



# GUATEMALA: CHILDREN OF THE MAYA

14-DAY PROGRAM

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Support education initiatives at local Guatemalan public schools
- Journey across the world-famous Lake Atitlán and take in sweeping views
- Attend a traditional ceremony led by a Maya shaman
- Stroll through the largest indigenous craft market in the hemisphere
- Zipline through Guatemala's scenic mountains

## ACTIVITY LEVEL

- Medium

## 2025 PROGRAM DATES

- July 01 – July 14

## GET IN TOUCH!

[experiencegla.com](https://experiencegla.com)

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@GLAteens



*With its stunning landscape and ancient Maya culture, Guatemala promises adventure and the opportunity to make a mark.*

## OVERVIEW

On this program, you will be immersed in indigenous culture, Maya heritage, and epic, mountainous landscapes. You'll find warm local residents proud to share their ancient traditions. This program is based in Xela (pronounced "shay-lah") —a local nickname for the vibrant town of Quetzaltenango— which is a hub for volunteer opportunities in education and children's issues.

With very little English spoken throughout the city, residents of Xela welcome student volunteers to assist in their classrooms on projects that support their education initiatives and infrastructure improvements. You will also zipline through the mountains of Guatemala and journey across the expansive, sacred Lake Atitlán during your time here in Central America.





## **ITINERARY**

*Actual schedule of activities will vary by program session. The information detailed here is typical for what you can expect to experience; however, service work and activities vary depending upon the needs of our local community partners, various celebrations and customs, as well as the weather and specific needs of the student group.*

### **DAYS 1-2: WELCOME TO GUATEMALA & GETTING ORIENTED**

Fly into La Aurora International Airport (GUA/MGGT) in Guatemala City, where you'll be met at the airport by a GLA staff member. We'll drive to the colonial town of Antigua, where you'll meet the other students, and we'll begin our orientation. Learn about some important cultural norms in Guatemala, review the GLA Code of Conduct, and start to get to know each other as we begin this exciting journey.

You'll also meet with local Maya women who will teach us the ancient customs of the Maya wedding ceremony. After the interactive presentation, you will have the opportunity to make tortillas and see how coffee was traditionally roasted.

### **DAYS 3 - 7: SERVICE & ADVENTURE**

You'll begin your community service project at the local school early the next morning. On the first day, meet with the teachers to learn more about the socioeconomic situation of the community served by the school. Understanding the big picture will help you do a better job of making a difference in local children's lives.

At mid-day, participate in the crazy adventure that is recess! Our small group of GLA volunteers will get to play with Guatemalan elementary schoolers. Jumping rope and soccer are all a must—and this scene of constant laughter, energy, and enthusiasm will set the tone for the rest of your community service at the school.

Take your spot at the front of the classroom and begin helping children with projects to improve their English. Lead them in art, conversation, learning games, and evaluate the effectiveness of the methods you and your peers choose. Volunteering daily at school will shed light on the issues unique to this country, such as education, children's issues, and preserving indigenous culture.

In the afternoons, you'll participate in various cultural activities. Participate in a hands-on textile workshop taught by local weavers, zipline through the forest, and enjoy natural hot springs!

### **DAYS 8-9: TWO-DAY EXCURSION TO LAKE ATITLÁN**

In the morning, we'll drive to Lake Atitlán, the sacred lake of the Mayans and one of the most beautiful lakes in the world. Spend the day surrounded by incredible scenery, enjoying a boat ride to one of the Maya villages and strolling through town while exploring local artisan markets. We'll spend the night at a lakeside hotel.





### **DAYS 8-9: TWO-DAY EXCURSION TO LAKE ATITLÁN - CONTINUED**

The day after, we'll leave Lake Atitlán early in the morning to travel to Chichicastenango, the largest Maya craft market in the hemisphere. Artisans from all over the country come to this open-air market—it's truly a sight to behold!

### **DAYS 10 - 12: SERVICE WRAP-UP, ADVENTURE & MORE MAYAN CULTURE**

Get ready to wrap up your service projects at the school, including teaching final lessons to the kids, planting trees to beautify the campus, painting a mural, or any other projects that you've become involved in to address community needs.

Dive into Maya cosmology by visiting a sacred mountain, where a local Maya shaman will share an ancient religious ceremony. You'll even participate in a chocolate workshop and take a class on salsa dancing!

### **DAY 13: ADVENTURE & FINAL CELEBRATION**

Our group departs Xela early in the morning to head back to Antigua, where you'll spend your last afternoon exploring the colonial city and doing any last-minute shopping. We'll also visit an organic coffee plantation (which offers samples—yum!). That night, we'll go out for a farewell dinner and reflect on our time in Guatemala.

### **DAY 14: DEPARTURES**

After breakfast and final goodbyes, we'll travel to the airport to begin our journey home. GLA staff will ensure that you're checked in for your flight and are prepared for the trip home. ¡Buen Viaje!



### **NOTICE ON PROGRAM UPDATES**

While this program is being planned for this season, some activities or details may change between now and the program start date. Please note that references from past participants and previously published information may not accurately reflect every aspect of this program. Refer to the sample itinerary above or to the GLA website for the most up-to-date version of program activities, and please note that further updates may be made between now and the program start date.

## **PROGRAM SPECIFICS**

- **Tuition:** \$4,399
- **Service Hours:** 30
- **Ages:** 14 - 18
- **Student-to-Staff Ratio:** 6-to-1
- **Accommodations:** Enclosed Compound
- **Arrival and Departure Airport**
  - GUA/MGGT Arrival (anytime), GUA/MGGT departure (anytime)

## **GLA HOME BASE**

Home Base is a lodge in the heart of Xela, offering students a peaceful escape after long days of service and adventure. Students live in gender-segregated rooms with 2-4 single beds per room, depending on the size of the rooms.

Bathrooms are shared, and hot showers are available. Home Base is quaint and provides groups with a strong sense of community.

## **GLA HOME BASE OVERVIEW**

- Pool
  - Home Base 1: Xela - No
  - Home Base 2: Antigua - No
- Air conditioning
  - Home Base 1: Xela - No
  - Home Base 2: Antigua - No
- Remote
  - Home Base 1: Xela - Yes--But only a few minutes from City Center
  - Home Base 2: Antigua - No

## **FOOD**

Meals in Guatemala frequently include delicious, sweet herbal tea and homemade tortillas. Chicken, rice, and beans are staples, along with vegetables and plantains.

Traditional Guatemalan dishes will be the norm at Home Base, but we will occasionally have American food as well, like pasta and sub sandwiches.

## **CLIMATE**

In general, the climate in Xela can go from mild to chilly, with sporadic warm episodes. The daily high is usually reached around noon. From then on, temperatures decrease exceptionally fast into the 50s. You'll be in Guatemala during its rainy season, but on the days that it rains, expect only scattered showers.

## **LEADERSHIP**

Global Leadership Adventures started as an educational institute, so we continue to think and act like educators—not tour operators—as we deliver life-changing programs. We intentionally weave a leadership curriculum into the daily experience on our programs. Through group discussion, meaningful service, workshops, speakers and excursions, staff guide students to reflect on program events through the lens of leadership, and celebrate outstanding examples of leaders they encounter in the local community. Lending this context to the experience creates opportunities for students to dig deep into their vision, purpose and knowledge of themselves and the world.

## **ABOUT GLOBAL LEADERSHIP ADVENTURES**

Global Leadership Adventures was founded in 2003 by Fred Swaniker, a native of Ghana, TED Fellow and educational entrepreneur whose work has been praised by Barack Obama. Born as a global extension of the revolutionary African Leadership Academy, Global Leadership Adventures now operates programs centered around leadership, sustainable community service projects, and meaningful travel across Africa, Asia, Europe or the Americas. Through life-changing adventures, we strive to inspire the next generation to realize their potential to transform the world and their role in it.

### **GLA HAS BEEN FEATURED IN:**

*The New York Times*

 **USA TODAY**

 **NBC NEWS**

*The Boston Globe*

*seventeen*





## **OUR EXPECTATIONS**

**BE PRESENT** | Our mission at GLA is “to inspire the next generation to realize their potential to transform the world and their role in it.” To that end, we expect GLA students to maintain high standards of personal behavior and to be open-minded. The culture may be different, sometimes shockingly so. GLA will challenge students as they are expected to work hard and be present physically and mentally for all activities. We also ask students to take a step back from regular use of technology - particularly their smartphones - so as to maximize their engagement with the program and their fellow participants. Students may get hot, dirty and bug-bitten along the way, but their contribution can transform the community. The goal is for each student to return home having had a life-changing experience.

**NO TOLERANCE** | GLA has a no-tolerance policy towards drugs, alcohol, tobacco and disruptive behavior. Those who violate or are suspected of violating this policy will be immediately dismissed from the program at the sole discretion of GLA staff.

**COMMUNITY-LED EXPERIENCES** | GLA makes every effort to offer thoughtfully crafted programs for teens and young adults. Detailed planning and exhaustive communications with partners are indispensable parts of our program development process. However, occasionally service and activities are adjusted from session to session, due to weather, changing needs of our local community partners and/or various cultural celebrations and customs. We expect participants to be open-minded and flexible, willing to embrace the experience when plans change. GLA makes every effort to communicate adjustments to students and families with advance notice. We expect you to be open-minded and flexible.

**MENTORSHIP** | GLA is not a therapy program. Our staff are highly skilled, professional, caring and fun, but they are not licensed therapists. GLA programs can be physically and emotionally demanding, and applicants should be in good physical and mental health.



## **ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

At Global Leadership Adventures, we welcome age-eligible teens who are excited about the opportunity to travel to apply for our programs. To ensure a safe and meaningful experience for everyone in the group, we follow essential eligibility criteria. While our intent is not to be exclusionary, it's important to note that GLA programs are not therapeutic programs and are not able to support struggling teens seeking behavior or mental health outcomes.

Applications are carefully considered and screened to align with these criteria. It is not uncommon for GLA to require supporting documentation or information in the application screening process to confirm eligibility or suitability for program participation. Failure to disclose full medical history may also result in the application not being accepted, additional fees, and/or removal from the program. Please discuss with our team for any further clarification or concerns and visit <https://www.experiencegla.com/policies/essential-eligibility-criteria/> to view the full essential eligibility criteria list.



## **WE'RE HERE TO HELP**

**CONTACT US** | Want to learn more about Global Leadership Adventures and our available programs? Our Admissions Team has expertise and insights into our slate of program offerings, and we're happy to answer any questions you might have. We have collectively visited or staffed many of our GLA programs around the world, and we have advice to share on everything from getting your travel documents together to what a typical day on a program is like. Call us at 1-858-771-0645 any time during office hours for assistance.

**ENROLL NOW** | We encourage you to enroll on your 1st choice program as early as you can! In fact, our most popular programs fill up early every year, and many students end up putting off the quick and easy application process only to end up on the waiting list. The best way to ensure that you save your spot is to place your deposit and apply early. You can easily enroll online at [www.experiencegla.com/enroll](http://www.experiencegla.com/enroll).

