



T: 1-800-985-4852
E: info@realgap.com
P: Real Gap Experience, 8 Essex Center Drive, Peabody, MA 01960

Guatemala Wildlife Rescue And Rehabilitation

Adventure



Relaxation



Culture



Trip Name: Guatemala Wildlife Rescue And Rehabilitation **Trip Code:** GUWR **Duration:** From 2 weeks

Trip Highlights

- Living in beautiful Flores
- Feeding and caring for macaws, howler monkeys, coatimundis and more!
- Help to rehabilitate animals that have been rescued from smugglers
- Visit the famous Mayan ruins of Tikal



Overview

The project focuses on the rehabilitation of native animals to Guatemala, with volunteers needed to not only play a central role in the day to day running of the centre but also provide some extra love and attention to the animals.

During the volunteer work in Guatemala, you will help nurse injured and seized wildlife back to health. You may be involved in caring for monkeys, parrots, ocelots, taras or kinkajous, carrying out wildlife surveys and hopefully get see some of the animals released. This project is an excellent opportunity to view and work abroad with sick, injured or confiscated tropical animals in Central America.

Destination Info

Guatemala is the most populated country in Central America and is bordered by the Pacific, the Caribbean, Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador and Belize. Guatemala is an extremely diverse and culturally rich place.

The infusion of colourful Mayan culture, colonial Spanish influence and geological features make for a spectacular and colourful nation that is really still finding its feet. During this programme you will be located 45 kms from the

Guatemala Wildlife Rescue And Rehabilitation

world famous Mayan archaeological site of Tikal. Flores is a fascinating, mountainous and remarkably beautiful island. The landscape is dominated by V-shaped valleys and astounding lakes. The Island's best feature is its natural, unspoiled beauty.

Itinerary



You should consider working as a volunteer in Guatemala on this placement if you are interested in working with animals during your gap year and you are looking to have a worthwhile volunteer experience working and travelling Central America.

When volunteering, you will help feed and care for the animals at the centre which include parrots, macaws, spider and howler monkeys, margays, ocelots, coatimundis, taras and kinkajous. Nearly all of these animals have been seized from smugglers and are very young, needing constant care and attention.

Your role as a volunteer will be to work as part of a team to ensure a better future for Guatemalan wildlife. It is important that volunteers can show initiative, be fairly independent and prepared to get their hands dirty!

Volunteers play a vital role in ensuring the welfare of the animals and daily tasks include caring for the animals, monitoring behaviour, cleaning enclosures, feeding, enclosure maintenance and any other specific needs of the animals that may arise.

There are also opportunities to take part in veterinary medical treatment, animal releases and wildlife surveys, though the scheduling of these activities is irregular and we can't guarantee you will be able to participate.

Your daily responsibilities are subject to change and can be quite unpredictable, new animals are admitted all of the time and tasks vary according to your interests.

Guatemala Wildlife Rescue And Rehabilitation



Releases are possibly the most rewarding part of the work you will be involved with during your time at the Centre. Releases take place primarily in the area of Yaxha Lake and the Rio Azul area further to the north; these being some of the best-protected areas in the Mayan Biosphere Reserve with abundant food and water resources and few nearby human settlements.

Although not guaranteed, it is highly likely that releases will be planned during your time there; if you would like to be involved with these then you are free to do so. It's best to speak to the onsite staff for details.

Sadly, many of the animals that are taken in at the Rescue Centre cannot be released due to the fact that they have been pets for too long, have become dependent on humans, have been injured and/or don't know how to survive in the wild. In these cases, staff will find the best available destination for them, trying as much as possible to place them in humane and natural environments.

Tikal Excursion

Included in the programme cost is a two-day excursion to the famous Mayan ruins of Tikal. This will include a return shuttle service, one nights hotel accommodation in Tikal, two meals, entrance fees to the park and museum and a bilingual guide for an early-morning animal watching/archaeological tour.



Here is how a typical day might take shape.

Guatemala Wildlife Rescue And Rehabilitation

Please note that your itineraries may differ from this, depending on the projects needs, and the number of other volunteers at the rescue centre at the same time. There are certain responsibilities at the centre and everyone is expected to pull their own weight and work as a team.

Please use this itinerary as an example only.

7.00am: Get up, feed the animals, clean cages.

8.30am: Breakfast.

9.30 - 11.00am: Duties around the centre.

11.00am: Pick up food bowls, clean cages.

12.00 - 14.30pm: Lunch and time for a siesta!

15.00 - 16.00pm: Feed the animals, clean cages.

16.00 - 18.00pm: Individual projects, swimming, hiking, construction.

18.00 - 21.00pm: Dinner and time to relax.

21.00pm: Bedtime!

Please note: itineraries and activities are subject to change.



With the help of volunteers, the project is able to achieve numerous rescues, releases and surveys.

In 2013 the project received an impressive 331 animals, including 141 species of bird, 81 mammals and 109 reptiles. This shows just how much of an important role the project and its volunteers play in wildlife rescues and the care of vulnerable animals in Guatemala. Most of the animals the project receive have been confiscated from wildlife traffickers, but also some were donated by owners who could no longer care for their pets anymore.

Notable achievements at the project in the last year have been:

- The rescue of 3 jaguars
- The rescue of a massive 50,000 sea turtle eggs
- Carrying out the first systematic sea turtle population survey ever conducted in Guatemala

None of this would have been possible without volunteers so your help is vital to the success of the project.

Accommodation

At the Rescue Centre, you will live in a spacious two story wooden building situated in a beautiful tropical forest. Facilities include comfortable wooden bunk beds, "western" shower and toilet and regular 110V US style electricity. You will eat and socialize at a separate spacious kitchen/dining room rancho and there is a very nice floating dock for late afternoon swims.

Please note: You will need to pay a deposit of 300 Quetzal for your room key and bed sheets. This will be refunded at the end of your volunteer project when you return them.

Programme Services and Facilities

You are located a ten-minute boat ride away from the town of Flores, which is situated on an Island in Lake Peten Itza. You are also within easy reach of the twin cities of Santa Elena and San Benito. You will be able to pop into Flores for any additional supplies you might want. There are also a few restaurants and bars, if you fancy a night out.

Internet

You will have to go into Flores to use the Internet facilities there. You can expect to pay about 12 Quetzal an hour.

Telephone

Get yourself an International phone card for making your calls home, that way you will be able to make phone calls wherever a phone is available to you. You will be able to find a public phone in Flores. If you have a mobile phone with roaming, take it to Guatemala, otherwise you can buy a cheap phone for around \$15.

The international dialling code for Guatemala is +502. To place an outgoing, direct dialled international call, dial +44 for the UK followed by the telephone number. For example to call Real Gap dial +44 1892 516164.

Laundry

There are limited laundry facilities, so you should be prepared and take some washing powder suitable for washing your clothes in the sink.

Meals

There is a resident chef at the Rescue Centre, someone whose good side you'll want to get on right away! She works miracles with a very limited selection of food and a simple kitchen. The Guatemalan diet is basic, but nutritious. It consists of the staples of beans and corn tortillas, as well as rice, simple pasta salads, fruits, vegetables and occasionally meat or chicken. Vegetarians are very welcome!

What's Included

- Airport pick-up and drop-off
- Transfer from hotel to airport
- Two-day excursion to the famous Mayan ruins of Tikal (including shuttle service, one night hotel accommodation in Tikal, two meals and a bilingual guide for an early-morning animal watching / archaeological tour)
- All project related transport
- All accommodation on programme
- Three meals a day
- 24/7 emergency assistance, and full on-site support
- Return flight from Guatemala City to Flores



What's Not Included

- International flights
- Travel insurance
- One night accommodation at hotel in Guatemala City - we can arrange this for you at an extra charge, payable when you arrive
- Entrance fees to Tikal - approx. payment of 150Q (about £11 / 13€ / \$15) to be made on arrival at the park
- Visas



Is This Trip For You?

You may be the only volunteer at your chosen project at any one time. However, you will still have the full support of your in-country team and those at the project. If you are looking for a group volunteering experience we have plenty of options for you to consider.

Additional Information

Orientation

On arrival at the rescue centre you will have a brief orientation. This will include being shown around the centre, being introduced to the project co-ordinator and staff, a health and safety briefing and an introduction to your tasks while at the centre.

Guatemala Wildlife Rescue And Rehabilitation

Although not required at the projects, we recommend you take the time to learn some basic Spanish and a little about Guatemalan culture before leaving home.

What to Pack

Please note that this kit list is intended to help you plan what you may need to take with you and therefore you may not need all of the listed items on your travels. In addition, it is worth noting that you can buy lots of the below in Guatemala and at a very cheap price and there will be opportunities for you to shop in local markets and towns.

Please note: Don't bring Samsonite or other hard luggage. Volunteers should use soft backpacks and be prepared to carry their own luggage.

Personal Admin

- Passport, insurance certificates and personal documentation
- Photocopies of all the above to be left at home with your next of kin
- Spending money
- Proof of inoculations (please speak to your GP about necessary immunisations)
- Guide book on country - recommended Lonely Planet or Footprints

General

- Camera / Film / Batteries
- Notebook and pen / diary
- Torch / Extra Batteries
- Sunglasses
- Pocket-knife (comes in handy for general use)
- Water bottle - at least one litre
- Day pack/rucksack for everyday use
- A three-season Sleeping bag (especially useful when on weekend excursions)
- Mosquito Net
- Light blanket or sheet (November to January)
- Toiletries
- Personal enjoyment - books, cards, music, to enjoy with your fellow volunteers etc.
- Spanish dictionary, verb book etc.

Clothing

- Hat
- Comfortable walking shoes
- A pair of thick socks for walking
- Sandals
- Light hiking boots
- Lightweight cotton clothing (short and long sleeve)
- Waterproof Jacket
- Fleece/pullover (for cool evenings)
- Long trousers
- Warmer clothing for winter

- Swimwear
- Towel

Medical Kit

- First Aid Kit (e.g. Antihistamines, Anti-diarrhoea tablets, headache tablets)
- Personal medication
- Sunscreen
- Mosquito and insect repellent

Minimum Age

18 years. Maximum decided on potential participants' health.

Minimum Numbers

There are no minimum numbers on the trip.

Please note: you may be the only volunteer at your chosen project at any one time. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to contact us

Flights

Your flight to Guatemala should arrive at Guatemala City Airport on your programme start date, and your return flight should be arranged for your programme end date.

To book your flights, please contact your travel advisor who will do their best to get you the best deal on the day. Please provide them with your full name as it is stated in your passport. Before you make the call please make sure you have your required departure dates, return dates and other details you may require.

Please note: If you are flying to Guatemala via the USA you will need to obtain Travel Authorisation by registering online through the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA) no later than 72 hours before departure. This is compulsory and will cost USD\$14 to register. To register, please visit: www.esta.cbp.dhs.gov

It is important that once you have booked your flights you add these details to your Online account, or alternatively you can contact us with your departure date, the flight number and arrival time at your destination.

FAQs

1. **Do I get hands on experience with the animals?**

Yes, and the longer you stay the more responsibilities you will have regarding the animals.

2. **Do I have to speak Spanish?**

No, it is not essential you speak Spanish.

3. **What types of animals are there?**

As it is a rescue and release centre, the types of animals do change but generally Birds, Monkeys and large Cats.

4. **Can I travel with my friend?**

Yes you would be more than welcome to volunteer with your friend.

5. **Do we have any trips included on this?**

Yes you have a trip to the amazing Mayan Ruins included.

6. **Do I need to take a sleeping bag?**

No, all bedding will be provided for you.

7. **Do I need to take a mosquito net?**

You don't need to take a net with you as the windows are netted however if you feel you would be more comfortable with a net then you are more than welcome to take one.

8. **Will there be a safe/safety deposit box available?**

There will be a locker available for your valuables however please also bring a padlock for your suitcase/backpack.

Support & Advice

Your safety is paramount which is why all our programs have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimized.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our staff at any time should you need to. In addition our overseas partners and coordinators are on hand in-country to assist you.

Financial Security

We know that the last thing you want to worry about when you're planning your trip of a lifetime is whether your money is in safe hands. As a leading global gap year provider it's our job to make sure your finances are secure, so when you book with us you can be confident that we do just that.

Real Gap Experience is part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

Insurance

Whether you're traveling for two weeks or two years, trekking the Amazon in Ecuador or on safari in Africa, insurance is an essential part of your adventure and will help you enjoy your travels, secure in the knowledge that you have the protection you need. In fact, everyone traveling with us must have adequate cover before their trip begins.

Of course you are free to buy insurance from any provider, however at Real Gap Experience, we have partnered with World Nomads to offer policies that have been specifically designed to meet the needs of global travel. If you think you're already covered by an existing policy, such as those offered by credit card providers, check the policy wording very carefully to ensure it covers you for your Real Gap Experience.

For more information on travel insurance please contact us to speak to one of our travel advisors.

Money Matters

In Guatemala the currency is the Quetzal (GTQ; symbol Q), which is subdivided into 100 Centavos. Coins come in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 25 and 50 Centavos and 1 Quetzal. Notes come in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 20, 50 and

100 Quetzals.

The US Dollar is also accepted as an official currency and Euros are increasingly easy to change at central banks. The best credit cards to take are American Express, Visa or MasterCard which are accepted by larger business and at ATMs (cajeros automáticos) in all but the smallest towns.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant \$3.36
Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) \$2.72
Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) \$0.84
Water (0.33 litre bottle) \$1.21

(Prices quoted in US Dollar)

Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information offered below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

For stays of up to 90 days, citizens of the European Union, the USA, Australia and New Zealand are not required to hold a visa when visiting for tourist purposes only. All other nationalities should consult their nearest Guatemala Embassy or High Commission.

Cultural Considerations

Greetings

Pleasantries are taken seriously in Guatemala, as many native Guatemalans are raised to greet strangers formally. It is simply polite to always say “Buenos Días” upon entering a building or when meeting somebody, and to say “con permiso” when leaving or passing someone.

You should address people in the polite “usted” form, and show additional respect for older people. If you know the person then it is customary to shake hands or kiss in greetings. Any kind of conversation is usually preceded by small talk, and being able to speak at least basic Spanish will get you a long way with the locals and demonstrate your keenness to fit in.

Saying “no”

A Latino always wants to help you and it's considered impolite to say ‘no’ or ‘I don't know’. Whatever you ask, always expect to get an answer, even if it is not correct. The best thing to do is to ask three different people the same questions and if you always get the same answer it's probably right!

Taboos

Latinos are not used to discussing ‘sensitive’ subjects with strangers (a stranger is anyone who is not family or they haven't known for ten years). Only discuss religion, politics and money with your teacher (or if the other

person brings it up in conversation and you feel comfortable with this). Although nosiness is common, certain subjects are taboo, for example: abortion, casual sex, social politics, etc. Listen first to get used to the norms.

Social Hierarchy

The family is hugely important to Guatemalans. It is common for three generations of families to be living together under the same roof. It is a way to increase the household income and to help one another. As you would expect, older people are treated with great respect. Women are traditionally responsible for bringing up the children, although this has begun to change in recent years. Men are still very proud of their machismo and view whistling at women as a compliment. Ladies, take it in your stride. You may be subjected to catcalls and the best way to deal with these is simply to ignore them! Dress more formally than you would normally or even wear a wedding ring and talk about your husband (unfortunately men tend to have more respect for your husband than they do for you.)

Religion

The dominant religions in Guatemala are Catholicism, Pentecostal and Mayan- Christianity infusions.

Clothing

It is important to remember, especially for female travellers, that the kinds of clothes you feel comfortable wearing in your own country may not be an acceptable form of dress in Latin America. Short skirts for example, will invite unwanted attention. Just use your common sense and adapt your style in accordance with your surroundings.

On certain projects, you should avoid wearing shorts, flip-flops, tank tops, and so on. Cover up for your own safety, and in respect of the local culture and customs.

With the warm climate and humidity, we advise that you pack a selection of lightweight layerable clothing. As the evenings can get quite cool, a jumper or jacket is advisable. Always bear in mind the activities you will be doing when you are packing, both at the project and socially.

Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs

Smoking and drinking is acceptable in Guatemala, and readily available. However, please respect other volunteers. Smoking is not permissible in volunteer apartments or the host families' homes. Drinking is only permissible in moderation and must not impact on your volunteer work during the week. While we want you to have fun in your free time, antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated at the project.

It is absolutely forbidden to bring drugs into Guatemala. Always keep an eye on your luggage while travelling. Never bring anyone else's luggage through customs. If you get caught there is little chance that you will walk away without punishment. As in most countries, Guatemala has very strict rules when it comes to the possession of drugs. All drugs, including "soft" drugs like marijuana, are ILLEGAL. Please do NOT use any illegal substances whilst travelling – it is not worth the risk and is not acceptable at the project.

Tipping

It is customary to tip 10% in restaurants and hotels generally add 10% tourist tax on top of the Value Added Tax.

Vaccinations & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad. The risks to your health whilst travelling will vary depending on your general health and the type of activities you are going to be partaking in and the length of your stay.

Since we are not medically qualified, it is recommended that you consult with your Doctor or a recognised Travel Medical Advisory Service who will assess your particular health risks before recommending vaccines and/or anti-malarial tablets and advising you on what precautions you should take.

Safety

Crime is endemic throughout Guatemala and particularly bad in certain areas, which we advise you avoid. As crime is mostly gang related, it tends to be focused on businessmen and residents rather than tourists, but, of course, it is still better to be safe than sorry.

Petty crime is more of a problem for tourists, so keep an eye on your things, especially in crowded and particularly tourist-orientated areas.

Violent crime is on the increase in Guatemala, so it is advisable to not drive at night, especially on the highways between tourist destinations e.g. from the airport into Guatemala City, from Flores to Tikal, as tourists have been intercepted en route to their destinations. Particularly in Guatemala City you should be extra vigilant if you are going out after dark. Woman travellers should especially take care. Here is a general list of precautions:

Avoid walking alone, especially at night

Avoid driving at night

Don't carry all your valuables

Make sure your luggage is locked when you are travelling on buses and so on

Walking trails around/ to Lago de Atitlan and Volcan Agua are notorious spots for robberies against tourists. Get on an organised tour or go in a big group if you want to walk in these places.

This information is not supposed to scare you or put you off, it is just to make sure that you are informed and can take the appropriate precautions where necessary.

We advise that you check your government's advice before travelling abroad. For UK, American and Australian customers please see the relevant links below;

UK: www.fco.gov.uk

USA: www.travel.state.gov

Australia: www.smartraveller.gov.au

ATM Theft

It is very likely that you will need to withdraw cash at some point during your travels. Please be cautious when withdrawing money from an ATM and ensure that you are vigilant of other people near the ATM, especially those that offer unsolicited assistance if your card is detained. It has been recognised that individuals are operating unlawful withdrawals by placing 'traps' in ATMs whereby personal bank cards are being detained, causing the victim to believe their card transaction has not been completed, and leaving their bank card in the ATM which is

Guatemala Wildlife Rescue And Rehabilitation

then later retrieved by the thief. To avoid this it is advised that you withdraw cash inside the bank at the counter. You will need your passport and driving licence and they will direct you to the teller to obtain your funds. It is more time consuming than using the ATM, but is the most secure way of withdrawing money.

Food & Drink

Guatemala is not a country famous for its gastronomic delights and in the more touristy areas you will be able to find all the regulars - Italian, American, Asian and so on. Traditionally lunch is the big meal of the day and most eateries offer a two or three-course offer at a lower price. Dinner prices tend to be a bit more expensive. Breakfast Guatemalan style features tortillas, eggs and beans but if this doesn't appeal you will be able to find something a little more suitable in the tourist areas!

Proper Guatemalan food is Mayan Cuisine, which features maize, in the form of tortillas and beans rather a lot. Other than Mayan, there is also latino food, which has a slightly more Western edge to it; meat stews and meat broths tend to be really tasty. Look out for typical Caribbean food on the east coast.

You should not drink tap water (including ice) unless it's boiled or bottled. Remember, most fruit juices are made with un-boiled water.

Be careful around dairy products and milk. Hamburger meat is not always safe. Make sure that uncooked vegetables are cleaned with purified water or peeled. Be careful with seafood and avoid undercooked meat. Remember, it's always better to be safe than sorry.

Remember to let us know before you depart if you have any special dietary requirements.

Drinks

All the normal soft drinks are available and popular throughout Guatemala. The locals also drink a flavoured water drink called 'Refresco', if you felt that way inclined. Decent coffee may be quite difficult to come across, but is becoming easier to find in the tourist resorts. Try a Licuado, a fruit drink made from milk or water (be careful with the water one!) for something a bit different.

Alcohol-wise, bypass the Guatemalan wine for a cheap bottle of the Chilean variety. Unless you want to get plastered, avoid the aguardiente, a local and lethal sugarcane spirit. Rum could be a satisfactory alternative. Beer is widely available and there is a small range to choose from.

Public Holidays

To view a list of the public holidays for Guatemala, please see the link below:

www.timeanddate.com/holidays/guatemala/

When planning your trip, you should be aware of the major national holidays celebrated throughout the country. Many schools, government offices, stores and banks are closed on National Holidays. Please note that there may be slight date variations for some of the holidays each year and that the list is not exhaustive.

Weather

Guatemala's climate remains warm and pleasant for most of the year. The Pacific and the Caribbean coast both get quite hot and humid, with a cool sea breeze to stop things from getting too balmy. The rainy season falls between May and October with most of the showers occurring in the afternoons. Altitude controls the climate somewhat, meaning that the low-lying jungle areas are hot and humid all year round, whereas the higher areas including Antigua and Guatemala City have a more comfortable climate that gets cooler at night.

Time

Guatemalan time is six hours behind GMT.

Electricity

In Guatemala the electric system is 120 Volts and frequency 60 Hertz. If your device does not accept this voltage you will need to bring a converter.

Outlets in Guatemala generally accept 3 types of plug:



Flat blade plug



Two parallel flat pins with ground pin



V-shaped flat prongs

Trip Note Disclaimer

The information contained in this trip note has been compiled with great care and is provided in good faith. Any itinerary featured is correct at time of release. However, our itineraries may change as we make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of recommended travel advice.

You can rest assured that it is always our goal to provide you with the most rewarding trip and experience ever!

Our Details

If you have any questions about this trip please do not hesitate to contact us and we'll be happy to answer them.

Phone: 1-800-985-4852

Email: info@realgap.com

Post: Real Gap Experience, 8 Essex Center Drive, Peabody, MA 01960

Web: www.realgap.com