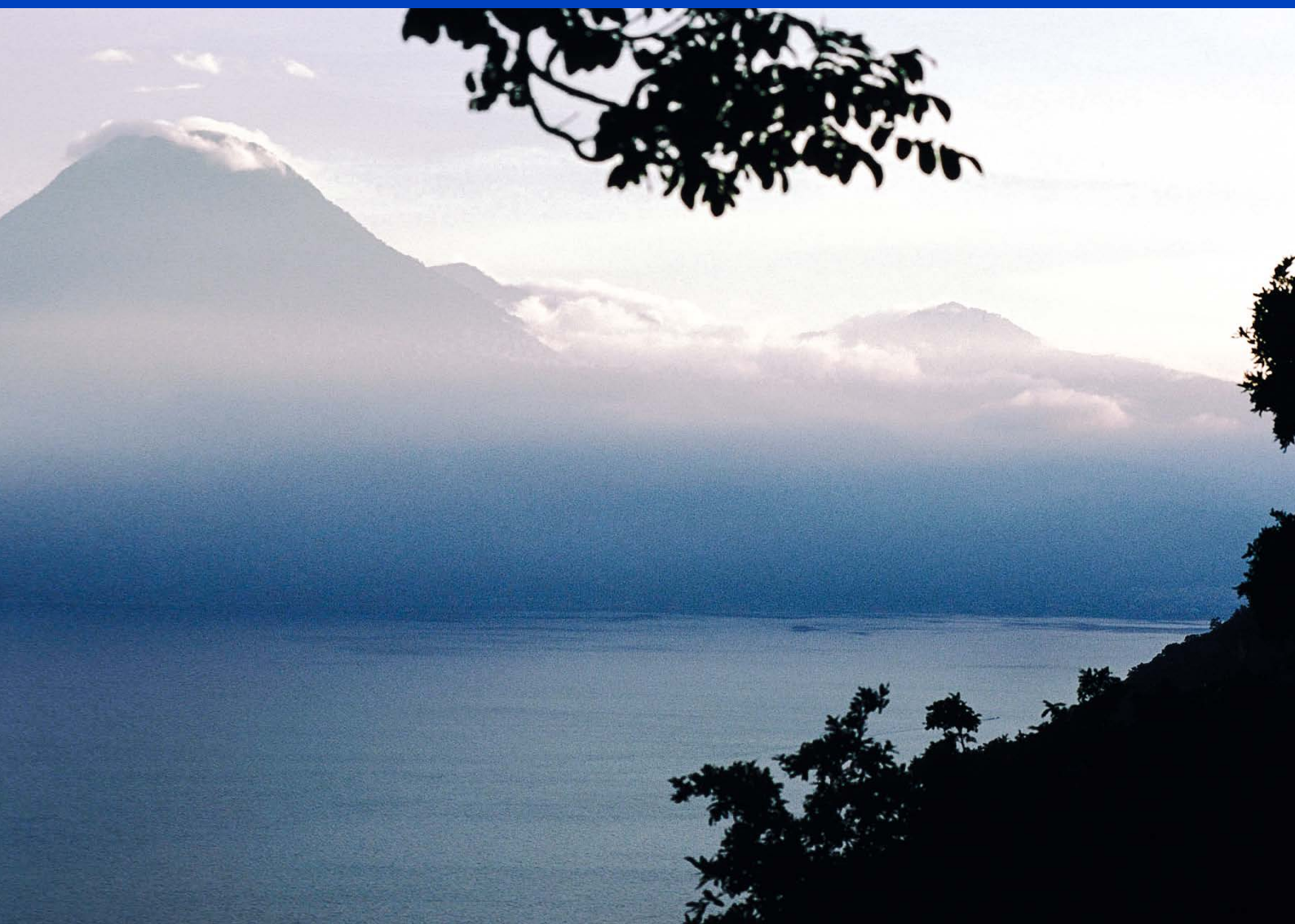


Country Handbook: Guatemala

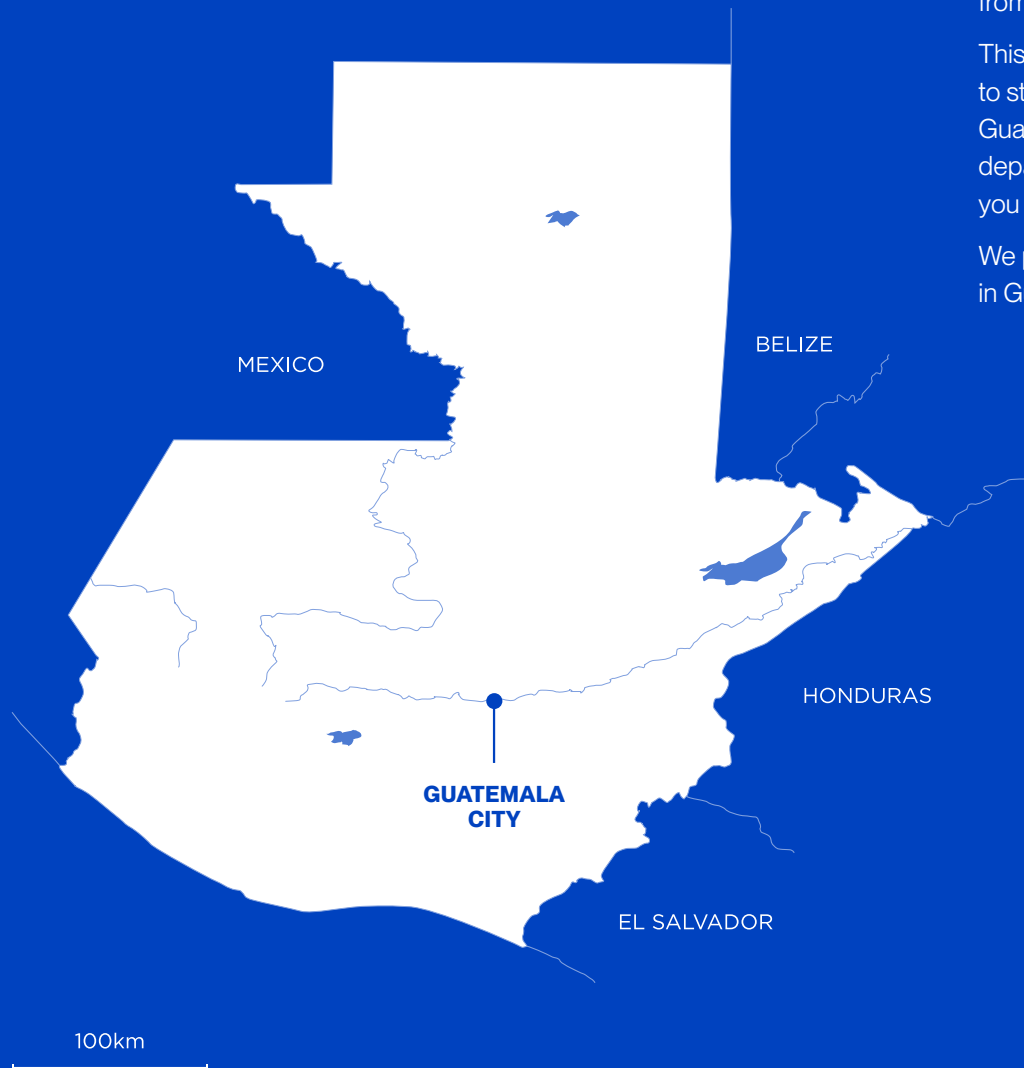


Introduction

Travelling to see the work of Compassion and our local church partners firsthand is an unforgettable experience. On this trip, you'll see for yourself how children are known, loved and protected by their church communities and are being released from poverty in Jesus' name.

This Country Handbook is designed to start preparing you for your trip to Guatemala. Please read it before you depart, and we'd also recommend that you keep it handy for easy reference.

We pray that God will bless your time in Guatemala!



Country Information



Guatemala is a fascinating country with a beautiful, multicultural history. Temple ruins from the Mayan civilisation are scattered across the land, and nearly half of the population descends from this indigenous people group. There are 37 volcanoes in Guatemala, three of which are currently active, and every year on November 1st a stunning display of intricate kites are flown across the sky to honour their dead. Guatemalans are also skilled potters, wood carvers and textile producers, with blue denim one of the top exports in the country.

Main languages:

Spanish (official),
21 indigenous Mayan dialects

Climate:

Mostly tropical (humid in the lowlands and cooler in the highlands)

Main religions:

Roman Catholic (41.7%),
Evangelical (38.8%)

Currency:

Guatemalan Quetzal (GTQ)



Compassion in Guatemala

Compassion has been working to release children from poverty in Jesus' name in Guatemala since 1980. In Guatemala, 59 per cent of people live below the national poverty line.

Compassion's Child Sponsorship Program is tailored to be age-appropriate for each child.

Children **AGED 1 TO 3** receive home-based care.

Children **AGED 3 TO 12** attend their local Compassion centre for three hours a day, two days a week.

Students **AGED 12 TO 19** attend the centre for four hours on Saturdays.



For more information on Guatemala, scan the QR code or visit: compassion.com.au/where-we-work/guatemala

Compassion assisted children in Guatemala typically attend program activities at their local child development centres. Here is an example of what a typical program day looks like:

Devotional time - Children learn to pray.

Spiritual lessons - Children sing songs and learn Bible stories. Children receive age-appropriate Bibles over the course of their development.

Break and snack time - Children can play in a safe environment and develop friendships. They are often provided with a substantial snack during program activities. A snack often consists of cereal, a sandwich and fruit.

Social-emotional lessons - Children learn conflict resolution skills and how to develop healthy self-esteem. Many of the children come from challenging home environments and are taught social and personal skills.

Lunch and social time - Children generally receive lunch at the centre. A typical meal consists of meat (chicken or beef), rice, vegetables and tortillas. They often receive a hot beverage called atol made from different cereals like corn and wheat. In the hot areas of the country, they might receive lemonade or juice.

Health lessons - Children learn practical health and hygiene lessons.

Letter writing and career planning - Older children work with local staff to identify their strengths and interests and set goals for their future.

In addition to Compassion's curriculum, older students can choose to undergo vocational training to build their skills in carpentry, pastry baking, seamstress training, beautician skills or handicrafts. Some centres have partnered with a government organisation INTECAP (Technical Training and Productivity Institute) to provide sponsored children with the skills they need to become competitive in the workforce. Parents are invited to meetings to discuss topics such as child development and health issues.

Cultural Considerations



Body language

- Guatemalans are expressive people and often talk with their hands.
- It's common to maintain direct eye contact during conversations, as it demonstrates respect, sincerity and an interest in what the speaker is saying.
- Most churches in Guatemala will not permit any kind of dance in the church or the child development centre. Ask local Compassion staff if you wish to undertake any choreography or dance with the children.
- It's considered impolite to have your hands in your pockets while talking to someone.

Language

- Useful Spanish phrases:

Hello: Hola

Goodbye: Adios

Good morning: Buenos días

Good night: Buenas noches

Thank you: Muchas gracias

Please: Por favor

Excuse me: Perdon

How are you? Como estás?

I don't understand: No entiendo

I'm sorry: Lo lamento

Yes: Si

No: No

Security

- Please ask permission before you photograph any local people. This can include photos taken from a moving vehicle, so be sure to check with your driver or Trips and Visits Specialist first.

Emergency contact information:

Local emergency number (police): 110

Local emergency number (medical assistance / fire): 123

Compassion Guatemala office: +502 7763 7648

Australian Embassy: +502 4210 9805

Clothing

- Tattoos and piercings are generally associated with gangs and not considered appropriate for Christians.
- The dress style in Guatemala is usually quite casual for men and women, however, when visiting local partner churches and child development centres, a more conservative style is preferred. Women should dress casually and modestly, avoiding shorts or skirts above the knees and tight-fitting clothing.
- It is best to wear closed-in shoes when visiting local church partners or children.

Greetings

- When meeting someone for the first time, it's customary to say 'mucho gusto' (a shortened version of 'nice to meet you').
- Handshakes are a common greeting among both men and women in Guatemala.
- Titles are important when you start a conversation. You can use 'señor' or 'señora' followed by the first name of the person. 'Señorita' is used for unmarried girls.
- Among close friends, women may kiss each other on one cheek and men may embrace and slap each other's backs.

Eating and drinking

- In Guatemala, the joy of food comes from the act of sharing, so meals play an important part in their culture.
- It's customary to use utensils for most dishes, but tortillas can be used to scoop up some foods, and in some areas of the countryside, food is eaten with the hands. It's best to follow the lead of your hosts.
- It's polite to finish everything on your plate as it signifies that you've enjoyed the meal.
- Many traditional foods in Guatemalan cuisine are based on Mayan cuisine and feature corn, chillies and beans as key ingredients. Fruit is abundant in Guatemala, including mango, papaya, banana, pineapple, melons and many other fruits. Coffee is a popular beverage and tends to be served weak with sugar and milk.
- At the start of a meal, it is the custom to say 'buen provecho' (enjoy your food) to everyone.



Key Challenges and Prayer Points

As a result of an unequal distribution of wealth and rapid population growth, many Guatemalan children face significant barriers to their development. This includes malnutrition, lack of medical access, threats of violence and high unemployment rates among caregivers. The nation is also a major corridor for smuggling cocaine and heroin from South America into the United States, which means that both drug and human trafficking are significant and growing problems in the country. Please pray for our local church partners as they seek to serve the children and families in their communities by providing them with safe spaces to learn, play and grow amidst so much corruption. Poverty and pronounced inequality persist throughout Indonesia, particularly in rural areas. Many rural communities lack basic infrastructure such as internet access, roads and safe water. Please pray over our local church partners as they implement initiatives to address inequality such as providing improved sanitation facilities and computer access.

Guatemalans struggle in several areas of health and development. There are high levels of illiteracy, particularly among indigenous tribes in rural areas, and many youth do not finish high school. Failing crops due to drought has also meant that many families have been gripped by famine in recent years. Devastatingly, almost half of the nation's children are chronically malnourished—one of the highest rates in the world. Please pray for the leaders of Compassion child development centres as they seek to meet the basic food and educational needs of these children and give them the best possible chance to have a thriving future outside the confines of poverty.



**SEARCH FOR
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