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Engaged ~ Philanthropic Travel

Guatemala ~ Mayan History, Culture and Communities

McMaster Alumni Association
Saturday March 5th – March 13th 2011



Trip Highlights:

Explore this magnificent country rich in Mayan history, markets, culture and archeology. Then **go beyond** the traditional sites and visit with important organizations working on economic and educational development programs such as women's co-ops, micro-finance projects for local coffee farmers, a small center for the disabled and with Habitat for Humanity who offer affordable housing to impoverished communities. *Enjoy a meaningful fully-guided journey in authentic 4-5 star boutique accommodations throughout, with all amenities.*

- March 5 Arrival and transfer to Antigua
- March 6 Enjoy a colonial Walking tour of Antigua (World Heritage City) and meet with local coffee farmers to learn about sustainable micro-finance projects
- March 7 Visit the education program near the city's municipal garbage dumps (Safe Passage)
- March 8 Meet with a Women's Artisan Coop and transfer to picturesque Lake Atitlan
- March 9 Tour San Juan village-- visit a school for the disabled and view Habitat for Humanity home sites
- March 10 Explore the famous outdoor markets at Chichicastenango -transfer flight to Flores
- March 11 Explore ancient archeological Mayan ruins at Tikal
- March 12 Visit a jungle Nature Reserve - return flight to Guatemala City – Farewell dinner
- March 13 Departure

Price: \$3880.00 CDN per person (not including airfare to Guatemala), double occupancy
Single Supplement: \$1200



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Philanthropic Elements:

While in Guatemala, the group will have the opportunity to visit and learn about various community development projects—No donations are required.

~ **SAFE PASSAGE** -The Development Program: committed to helping the poorest of Guatemala's children.

Hundreds of people spend long days scavenging at the Guatemala City Garbage dump. Safe Passage opened its doors in 1999 to provide assistance to the children of families working at the dump. The organization represents a refuge from a life marked by extreme poverty and dangerous conditions. Safe Passage offers support to cover the costs required by the local public schools. In addition, it provides educational reinforcement and social services so that the children can succeed in school. www.safepassage.org

~ **AS GREEN AS IT GETS** - As Green as it Gets (GAIG) www.asgreenasitgets.org is a charity working to support small independent coffee producers and promote environmentally responsible agriculture in Guatemala. The group will have the opportunity to visit some of the families supported by this organization where you can meet coffee farmers and watch them (also take part if you wish) in their daily coffee processing.

~ **HABITAT for HUMANITY** - Habitat Guatemala has provided more than 30,000 housing solutions to families across Guatemala. As "a hand up, not a handout" organization, Habitat Guatemala helps families reach their goal of owning a safe, affordable home through hard work and financial responsibility.



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Detailed Itinerary

March 5th		Arrival Day
TBA	Arrival	
	Meet & Greet at Airport	Different arrival times
	Private Transfer from airport to the hotel for Check-in	
	Dinner at leisure in town	<u>Not Included</u>
	Overnight at El Convento	Suite/Standard Room

Upon arrival you will be greeted and transported to your hotel.

La Antigua Guatemala

La Antigua (the old one), former colonial capital of the Kingdom of Guatemala, combines 17th and 18th century buildings and ruins with all the modern conveniences discerning travelers desire. The city was established as Santiago (St James) in 1543 after a mudslide destroyed the former capital. Santiago’s history was punctuated by massive earthquakes, followed by rebuilding and reparation, until the earthquake of Santa Marta in 1773 prompted a move to the present capital in Guatemala City. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979, Antigua exudes a unique atmosphere of history, intrigue and surprise.



Antigua Guatemala

March 6th Colonial Walking tour & Fair trade coffee tour (B,L,D)	
Breakfast	American
Colonial Walking tour	
Traditional lunch at local restaurant	3-course menu/ no drinks included
Private transfer to fair trade coffee tour of AGAIG	
Fair trade coffee tour	
Dinner at local restaurant	3-course menu/no drinks included
Overnight at www.elconvento.com	Suite/Standard room



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You will be met at your hotel reception by your private guide to begin your walking tour of Antigua. Your tour will cover the architectural & historical highlights of this colonial city with a behind-the-scenes look at some of the many ruined churches, convents, and cathedrals. Entrances are included to the Cathedral, Central Park, and La Merced Church. Enjoy a lunch at a local restaurant before driving to a sustainable coffee program.



As Green as it Gets (GAIG) is a charity working to support small independent coffee producers and promoting environmentally responsible agriculture in Guatemala. This tour takes guests to visit some of the families supported by this organization where they can work side-by-side with small coffee farmers in their daily coffee processing.

Dinner will be served at a local restaurant.

March 7th Safe passage tour and free afternoon	(B,L)
Breakfast	American
Private transfer to Safe Passage Program in Guatemala city	
Lunch at Safe Passage	
Private transfer to Antigua	
Late Afternoon at Leisure	
Dinner on own in Antigua	<u>Not Included</u>
Overnight at www.elconvento.com	Suite/Standard Room

Today you will experience the life of those who live near the municipal garbage dumps in Guatemala City.

SAFE PASSAGE -is a development program: committed to helping the poorest of Guatemala’s children.

Hundreds of people spend long days scavenging at the Guatemala City Garbage dump. Safe Passage opened its doors in 1999 to provide assistance to the children of families working at



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the dump. The organization represents a refuge from a life marked by extreme poverty and dangerous conditions. Safe Passage offers support to cover the costs required by the local public schools. In addition, it provides educational reinforcement and social services so that the children can succeed in school.



Enjoy the late afternoon walking the cobblestone streets of Antigua. Dinner is at your leisure.

March 8th Transfer Lake Atitlan		(B,L,D)
Breakfast		American
Visit to Women’s Artisan Cooperative		Transfer to Lake Atitlan
Dinner at Casa Palopo		3-course menu / no drinks included
Overnight at www.casalopo.com		Master Suite / Standard Room

En route to Lake Atitlan we will stop at a women's cooperative to learn about local Mayan traditions, weaving and cooking. We will work alongside the women cooking a traditional lunch.

After a 2 hour drive we will arrive at Lake Atitlan, which has been called, “the most beautiful lake in the world.” It is indeed an amazing setting with the crystal blue waters of the lake surrounded by the three lofty peaks of Toliman, San Pedro and Atitlan Volcanoes. Villages surrounding the lake are rich in the local indigenous customs, traditions, dress and crafts. After exploring the bustling town of Panajachel, we will settle into our hotel and enjoy dinner overlooking the lake.





March 9th San Juan La Laguna Village, Centre for Disabled – Habitat for Humanity (B,L)	
Breakfast	American
Private boat transfer to San Juan La Laguna	
Visit a small centre for the disabled – Centro Maya	
Visit Habitat for Humanity Home sites	
Transfer to town for dinner	<u>Not Included</u>
Overnight at www.casapalopo.com	Master Suite / Standard Room

After breakfast we will take a boat transfer across beautiful Lake Atitlan to the picturesque Mayan village of San Juan La Laguna where we will enjoy a walking tour of the area, rich in artisan history.

We will visit a local school for the disabled –*Centro Maya*- www.centromayaguatemala.net

In Guatemala, families of disabled children are primarily responsible for their care and development, and receive little support from society as a whole. Some families feel embarrassed and unduly burdened if their children have mental or physical disabilities and avoid taking them out in public. The children then end up isolated and lose touch with the outside world. At Centro Maya Xe'Kiyaaqasiwaan, they aim to provide a nurturing, educational and therapeutic environment for disabled children in the surrounding area. They also seek to provide parents of disabled children with the tools to further their child's development.

Lunch will be provided by a local women's cooperative.

Our tour of San Juan La Laguna will include a stroll through the home sites built by Habitat for Humanity after Hurricane Stan.

Dinner in town at your leisure.

March 10th Chichicastenango Market and Pascual Abaj hill tour (B,L)	
Breakfast	American
Transfer to Chichicastenango Market	
Guided tour of Chichicastenango Market & Pascual Abaj Hill	
Lunch at Santo Tomas hotel	Buffet style & 1 soft drink
Private Transfer to Guatemala city	3 hr transfer
Dinner on own at Villa Maya	<u>Not Included</u>
Overnight at Villa Maya	Standard Room



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Today we set off on a 2-hour drive to Chichicastenango –one of the most famous outdoor craft markets in Central America. This is where craftsmen and villagers from all over the highlands converge to sell their wares. Many people come to perform Mayan rituals on behalf of people in their community. Chichi is one of the easiest places for travelers to experience the unique way that Mayan & Catholic faiths have merged in Guatemala. During a trip to Chichi, you can also visit the small mask factory and see a traditional dance display performed by the local children.

Lunch will be provided at Santo Thomas Hotel

Our group will then be transferred to Guatemala city for a domestic flight to Flores. Late evening check-in at the the hotel. Dinner at leisure.



Peten – Northern Rainforest Guatemala

March 10th Chichicastenango Market and Pascual Abaj hill tour		(B,L)
Breakfast		American
Private Transfer to Tikal Ruins		
Guided Tour of Tikal		
Picnic Lunch at ruins		
Transfer to hotel		
Overnight at Villa Maya		Standard Room

After breakfast the group will drive to the world famous Mayan temple ruins at Tikal. Tikal is known as the “New York of the Maya World” for its spectacular temples that rise above the dense jungle canopy. Set in the protected rainforest this is an amazing climax to any trip to Guatemala, an incredible sight to behold. Monkeys and exotic birds complement this magnificent scene. Lunch will be served at the temple ruins. Evening and dinner at leisure.



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El Peten, Guatemala’s Rainforest Region

El Peten, in northeast Guatemala, represents the largest tropical forest in Central America, containing ruins, great and small, from the ancient Maya civilization. The crown jewel among the Peten's 13,000 square miles is Tikal, a sprawling complex of more than 3,000 structures. The ruins of Ceibal, Aguateca, and Yaxha contribute to the Peten's standing as the heartland of the Maya. Countless more ruins still lie shrouded by dense forest overgrowth in the Peten, which contains over 800 species of trees, 57 species of reptiles, and 500 species of birds. Tapirs, peccararies and jaguars still roam the emerald forests, just as they did when the ancient Maya ruled the region.



March 12th Nature Reserve and flight to Guatemala city (B,L,D)	
Breakfast	American
Boat transfer to Nature Reserve	
Guided Tour of Nature Reserve	
Lunch at local restaurant	3-course menu / no drinks
Boat transfer at Flores	
Flight to Guatemala City	
Meet and Greet at airport by English speaking driver	
Farewell dinner at hotel	4-course menu / ½ bottle of wine or 2 beers / 1 soft drink
Overnight at www.vistareal.com	Master Suite

Today we will enjoy a tour of a local nature reserve.
 Return flight to Guatemala City
 Farewell Dinner at Vista Real.

March 13th (B)	
Breakfast	American
Private Transfer to airport	Different departure times, with Guide
Trip ends	



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Program Inclusions:

- Accommodation in listed hotels **subject to change based on availability - should hotel need to be changed alternative hotels to be booked in same category
- Meals as mentioned
- Private transfers, tours and all entrance fees
- Local Guide and a GoPhilanthropic guide in each activity
- Domestic flight for all travelers

Our prices DO NOT include the following:

- Any international airfare to and from Guatemala
- Any room category not mentioned above.
- Any early check in late check- out will be subject to room occupancy of the day, at any of the hotel. The usual check-in/check-out time remains 12:00 hours.
- Any personal expenses - telephone calls, laundry, shopping, drinks.
- Any additional expenses caused by or liability for disturbance in the trip due to circumstances beyond our control such as airline & railway delays, roadblocks, vehicle malfunctions (mechanical breakdown) and other conditions like sickness, natural disasters, wars etc.
- Liability for insurance against injury, loss of life, accidents, damage or loss of goods.
- Any services / meals other than specified above.

Prices per person in Canadian Dollars

Based on double occupancy	\$3880.00
Single Supplement	\$1200.00