



**NPH USA**

Raising Children. Supporting Families.  
Transforming Lives.



# VISITOR'S GUIDE: NPH GUATEMALA

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# Country Overview

Guide Sources: The CIA World Factbook, Fodor's Travel, Lonely Planet.com, UNICEF

Guatemala is the most populous of the Central American countries. The majority of its population is formed by Indigenas, direct descendants of Mayan tribes, who are still deeply rooted in their traditional culture.

Area: 42,042 square miles  
– about the size of Tennessee

Population: 17,980,803  
(2023 estimate)

Languages: Spanish 60%, Amerindian languages 40%

50% of children under age 18 live in poverty.

## Climate/Environment

- Mostly mountainous with narrow coastal plains and a rolling limestone plateau
- Tropical climate: hot and humid in the lowlands and cooler in the highlands
- Volcanoes; susceptible to hurricanes on the Caribbean coast
- Environmental issues include water pollution, soil erosion and deforestation

## A Brief History

From the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the Mayan civilization flourished in Guatemala. By the 1500s with the arrival of the Spanish, the Maya, although their golden age had long since ended, still lived simply and peacefully in villages throughout Guatemala. In 1524, the conquistador Pedro de Alvarado entered the nation in search of wealth.

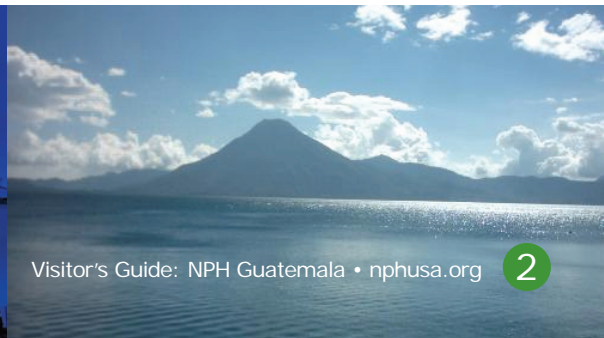
The Spanish effectively enslaved the indigenous population, as was done throughout Latin America, until finally in 1821, there was a revolt strong enough to win Guatemala its independence. The Maya people, although then technically free, were still enslaved in an unfair economic and social system, which put them in debt to the land-owning elite.

Since the 1800s Guatemala has faced many issues spurred by modernization, politicization and militarization. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century a constant and brutal struggle between right wing dictatorial military regimes and dissenters took place culminating in a

36-year long guerrilla war. During those decades, with changing governments, the country remained largely in the hands of the powerful elite composed mainly of big landowners, the military and industrialists. The oppression of a large part of the population persisted through acts of terror and killing sprees aimed to eliminate support for any opposition towards the elite. In 1996, a peace treaty was finally signed, but tragically it is estimated more than 200,000 individuals were killed and another one million were displaced.

Since the peace accords, Guatemala has continued to face great problems and is plagued with violence and inequity. Illiteracy, infant mortality and malnutrition are among the highest in the region, and life expectancy is among the lowest. It is also a major corridor of drug trafficking. For precisely these reasons, we created a safe and loving home for orphaned and abandoned children in Guatemala, where they can find a family who will support them and offer them love, safety and hope for the future.

Below: Antigua Cathedral, Francisco Anzola/WikiCommons; Lake Atitlan, NPH International







# The NPH Home

In 1996, the Guatemalan government gave permission to Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (NPH, Spanish for "Our Little Brothers and Sisters") to establish a home for abandoned children, and *Hogar San Bernardo* was founded. Thanks to generous donations from around the world, NPH was able to purchase 25 acres of land for a permanent home in 1997. After budget shortages delayed the construction several times, the basic buildings were finally completed in August 2003. The home, named *Casa San Andres*, is situated 4,900 feet above sea level in the highlands, about an hour from Guatemala City.







## Daily Life

### Highlights

- The school year in Guatemala is January – October. The curriculum includes Spanish, social studies, natural sciences, English, arts and crafts, music and sports.
- There are five nationally certified vocational workshops: Baking, Cooking, Carpentry, Metalwork, and Sewing.
- Two special projects - Family Bakery and The Smile Shop - were launched in 2015. The bakery offers fresh pastries made on site and coffee to help local fundraising. It is staffed by students who gain professional experience and business management skills. The Smile Shop is an integrated learning store for children and young adults with physical and cognitive disabilities. Participants make and sell healthy snacks, attend to clients, and manage resources, learning skills for independence.

### Responsibility

Responsibility is one of the most important values that NPH tries to instill in their children. This is why each child is expected to not only be responsible for him or herself, but to contribute to the family. This includes traditional chores such as washing clothes, cleaning, and serving food.

Each child also has additional responsibilities after school and during the weekends. Some work in the gardens, while others care for the grounds and clean common areas. Everyone knows how much effort goes into caring for their home and all the people who live there.

After attending high school, *pequeños* are asked to give two years of service to the home.

### Community Outreach

NPH Guatemala's outreach programs include:

- Over 180 children from low-income families in the local area attend the NPH school for free, or are attending other schools on scholarships paid for by NPH.
- The home's medical clinic assists people from the surrounding communities.

### Typical Day at *Casa San Andres*

5:00 a.m. Wake up, make beds, get dressed  
6:15 a.m. Breakfast  
7:00 a.m. School  
1:00 p.m. Lunch  
2:00 p.m. Workshops for middle school kids  
3:00 p.m. Working time for children not in workshops  
4:00 p.m. Homework for children not in workshops  
5:00 p.m. Free time  
6:00 p.m. Dinner  
7:00 p.m. Free time  
8:00 p.m. Bedtime

### Godchildren

If you sponsor a child at NPH Guatemala, arrangements will be made for him/her to spend time with you during your visit. Please contact your regional office if you are interested in becoming a Godparent.





# Travel Tips



## Time Zone

Central Standard Time  
UTC/GMT -6 hours



When traveling abroad, we recommend enrolling in the U.S. Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). This free service helps the U.S. government know where citizens are, so they can notify and assist them in case of emergency. To enroll, visit <http://step.state.gov/step>



The goal of the trip is to have fun, experience the culture of Guatemala and meet the inspiring children of NPH. Each traveler has so much to share with this great family and so much to learn. We hope that each visitor grows from their interactions with the children we support, just as your visit helps them to do the same.

## Entry Requirements

All travelers are required to have a valid U.S. passport to enter and exit Guatemala. While a visa is not required, your passport must remain valid until your return date.

## Vaccinations

Before traveling to Guatemala, please consult your physician and visit [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

## Transportation

- For group trips organized by NPH USA, transportation will be provided by NPH.
- Do NOT hitchhike under any circumstances.

## Accommodations

Lodging varies depending on trip package. See specific trip information or consult the coordinator for details.

## Food

While at NPH facilities, we will eat just like the children and staff at specific mealtimes:

- Breakfast: 6:15 a.m.
- Lunch: 1:00 p.m.
- Dinner: 6:00 p.m.

Food at NPH is NEVER wasted. If you are unsure you will like what is being served, ask for only "un poquito" (a little), and if you cannot finish, please offer it to one of the kids.

While on day trips, we will eat in restaurants where we are sure that food will be prepared safely.



Please read NPH International's Visitor Policy and Guidelines, sign the form and return it to your trip coordinator.

All visitors are welcome to bring additional snacks to share. Be sure to bring things that can withstand hot and humid conditions and preferably are individually wrapped.

## Water

Tap water at NPH Guatemala is safe to drink – it is purified and tested twice a week. Outside the home, **DRINK BOTTLED WATER ONLY.**

## Bathroom Etiquette

It is not possible to flush toilet paper in most Latin American countries due to the poor plumbing systems. Toilet paper and all sanitary products must be thrown in small waste baskets next to the toilet. **DO NOT flush toilet paper or sanitary products while visiting the NPH home.**

Bring travel toilet paper, or a small packet of facial tissues on day trips. Tissue is not always available in public bathrooms.

## Medical Assistance

The home's clinic is staffed 24/7 and can handle a wide array of minor situations.

## Electricity

Electrical outlets are 120 volt/60 hertz, so no adapters are needed. You should expect power outages, which are common in Latin America.



## Travel Tips *(continued)*

### E-mail & Phones

While at NPH, you will have access to Wifi: ask the Visitor Coordinator for the access code. You may also ask if you can use one of the home's computers in the office. Please keep in mind that it is not permitted to lend phones or computers to the children. There also are nearby Internet cafés for e-mail and phone calls.

### Clothing

Comfortable, broken-in walking shoes are a must! The days are hot, so light clothing – shorts, slacks, cotton T-shirts, sandals and/or running shoes – is appropriate. However, it can be cold at night, so you will want to have sweaters and/or a jacket, long pants and socks.

Keep in mind to dress conservatively and in a tidy manner. Please do not wear anything torn, too short or provocative. If you have any piercings other than ears, please take them out during your visit. If you have any tattoos, please keep them covered. In Guatemala, tattoos are associated with gang activities and we do not want the children to have a negative impression of you.

### Currency and Credit Cards

Guatemala's currency, the quetzal (ket-*sahl*, abbreviated to Q), is fairly stable at around Q7.5 = U.S. \$1. The quetzal is divided into 100 centavos. The U.S. Dollar also became an official currency in 2001 and is widely accepted. ATMs are most everywhere except the smallest towns. Many places accept credit cards, but please remember that credit card fraud is increasing all over the world, and while it should not stop you from using your cards, you should be cautious.

### Tipping

In Guatemala, tipping is a reward for good service, not an obligation. Restaurant bills do not include gratuities – adding 10% is customary. Bellhops and room maids expect tips only in the most expensive hotels. A small tip for tour guides and taxi drivers is appreciated but not expected.

### Safety

Outside the gates of NPH, we recommend that you never go alone anywhere. Be vigilant in regards to your surroundings. While at the home, we will be in a very safe and controlled environment. However, it is important to remember to watch your personal property. Our children have all come from very different backgrounds and while NPH tries to help them realize that they are safe now, many of them are still in survival mode. They are not malicious, but for many, taking is the only way they have ever survived.



See page 9 for  
emergency contact  
information.

PLEASE DO NOT  
give children your  
address, e-mail or  
phone number  
even if you are  
their sponsor.

## Terms to Know

Good morning/afternoon/evening! -  
*¡Buenos días/tardes/noches!*  
See you later! - *¡Hasta luego!*  
How are you? - *¿Cómo está?*  
Fine, thank you. - *Bien, gracias.*  
Please - *Por favor*  
Excuse me - *Permiso*  
Do you speak English? - *¿Habla inglés?*  
Yes - *Sí*  
No - *No*  
Thank you - *Gracias*  
You're welcome - *De nada*  
How old are you? - *¿Cuántos años tiene?*  
How much is this? - *¿Cuánto es?*  
More - *más*  
A little bit - *un poquito*  
House - *casa*  
Home - *hogar*  
School - *escuela*  
Backpack - *mochila*  
Office - *oficina*  
Kitchen - *cocina*  
Water - *agua*  
Food - *comida*  
Rice - *arroz*  
Beans - *frijoles*  
Spoon - *cuchara*  
Fork - *tenedor*  
Cup - *vaso*  
Plate - *plato*

## NPH-Related

*Pequeño/a* - literally "little," but it is the term used for all NPH children  
*Tío/a* - literally aunt or uncle, but at NPH it is a caretaker  
Fr. Wasson - *Padre Wasson* (Founder of NPH)  
*Padrino* - Godfather (Sponsor)  
*Madrina* - Godmother (Sponsor)  
*Ahijdo/a* - Godchild  
*Hermano/a Mayor* - Older brother/sister - the term for a former pequeño/a or graduate of NPH



# Suggested Packing List

## Clothes

- Lightweight travel clothes - there is no laundry facility, but you can hand wash!
- Jeans/shorts/travel pants - your preference
- Comfortable shoes for walking - tennis shoes or something with closed toes
- Poncho/lightweight rain jacket
- Sweater, fleece jacket or sweatshirt - it is cold at night
- "Bug off" clothing - REI or Ex Officio (if sensitive to mosquitoes)
- One "nicer," but still casual outfit

Remember to dress conservatively. No visible undergarments; nothing torn, ripped or too short.

## Toiletries

- Hand sanitizer
- Shampoo/Conditioner
- Soap (we recommend a pack of disposable face cloths that have soap in the fibers. They work as soap and a washcloth.)
- Toothbrush/paste
- Deodorant
- Razor
- Earplugs
- Soap for washing clothes (if you want)
- Suntan lotion
- Insect repellent
- Small packet of facial tissues
- Travel toilet paper

## Medicines

- Personal prescriptions (can be hard to get or expensive outside the U.S.)
- Pepto Bismol/Immodium
- Advil/Tylenol/Excedrin
- Cipro/antibiotic for travelers' diarrhea
- Benadryl/Hydrocortisone
- Bandages/Neosporin
- Emergen-C/cough drops

## Personal Items

- Pillow
- Umbrella
- Water bottle
- Camera/Charger
- Fly paper
- Sunglasses
- Flashlight (plus extra batteries)
- Travel alarm clock (if desired)



We often leave pillows, towels, sheets and dinnerware for the home to keep after we leave.

## Snacks/Food

While we encourage everyone to eat the food provided (it is tasty), if you are worried about not liking the food, or getting enough, consider packing some pasta or another substitution for a meal, just in case. In addition, you may also want to bring:

- Granola bars/fruit bars/popcorn/snacks to share
- Gatorade packets (it is easy to get dehydrated)
- Good ground coffee and sugar to share

## Other

- Passport
- Two copies of passport and credit card information: leave one copy at home
- Pictures of your family to show kids (great conversation starters!) and/or postcards

## Do NOT Bring

- Expensive or irreplaceable jewelry or other valuable items
- Flashy gifts







# Gifts

Visitors often ask what items they can bring for the children. Following are some suggestions.

## Clothing and Shoes

- Underwear
- Socks
- Sandals

## Education/Arts & Crafts

- Books in Spanish
- Coloring books
- Colored pencils and crayons
- Glue and tape
- Scissors
- Construction paper
- Play-Doh
- Yarn and pipe cleaners
- Beads
- Stickers

## Toys & Games (for every age group)

- Card games
- Board games
- Jigsaw puzzles (100 pieces max.)
- Marbles

## Sports Equipment

The kids spend most of their time outside, so think of items that require little or no maintenance and can be shared by everyone!

- Balls
- Jump ropes
- Air pumps with extra needles

## Hygiene

- Feminine products
- Shampoo
- Soap
- Toothpaste
- Toothbrushes (for kids AND adults)

## Health Care

- Vitamins
- Bandages
- Neosporin
- Tylenol

These items are always needed in the clinic. Please contact us if you are interested in donating other medical supplies.

## Other

- Barrettes and hair accessories
- Inexpensive plastic jewelry
- Batteries of various sizes are always needed and easy to transport

## When in doubt . . .

Bring things that NPH needs or wants, and that get depleted. If you are still unsure, ask!



## PLEASE DO NOT

- Bring candy or small items to randomly pass out. This can result in hurt feelings among children who do not receive anything.
- Bring expensive gifts, such as music players, video games or jewelry. This may unintentionally create feelings of jealousy and cause problems for that child.
- Give gifts directly to the children. Give them to the home's Visitor Coordinator or a staff person.
- Give money to anyone at the home. This can cause confusion about how it will be used and will not qualify for a tax deduction under U.S. law. Please make all donations through NPH USA.

## REMEMBER, YOUR VISIT IS A GIFT!

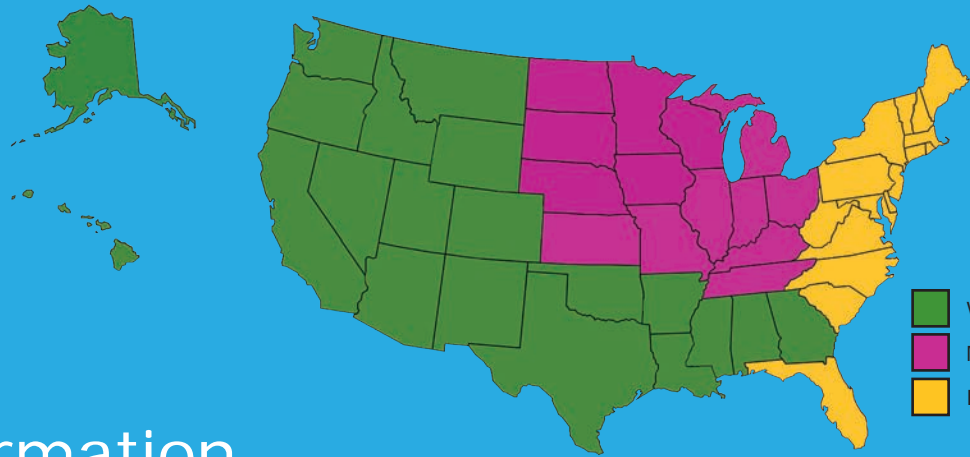
Neither NPH nor NPH USA want the children to associate your visit with material items. The best thing that you can bring is you! All your kind words, thoughts and affection are going to be the most lasting gift. Building relationships is the most valuable thing you can offer!







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West and South  
Midwest  
East

## Contact Information

*We suggest you leave this information as well as your flight and hotel details (if applicable) with your emergency contact.*

### National NPH USA Office

20 North Wacker Drive  
Suite 4000  
Chicago, IL 60606-3193

Phone: 888.201.8880  
info@nphusa.org

NPH USA, Federal Tax ID #65-1229309, is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that supports the homes, healthcare and educational programs of Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos.

### FUNDRAISING AREAS

#### West and South Area

##### Seattle Office

2719 East Madison Street  
Suite 304  
Seattle, WA 98112-4752

Phone 425.646.3935  
infnw@nphusa.org

##### Phoenix Office

5110 North 40th Street  
Suite 248  
Phoenix, AZ 85018-2143

Phone 480.967.9449  
infosw@nphusa.org

#### Midwest Area

##### Minneapolis Office

1400 Van Buren Street NE  
Suite #200-210  
Minneapolis, MN 55413-4605

Phone 651.482.1703  
infoupm@nphusa.org

##### Chicago Office

20 North Wacker Drive  
Suite 4000  
Chicago, IL 60606-3193

Phone 312.386.7499  
infomw@nphusa.org

#### East Area

##### Quincy Office

265 Willard Street  
3rd Floor  
Quincy, MA 02169-1514

Phone 617.206.4940  
infoma-ne@nphusa.org

### NPH Guatemala Emergency Contact Information

Camino Viejo a Parramos  
Aldea Cajahuatlén los Corrales  
San Andrés Itzapa,  
Depto. de Chimaltenango  
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