several altars on the lake shore. Here we will participate in an authentic Mayan shaman ceremony. In the evening, we will return to the GLA Home Base and have free time.

Day 16: We will again wake early and travel to Abaj Tukulik, the ancient pre-columbian Maya and Olmec ruins. The site dates back to the 9th century and was an important centre of commerce. It has some of the largest sites of sculptured monuments on the Pacific coastal plain. A local archaeologist will explain the ruins and we will have a box lunch on site. After lunch, we will visit a local organic coffee farm to learn about coffee production and sample the goods. Upon returning to the home base we will have dinner and then a leadership workshop.

Day 17: We will return to our community service sites to begin our last week at the school. After lunch we will have time for laundry and internet before our Spanish classes. In the evening we will have a piñata making workshop which we will prepare for our schools and the local orphanage.

Day 18: After community service we will travel to some local hot springs which are situated up in a cloud forest with mist cascading down the high walls of the tropical vegetation that surrounds the pool. We will have time to relax and hang with friends. We will return for dinner and then finish up our piñatas and have our final leadership workshop.

Day 19: We will complete our final morning of our community service projects and say goodbye to the students at the school and leave them with a piñata. After lunch, we will go back to the orphanage and engage with the kids one last time, and leave them too with piñatas. After dinner, we will have a bonfire to reflect on our journey of Spanish, Service and Mayan culture.

Day 20: After breakfast, we will travel back to the colonial city of Antigua for our last full day. We will have time to explore the many sites and shop for last minute souvenirs. We will dine at a local restaurant for our farewell banquet before retiring for the night in a hotel.

Day 21: 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 logo for The New York Times, featuring the name in a classic blackletter font.The logo for the magazine Seventeen, with the word in a pink, italicized, sans-serif font.The logo for The Boston Globe, featuring the name in a blackletter font.The logo for Baltimore Times Online, with the text in a blue, blocky, sans-serif font.