WHY CCS SENDS VOLUNTEERS TO NEW GUATEMALA CITY:

Cross-Cultural Solutions partners with local people and change-making organizations in Guatemala City, Guatemala because:

- During Guatemala’s 36 year-long civil war, many Guatemalans migrated to Guatemala City seeking both refuge, and steady work. And though the civil war has long since ended, the residual effects of the violence and instability still reverberate across generations. The entire country is still working to overcome the incredible setbacks that came with decades of violence and unrest.

- As a result of mass migration that took place during the civil war years, countless Guatemalans had their lives completely interrupted as families packed up everything and moved into the urban slums seeking work and shelter. In fact, families are still picking up the pieces after the disruption. And this is where your volunteer efforts can make a tremendous impact. Whether you’re providing one-on-one attention to a child at a daycare, a teen living with a disability, or an abandoned abuelita—grandmother, the work that you do has an incredible impact on the morale of the individuals with whom you work.

- Your impact as a volunteer goes far beyond your day-to-day efforts. When volunteers like you travel from other countries and continents to support the work of Guatemalan grassroots organizations, it puts the work of these organizations in the public eye. More attention is paid to their struggles and successes both locally and globally.

As an international organization, we understand the value of genuine cultural exchange. And members of the communities in which our volunteers work are oftentimes, seeking exactly the same thing: an opportunity to participate in an open, inter-cultural dialogue. When volunteers spend their mornings teaching children, working in daycares, supporting individuals with disabilities, or volunteering at a home for teens with disabilities, local people take more of an interest as well, and it becomes a unique opportunity for individuals to come together, learn something, and hear about the world from a new perspective.
YOU’LL LOVE IT BECAUSE...

The CCS Home-Base in Guatemala is a home in every sense of the word. From the courtyard bursting with colorful flower, to trees full of chatty parrots, you’ll never forget that you’re in tropical Central America. The CCS Home-Base is a perfect place to bond with your fellow volunteers, connect with the in-country team, or simply unwind after an exciting day of volunteer work. And the best part is that Virginia, Guatemala Country Director, and honorary volunteer mom, lives just next door. And with her warm disposition, unlimited local knowledge, and huge smile, we can guarantee that you’ll have the best next door neighbor around!

The in-country team is phenomenal and you’ll immediately become a part of the family. Learn to prepare traditional Guatemalan tortillas with Sylvia or Julieta, the CCS cooks; spend evenings lounging around and practicing your Spanish with Don Enrique and Pablo; get answers to all of your hardest questions on Guatemalan culture, history, and social issues from Virginia. There is no shortage of amazing and warm personalities on the CCS Guatemala team. And once you’ve joined the family, you’ll see what we mean.

There are cultural activities and opportunities for free time to suit absolutely every taste and interest.

Here are just a few of the cultural activities that you may participate in during your time in Guatemala:

- Learn to speak Spanish or brush up on the skills you’ve already got
- Explore Mayan history with local experts
- Visit a coffee plantation and learn about the process from bean to cup
- Learn about traditions and customs when you visit with local families

And here are some of the options that you can pursue during your free time:

- Hike an active volcano and roast marshmallows at the top
- Explore the Mayan ruins at Tikal
- Get your adrenaline pumping with outdoor adventure at Lake Atitlán
- Visit one of four neighboring countries
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A VOLUNTEER:

◊ Plenty of volunteers rise before breakfast around 7:00 a.m. to make time for a leisurely stroll down to the local bakery. And once you catch a whiff of the fresh-baked goodness coming out of this little neighborhood spot, chances are you’ll want to find time for an early morning walk, too.

◊ **What’s for breakfast?** At around 7:15 a.m., Sylvia or Julieta will have a delicious breakfast ready to enjoy. Breakfast in Guatemala will typically include black beans, steaming fresh tortillas, eggs, and tons of fruit. They’re experts at cooking to please, so if there’s something that you’ve realized you can’t live without (more tortillas, anyone?) be sure to let them know so they can keep it coming in the days ahead.

◊ At around 8:00 a.m., fill up your water bottle, pack a bag, and head to your volunteer assignment. Some assignments are close enough to walk, but if yours isn’t, that just means extra bonding time with Don Francisco, the CCS driver. Whether you spend the day teaching kids, assisting with the care of infants and children, improving the quality of care for people living with disabilities, enhancing the quality of healthcare, or improving the sense of dignity among the elderly, you’ll find that this is the time of the day that tends to fly by. And when it’s time to wrap up, hop back in the CCS van or hoof it back to the Home-Base for some down time before lunch.

◊ **What’s for lunch?** Once you return to the Home-Base, at about 12:30 p.m., you’ll enjoy another delicious meal. In Guatemala, lunch is the biggest meal of the day and there’s never a shortage of local dishes to enjoy. Lunch may include tamales (with varieties to satisfy the carnivores and the vegetarians in the house), tortillas, healthful salads, and rice. And there are always plenty of options for those with dietary restrictions. After lunch, you’ll have some time to relax around the Home-Base and catch up with your fellow-volunteers.

◊ Most afternoons at about 2:30 p.m., you’ll have a scheduled cultural activity. Depending on the day and the week, it could be just about anything! Maybe you’ll enjoy a weekly Spanish lesson or perhaps you’ll head into town for a tour of the local market, but whatever it is, it will be an immersive opportunity to learn more about your new community, and what makes it so unique.

◊ **What’s for dinner?** At the CCS Home-Base in Guatemala, dinner is usually served at 6:00 p.m. Dinner at the Home-Base will include local favorites like hilachas—shredded beef simmered in a tomatillo sauce—soups or stews, rice, beans, and fresh fruit. And in case you didn’t get your fill at breakfast and lunch, there’s always fresh fruit juice available.

◊ **After dinner,** volunteers tend to congregate in the common area and prepare for the following day’s volunteer work. Volunteers may also choose to take a walk to the bakery, visit the local ice-cream shop, take in a movie at the local theater—complete with individual reclining seats for your viewing pleasure, or even go dancing in nearby Guatemala City.
KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

Getting There:
- Fly into Guatemala City Airport (GUA)
- Arrive between 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. local time, so that our smiling staff can scoop you up at the airport. If you’re volunteering for one week, please arrive before 4:00 p.m. on your start date.
- Please make sure to book your return flight for any time between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. local time on the published end date of your program. All programs end on a Saturday.

Visa Details:
- **Who should apply?** If you hold a passport from the U.S., Canada, UK, or Australia you do not need to apply for a visa to enter Guatemala. If you are from a country other than those listed above, please contact your local Guatemala embassy or consulate.
- **If I need a visa, when should I apply?** We recommend applying for your visa at least a month prior to your departure date. It’s a painless process, but there’s nothing wrong with building a little buffer time into your schedule to make sure that everything goes smoothly.

Travel Medicine:
- **What to ask:** We recommend speaking with a licensed travel physician in order to determine what other vaccinations, prescriptions, or medical precautions you may need based on your personal history and preferences.

Climate:
- The climate in Guatemala City, where the CCS Home-Base is located is mild year-round with temperatures ranging from 60-70 °F with some dips into the 50s at night, and highs that rarely go above the 80s.

Pack Your Bags:
- You’ll want to make sure that you choose your attire so that it reflects the importance of your role, as a volunteer in Guatemala. This means that you should be dressing respectfully for the customs and traditions of the local community.

  **Women:** Jeans, pants, and khakis. Capri pants and long skirts that go below the knee. Casual is fine. Shorts and skirts that go below the knee are acceptable as well.

  **Men:** Khakis, jeans, longer shirts

  **Both:** T-shirts, without logos or political statements, that cover your shoulders, button-down or polo shirt, khaki pants/trousers, cover up or light-weight shirt, extra socks and underwear, tennis shoes/sneakers, Teva-type sandals that strap to your feet, raincoat and umbrella (May-October), warm clothes (October-April), and a bathing suit for weekend visits to the beach.

Learn more at [www.crossculturalsolutions.org](http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org)