

STUDY SPANISH & VOLUNTEER

■ Study Spanish & Volunteer

■ Partner organizations

Study Spanish and Volunteer!

Besides studying Spanish, volunteering is one of the biggest reasons travellers have for coming to Quetzaltenango (commonly known by its Mayan name, Xela.) At Celas Maya it is possible to combine Spanish classes with volunteer work without losing any study time. To gain even more experience with the culture and the Spanish language it is possible to live with a Guatemalan family. The combination of Spanish classes, volunteer work and living with a host family is the best opportunity to immerse yourselves not only in Spanish language but also in cultural experiences that will enrich your understanding of the environment.

There are literally dozens, maybe even a hundred or so, organizations that are always looking for volunteers. Everyone who is interested in doing volunteer will find an organization that fits their interests in social, cultural and political projects. Every organization is more than happy to welcome you but most of them require a level of Spanish (basic, intermediate or advanced) and an available time (morning/afternoon, days/weeks/months). Our volunteer coordinator has knowledge of the organizations and can advice the student to find the best possible volunteer placement.

Students at Celas Maya (in Xela or online) can use the volunteer advice an extra and free service.

Groups, universities, agencies etc. contact Celas Maya for more information about the prices and the opportunities.

Individuals who are interested in doing volunteer work and want to experience the Guatemalan culture to live with a family are also welcome at Celas Maya. We can arrange this all in advance for only \$25. The host family offers a private room, 3 meals a day (Monday through Saturday), purified water at meal times and hot water for only \$ 50 / week.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

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Children/Education:

Caras Alegres
Corazon para los niños
Hogar Temporal

Caras Alegres

Spanish level required: Basic
Minimum time commitment: 4 weeks (If necessary 2 weeks of Spanish classes in advance)
Working days a week: 5 days
Schedules: 14.00 – 16.30
Various projects like: Children's Daycare, Women's Development, Family Support.

Project Description

Caras Alegres, which is Spanish for "happy faces" is an organization that supports women and children who are living their lives in poverty while attempting to give them a positive outlook on the future.

This Netherlands based foundation was established on July 5, 2004. Its projects in Guatemala are currently being run by Marcel and Judith van der Geest. The foundation has some small dynamic projects in which people may independently take part.

After School Program

The program is meant for children and teenagers. Through different activities, they will be stimulated to discover and learn. It is our hope that this will in the end allow them to develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially.
The activities varied from talking session to English classes and from playing soccer to homework supervision.
The children and teenagers that take part in these activities will have the chance to develop in a safe environment, and in this way ensure their future. Because to learn is to live!

Women's Programs - in developing -

With these programs we want to guide women, single and married, to a more self sufficient existence and thought this, increase their feeling of self worth. As you have read in the introduction, there is great inequality in Guatemala that affects women.
Through different meetings the women will be made more aware of their own potential. There will be opportunities for them to alphabetise, and to join meetings with subjects as hygiene, food, violence in the home and addiction. Apart from this, meetings will be organised and supervised where women can come up with creative solutions together.

Family support

To improve the life of a child it is important to start at their origin; the family situation. For this reason contact between mothers and children is the central focus of this particular program. We support families during their difficulties which they face in live, by giving them advices, food supplies, medical care and medications and scholarships.

Corazón para los Niños

Spanish level required: Intermediate
Minimum time commitment: 1 Month
Working days: Monday - Friday
Schedules: Classes are from 14:00 - 18:00

Project Description

The children that come to the school are boys and girls that are working part-time and now have the opportunity to study in the afternoons in this free school program. When they come to the school they take an exam to decide in which year they should start. Every grade has children of different ages (7 - 18 years). There are three different schools with 15 children in each classroom.

Job Description

Seeks volunteers to teach painting and art, home economics and nutrition, sports, and for extra classes for children who have problems studying. As a volunteer you give one-on-one instruction.

Hogar Temporal

Spanish level required: Basic
Minimum time commitment: 2 weeks
Working days: Monday - Friday
Schedules: 8:00-12:00 and 14:00-16:00

Project Description

Hogar Temporal Quetzaltenango is an orphanage in Xela. Usually there are between 80 and 100 children living there, each with a story of their own. Some are abandoned by their family, others are orphan or sexually, emotionally, or physically abused. Attention and love are always necessary and there is always a lot of work to do. We offer for example English classes and other activities. If you are interested in volunteering with us you can always call, email or visit us in person since we are located in Zona 1.

Job Description

We seek volunteers for our different programs that we do: 1) teaching English 2) typing classes 3) computer classes 4) stimulation of the young children 5) chess. Further you can supervise educational activities, tutoring with schoolwork, organize sports tournaments, care for children/babies, helping the kitchen, as well as general social work activities. You can work in the mornings or afternoon.

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Health

Primeros Pasos
Proyecto Payaso

Primeros Pasos.

Spanish level required: intermediate

Minimum time commitment: 1 month

The minimum time commitment is 2 months for the health educator volunteer positions.

Project Description

Primeros Pasos is located in the Palajunoj valley, a 15 minutes bus ride outside of Quetzaltenango. The Palajunoj valley is home to more than 15,000 people, though it is served by only one government-employed doctor and one nurse. The valley is made up of 10 communities with one school each. The number of students in the each school goes from 35 to 1200 children between the ages of 7 and 16, indicating the approximate size of the community.

Primeros Pasos was formed in June 2002 as a non-profit organization under the name of Salud de Tierra Colorada, based out of a rural clinic in Tierra Colorada Baja, a primary Mayan Quiche community in the outskirts of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. The program focus was to provide free medical service, medication and basic health education to the children of Tierra Colorada and neighboring communities through the public school system.

As the project progressed, we were able to identify trends in both the medical results and areas of interest for the children and the mothers, as well as the need to have a more integrated program to address the needs of different communities. Today the project is known as Primeros Pasos and has become the only clinic in the area to see both adults and children. Our Healthy Schools Program has expanded to include all the schools in the Valley, the daycares, after school programs in Xela and of course the population from the Valley that do not attend a school or daycare and/or are older than 17 years of age.

Primeros Pasos believes access to basic health care should be available to all children. Working in communities where families would otherwise not be able to afford doctor visits and medical care, Primeros Pasos provides preventative and primary care through direct medical services and health education.

Primeros Pasos aims to improve the quality of life of the rural communities of the Palajunoj valley of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, through integrated health education programs and access to medical services.

We are always looking for volunteers to fill the following positions. Specific volunteer needs vary with the current inflow of patients, new programs we are undertaking, and the number of volunteers working with the project.

Medical Professional: Doctors, PA's, RN's and fourth year medical students to complete clinical examinations, make diagnosis and observations, and hand out medication. Intermediate to Advance level of Spanish required. Minimum 1 month commitment.

Dentist: To conduct consultations, extractions and fillings. Intermediate to Advance level Spanish required. Minimum 1 month commitment. With stipend, minimum 3 months.

Lab Technician: To conduct lab analysis of fecal, urine and blood samples. Intermediate to Advance Spanish level required. Minimum 1 month commitment.

Children's Health Educator: A Person interested in health education to teach the in-clinic children's/women's health education class as well as work within the schools and towns, developing curriculums and community organizing. Advanced Spanish Required. Minimum 2 months commitment.

Administrative/Fundraiser: A person with excellent writing skills, experience in international fundraising and grant writing. Intermediate to Advance Spanish level required. Minimum 2 months commitment.

People with experience working with statistical analysis or population surveys, please inquire for current opportunities.

Proyecto Payaso *Health and education*

Spanish level required: Basic

Minimum time commitment: 3 Months

Project Description

A multi-ethnic, plurilingual, multicultural, sexually, politically and spiritually diverse collective of educators, based in the highlands of Guatemala.

It focuses on prevention of HIV/AIDS with popular theatre and workshops aimed at adults and youths.

Job Description

Seeks volunteers to work in education, theatre and the translation of proposals and documents into Spanish and English.

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PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Human Rights

Asociación Nuevos Horizontes

Asociación Nuevos Horizontes

Spanish level required: Basic

Minimum time commitment: 4 weeks

Working days a week: 3 days a week (or more if you want)

Schedules: 09:00 - 12:00 and 14:00 - 17:00

Project Description

We are a non-governmental organization located in the city of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala that works for the vindication of the rights of women and children.

We offer support and services to women and their children in situations of personal difficulty and social risk. We have the only shelter in Guatemala for abused women and their children, and offer various other programs focused on the health and overall personal development of Guatemalan women and children. As our name suggests, our overall goal is to bring new and brighter horizons to the lives of women, children, families and communities in Guatemala.

Job Description

As a volunteer with Asociación Nuevos Horizontes (ANH), you will have the opportunity to work with Central America's first domestic violence shelter.

Volunteers devise and organize fun, educational and creative activities for the children who live in the shelter as well as after school activities for those who attend school during the day. Volunteers can also help organize excursions for the children, many of whom have few opportunities to leave the shelter. Assistance is also needed for fundraising events in the local area.

It's sometimes challenging working with the children but ultimately rewarding, as although they may have experienced great difficulties in their lives, the children are excited by the new experiences they can share with our volunteers.

No specific experience is needed but experience working with children is an advantage. Volunteers should be independent, enthusiastic and hardworking. Basic Spanish is an advantage but this program can easily be combined with Spanish study in one of the town's many schools.

There are no fees for this program and volunteers have the support of two volunteer coordinators who can also assist with finding accommodation

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Construction
AIDG / Xelateco

AIDG / XelaTeco

Spanish level required: Basic
Minimum time commitment: 1 day

Project Description

AIDG is dedicated to supporting clean water, clean energy and sanitation projects for the rural poor. This is accomplished through a combination of appropriate technologies, micro-enterprise and outreach projects.

The Appropriate Infrastructure Development Group (AIDG) works to provide rural villages in developing countries with affordable and environmentally sound technologies that meet their needs for electricity, sanitation and clean water. Through a combination of business incubation, education, training and outreach, AIDG helps individuals and communities gain access to technology that will improve their lives.

Job Description

Engineers, hands-on construction, business/marketing consultants and English to French/Spanish translators.

Volunteer or internship applicants should have a willingness to get hands-on and dirty, possess a good sense of humor and the ability to work independently. AIDG is interested in volunteers who are versatile, mature, highly motivated and friendly.

Notes: The Internship positions are allocated to applicants with engineering or specific trade skills, as well as social entrepreneur experience. These positions require a minimum 3 month commitment and involve a 35 hour working week.

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PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Animals

Rescate Animal

Rescate Animal

Spanish level required: Basic

Minimum time commitment: 1 day

Project Description

Animal welfare project with the ultimate aim of improving the condition of all animals in Xela.

Job Description

Animal mistreatment is a grave problem here in Guatemala and we work to protect the lives of street animals that otherwise would have no help.

We have different activities that volunteers can assist us with.

- To interact, play and walk with the animals
- Bath the animals
- Assist the veterinary in the veterinary clinic
- Help to develop the organization with marketing and fundraising activities
- Assist with sterilizing street dogs
- Help to visit schools, daycares, etc. to educate little children with our educational materials about caretaking , handling, training, educating and dealing with animals (especially dogs)

The working hours are from 8:00 till 1:00pm and from 3:30 till 5:00pm every day. However you are free to decide what days or hours you feel like working.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Textiles

TRAMA Textiles

TRAMA Textiles

Spanish level required: Basic

Minimum time commitment: 3 weeks

Weaving classes: Opportunity to learn from women who have spent years mastering the art of backstrap weaving. You'll learn about the history of weaving, how to select the best materials, how to make a garment, and how to appreciate the culture of textiles

Project Description:

Collective of 400 backstrap loom weavers from five ethnic groups: Mam, Ixil, Cackchiquel, Tzutuhil, and Quiche. 100% worker owned. Founded in 1988 by a handful of local women, Trama Textiles aims to improve the lives of the women in it's cooperative by providing trade skills, solidarity and economic oportunitites. TRAMA's backstrap loom weavers are able to provide additional economic income to their families.

Benefits of Volunteering with TRAMA

- * Gain experience and marketable skills
- * Learn how to weave with traditional Mayan techniques
- * Eat lunch and interact with the women weavers
- * Have the opportunity to visit some of our weaving cooperatives
- * Practice your Spanish and learn more about Guatemalan culture

Volunteer Commitments

- * Help us advance the mission of TRAMA Textiles
- * Tell us when you can start and how much time you have to offer
- * Notify us ahead of time if your time commitment changes (1 weeks)
- * Be on time
- * Long term positions are available ...

Volunteer Preferred Qualifications

- * Highly motivated and flexible
- * Ability to work independently and in a team
- * Time commitment of at least 3 weeks and 10 hours per week. (If you would like to volunteer for less time, you have to also sign up for one of Trama's weaving courses.)

Possible Volunteer Projects

** Graphic Design*

We are always looking for talented people to help create and redesign materials. Possible projects can include giving our marketing materials a make-over, helping update our website, creating a map of Guatemala with information about our groups, and redesigning our booklets.

** Photography*

We need more photos taken of our shop, products, and weaving school.

Fundraising

To support our cooperatives, this position would help research potential funding sources, including private donors, grants, and more. This volunteer would also help draft materials to communicate with donors as well as help throw benefit parties.

** Marketing*

Help promote TRAMA's weaving classes and products. Collaborate with local Spanish schools, non-profit organizations, and businesses to advertise for TRAMA. Reach out to international weaving associations and other organizations to recruit weaving students.

** Product Sales*

Help distribute our products around the world. This opportunity involves researching potential sales contacts and preparing sales materials. This also includes helping update and maintain our product catalogue.

**Store Management*

Make the TRAMA Textiles store an enjoyable and easy place to shop. This opportunity involves arranging products, decorating the store, maintaining inventory, and helping customers with inquiries.

** Translation*

Are you proficient in both Spanish and another language? There are various available projects for this opportunity, which includes: translating to foreign students for our weaving classes, translating various marketing materials, and interviewing our groups in their communities.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Eco Tourism

Econexiones Unidas
Comunidad La Florida

Econexiones Unidas

San Juan del Laguna, Lago de Atitlan

Spanish level required: Advanced
Minimum time commitment: 1 week

Project Description

A Franco-Guatemalan, socio-environmental and solidarity NGO that strengthens the capacities to promote value and support the actors and projects that pursue sustainable development.

Job Description

To support and advise the eco-actors in our network in various activities such as eco-education, marketing, art, communication, planning, and ecotourism. Examples are helping organizing Eco-festivals/benefit parties/forums, cleaning activities, reforestation, help with making rural strategies, collect funds, organizing workshops. Develop their network by finding new eco-actors and projects. Further you can travel and see rural communities while doing field visits for them.

Comunidad La Florida

Colomba, Guatemala

Spanish level required: Basic
Minimum time commitment: 1 week

Project Description

La Florida is a rural community in the department of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. At the moment, we are 92 families, working together collectively to produce organic coffee and other crops. We, the campesinos, won our right to land after a long struggle which included more than two years of regular occupation of the finca La Florida.

On April 28th, 2005 we received a 6.5 million Quetzales (USD \$850,000) loan from the government of Guatemala which enabled us to buy the finca we once occupied and make it our community.

We all work together collectively, producing organic coffee, tomatoes, pepper fruits, beans, corn, cacao, and raising sheep. Normally, we work from 6 AM to 1 PM for the collective and after that we each work on our own piece of land. We have also initiated an eco-tourism project that contributes to pay our debt and offers a source of income to many of the families here. Volunteers have had many important contributions to our community.

At the moment most of our land is not cultivated and therefore covered with jungle. The community's land is so big that it takes more than a day to walk around it. Even though La Florida is only three hours from Xela by public transportation, the location is very remote with only one road connecting it to civilization. Our community is situated in the Western Highlands of Guatemala. At an altitude of 800 meters above sea level we enjoy a pleasant mix of the cold of the highlands and the heat of the coast.

Job Description

The people in our community still live in poverty. This is one of the reasons why we invite foreigners and Guatemalans who want to experience the life of the campesinos & campesinas first hand, live in the beautiful surroundings and most of all help us in our struggle for a better life. As we are still too few to work on such a large piece of land, we can always use more hands in the fields.

Some volunteers have begun teaching classes for children and youngsters. So far they have mainly been teaching English, but volunteers are always welcome to teach something else about which he or she has specific knowledge. Math classes would be especially useful.

The ecotourism project is still in development. Therefore volunteers with skill in construction, those who want to discover new trails with local guides, or help develop the project in general are very much needed.

A volunteer who stays for more than a week will be invited to participate in the regular meetings with the ecotourism commission.

And most of all, you will have the chance to experience the everyday life of the people in the community. Collect fruit in the forest with the men, learn how to make tortillas with the women, play with the children, learn about medicinal plants, get to know the history of the community, and much more.

You will eat with a family and live in the former dueños building. For volunteers, everything is included in the price (3 meals a day, lodging). There is a minimum one week stay.