



Primeros
Pasos

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PRIMEROS PASOS

VOLUNTEER INTRODUCTION PACKET

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Dear future Volunteer,

Thank you for your interest in Primeros Pasos! We would like to share some important information with you about volunteering with us.

Primeros Pasos is a non-profit, independent organization located in the rural Palajunoj Valley just 10 minutes by bus outside of Quetzaltenango (Xela), Guatemala, which serves rural, impoverished, Maya-Quiche indigenous populations. The small Primeros Pasos primary care health clinic serves as the only reliable source of affordable and quality healthcare and health education in the entire valley as it is the only clinic equipped with doctors, dentists, a laboratory as well as a pharmacy. Moreover, Primeros Pasos has a comprehensive outlook on health care: with the collaboration of local health professionals, health educators, community leaders, and both local and foreign volunteers, Primeros Pasos incorporates and combines clinical care, health education, and community outreach programs to effectively provide preventative and primary care. We serve 4,000 children through our Healthy Schools programs as well as approximately 4,000 walk-in patients every year.

Primeros Pasos is the only clinic in the Palajunoj Valley that also tackles greater underlying health and social issues in the area—chronic malnutrition, respiratory infections, skin diseases and the epidemic of gastrointestinal parasitic infections that affects 95% of the population—through both our extensive year-long Nutrition Recuperation and Healthy School programs.

Through the Healthy Schools Program that includes the 10 primary schools and 5 daycare centers of the Palajunoj Valley, Primeros Pasos provides free medical and dental healthcare to about 4,000 children through mobile clinics as well as “healthy field trips” to the clinic which also involves interactive, age-appropriate health education workshops focused on parasite infection prevention, basic hygiene, nutrition, the environment, self-esteem, domestic violence, drug addiction, and reproductive health. Each child goes home with free medication, a toothbrush, and a bar of soap. The Healthy Schools program not only provides medical treatment to children who otherwise may never see a doctor, it also gives them the tools to become healthy adults.

In addition, the Nutritional Recuperation Project support chronically malnourished children and their mothers as well as pregnant women by providing medical and nutritional treatment together with health education, in turn improving family health and promoting health in the Palajunoj Valley.

As a non-profit grass-roots organization that receives no government support, Primeros Pasos is able to operate solely on the generosity of volunteers, faithful donors, and grant obtainment. Thus, Primeros Pasos kindly asks all volunteers for a donation of \$250USD. Volunteers can provide this donation out of pocket, however, Primeros Pasos encourages volunteers to fund raise the donation so that more people learn about the organization! Proving to be very easy and successful, volunteers can create their own personalized profile on the Primeros Pasos donation platform already equipped with Primeros Pasos information and video as well as find more donating information on the website <http://www.stayclassy.org/events/primeros-pasos-fundraising/e2190>. Additionally, volunteers are welcomed to make in-kind donations, such as medicines, medical supplies, soap, toothbrushes, etc. Please contact the Volunteer Coordinator (info@primerospasos.org) for a complete supplies list.

We look forward to collaborating with you in the future. Thank you again for your interest in Primeros Pasos! Please do not hesitate to contact us at info@primerospasos.org with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Jamie de Guzmán Pet

Development Director / Directora de Desarrollo
Volunteer Coordinator / Coordinadora de Voluntarios
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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Thank you for your interest in Primeros Pasos! Each year we select committed individuals to serve in the clinic and dedicate themselves to the rewarding work we do in Guatemala. We seek thoughtful, diverse, and hard working volunteers. For every application, we consider the applicant's volunteer and academic history, Spanish level, and enthusiasm.

All volunteers are expected to be willing to work hard as well as actively participate and contribute to the mission of Primeros Pasos of providing quality healthcare and educational services to the communities of the Palajunoj Valley. Volunteers will be walking/hiking throughout the breathtaking rural communities of the Palajunoj Valley as well as providing support to the quality management of each program through curriculum development as well as program monitoring and evaluation. Ideal volunteers are flexible, open-minded, and sensitive to the ideals, traditions, and beliefs of the people with whom they work with. All volunteers must be at least 18 years of age.

MEDICAL PROFESIONALS

Physicians, medical students, registered nurses and nurse practitioners work together to attend to patients. Medical volunteers complete clinical examinations and distribute medications. They attend to infants, children, and adults in the Palajunoj Valley, with an emphasis on pediatric care. Clinical volunteers work side-by-side with Guatemalan and foreign medical volunteers and work directly with a Guatemalan supervising physician. They must be capable of examining a patient entirely in Spanish and must be able to appropriately answer patients' questions and prescribe medications. We require all medical volunteers to speak Spanish at an advanced level. We have found that volunteers who speak Spanish at this level may better serve our communities. We also ask that all medical professionals work with Primeros Pasos over a four week period at minimum. Psychologists, nutritionists, physical therapists, and chiropractors also welcomed.

LABORATORY TECHNICIAN

Volunteer laboratory technicians assist our staff laboratory technician in completing medical laboratory tests. Our lab is equipped to process stool, urine, and blood samples. The clinic treats both pediatric and adult patients and the laboratory processes labs for both. Laboratory technicians assist with the preparation and completion of exams both with reactivities and microscope exams. They must have some laboratory experience and familiarity with laboratory practices. They must be able to communicate with the medical staff and laboratory technician in Spanish about medical topics and respond to questions. We require that laboratory technicians speak an intermediate level of Spanish and commit to four weeks with the organization.



CHILDREN'S HEALTH EDUCATOR

Health Educators work with Guatemalan students, teachers and community members from the Palajunoy Valley. Health educators provide in-clinic classes to students (grades K-6) and give age appropriate one hour workshops in the schools on topics such as nutrition, hygiene, puberty, sexual education, children's rights, self-esteem, alcohol and drug abuse, and several more. Health education volunteers must have a high intermediate to advanced level of Spanish as they teach the health education classes entirely in Spanish. They must have the confidence and ability to speak in front of the group and be able to appropriately answer questions from students in Spanish. We want to ensure that our volunteers feel comfortable with the curriculum, and that their experience meets both of our expectations. We ask that all Children's Health Educators commit to working at least eight weeks with Primeros Pasos.

NUTRITIONAL RECUPERATION FACILITATOR

Our Nutritional Recuperation Program works with pregnant women, malnourished children and their families in the Palajunoy Valley. Nutritional Recuperation Facilitators work alongside our Nutritionist and her assistant to improve the nutrition of the targeted children through both direct treatment and parallel education for the parents. An ideal candidate would be interested nutrition, public health, and education. This volunteer position requires flexibility in schedule and also a willingness to go out into rural communities. The volunteer must be able to communicate fluidly with Spanish-speaking staff and families. He/she must be comfortable speaking in front of groups and answering questions. We want the volunteer to be comfortable and actively participate in the program, therefore all Nutritional Recuperation Facilitators must speak Spanish at the intermediate level.

DEVELOPMENT RESEARCHER / GRANT WRITER

The Development Researcher will work in collaboration with Primeros Pasos' Development Director. She/he will be responsible for projects relating to the long-term sustainability of the organization including researching and networking, grant writing, fact-finding, and collaborating with other organizations. An ideal candidate would be interested in non-profit administration, international development, and/or public health. Additionally, he/she would have experience with databases and Excel and have strong writing skills. Although Spanish is preferred, it is not required for this position. We do give preference to college graduates for this position. Development Researchers are asked to volunteer for a minimum of four weeks.

COMMUNICATIONS / SOCIAL MEDIA ASSISTANT

Primeros Pasos is looking for a talented individual to expand and improve our online presence. The volunteer will work in collaboration with our Development Director and would need to have experience in at least one of the following: website design and development, video editing, graphic design, social media development and management, journalism, and/or photojournalism. Due to the work being done in this position, it is necessary to bring a laptop. The assistant is asked to volunteer a minimum of 4 weeks and Spanish language skills are not required.

INTERNSHIPS & RESEARCH

Internship and research opportunities are always available at Primeros Pasos. Most of our volunteers pursue independent projects apart from the traditional positions, and over the years volunteers have helped us develop curriculum, implement new systems, evaluate our data, and other important project that insure the success of the clinic. For more information and ideas on how you can create your own unique experience, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at info@primerospasos.org.



MISSION, HISTORY & PROGRAMS

OUR MISSION:

Primeros Pasos aims to improve the quality of life of the rural communities of the Palajunoj Valley of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, through integrated health education programs and access to medical services.

ABOUT:

Primeros Pasos is a non-profit, independent organization with a comprehensive outlook on health care. With the collaboration of health professionals, health educators, volunteers, and community leaders, Primeros Pasos offers quality and affordable health care and health education to the rural, underserved communities of the Palajunoj Valley of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. We incorporate and combine clinical care, health education, and community outreach programs to effectively provide preventative and primary care.

HISTORY:

In late 2002, a group of Guatemalan and foreign students and doctors partnered with community members to revitalize an abandoned mission clinic located in a primarily Mayan-Quiche community outside of Quetzaltenango. The area residents had no local access to public medical services and limited resources to obtain care. The team began by bringing groups of primary school students to the clinic, combining health education with clinical care to address the high rates of childhood malnutrition and diarrheal diseases. Between June and November 2002, free medical services, medications, and basic health education classes were provided to over 1,000 children from the local public schools.

In 2004, the project became known as Primeros Pasos. The clinic and its staff continued to expand its reach into all areas of the Valley, develop new programs and services, and identify trends in the health of the communities.

THE NEED:

Years later, Primeros Pasos remains the only comprehensive and affordable source of local health care in the area and has extended their programs to include medical, dental, and lab services to both adults and children, and offers health education classes year-round to participating schools and community groups.

PROGRAMS & SERVICES:

Healthy Schools Program

Our Healthy Schools Program provides primary students in the Palajunoy Valley with free annual clinical care accompanied by education aimed to encourage life-long healthy habits. The program has two major components, “health field trips” hosted in the clinic and health education outreach in the schools, which combined help reach nearly 4,000 children in 10 schools and 5 daycare centers in the Valley each year. Every week, individual classes from the local primary schools arrive at the clinic for a “health field trip.”

Students receive a medical and dental check-up, are tested for parasites, and participate in an interactive health education class focused on basic hygiene and nutrition as well as partake in a hand-washing demonstration. In addition, every child is sent home with a toothbrush, soap, and any medication that they may need. The outreach component of the program strategically supplements the basic health lessons taught during the in-clinic visits. Our team travels to the schools and gives workshops on age-appropriate themes such as the environmental, self-esteem, domestic violence, drug addiction, and reproductive health.



Volunteers Dianna Abreu, Stephanie Estévez, and Brooke Angel teaching the children how to properly brush their teeth during a mobile clinic at Escuela Las Majadas!

In 2015, we are excited to make enhancements to the program by adopting a more comprehensive approach that expands health education workshops and training to schools principals and teachers as well as to parents so that entire communities will make improvements to their health and instill healthy habits in their daily lives, improving the quality of life of their children, their families, and their entire communities.

Nutritional Recuperation Program



Primeros Pasos Nutrition Director Scarlet Samayoa and Volunteer Intern Caleb Hayes teach the women about reproductive health!

Our Nutritional Recuperation Project supports chronically malnourished children and pregnant women by providing medical and nutritional treatment together with health education, in turn improving family health and promoting healthy homes in the Palajunoy Valley.

In 2012, Primeros Pasos started its first nutritional health outreach project targeting 25 families with chronically malnourished children in the Palajunoy Valley. Our initial strategy focused directly on the immediate treatment and nutritional recovery of children under five whom if left untreated would have detrimental and lasting medical consequences such as stunted growth and reduced mental faculties. Moreover, the parents were given practical knowledge and tools to maintain healthy and hygienic homes, which help sustain their children’s health for years to come.



In 2015, our initiative to prevent and treat child malnutrition through comprehensive education will focus on the first 1,000 days of a child's life as it is the period of maximum impact of nutritional development and growth. Thus, the 120 program beneficiaries will include pregnant women, children under 2 years of age as well as their respective mothers. Participants can continue to benefit from the program until the child turns 2 years old.

Our 2015 project has three main objectives:

- To treat and prevent malnutrition in the Palajunoj Valley through nutritional treatment and holistic care that will be sustained past the project end date.
- To educate and empower women through nutrition and public health courses and training workshops so that families can benefit from improved awareness and knowledge of healthy and affordable dietary, hygiene and lifestyle choices.
- To ensure sanitary, stable home environments through the provision of resources such as potable water, smokeless stoves and sanitary latrines, so beneficiaries can fully benefit from the project treatment and education.

This comprehensive intervention not only helps families fight chronic malnutrition, but also gives families an opportunity to lead healthy and productive lives.



Monthly monitoring of weight and height of the children!



Nutrition Director Scarlet Samayoa giving a cooking demonstration with a healthy recipe of pancakes with carrots!



Now, it's the women's turn to practice!



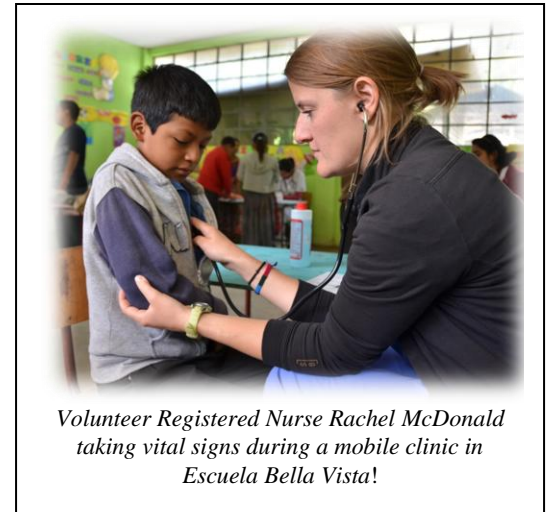
Nutrition Director Scarlet Samayoa teaching the women how to properly prepare their family gardens and have a successful harvest!



Mobile Clinic Program

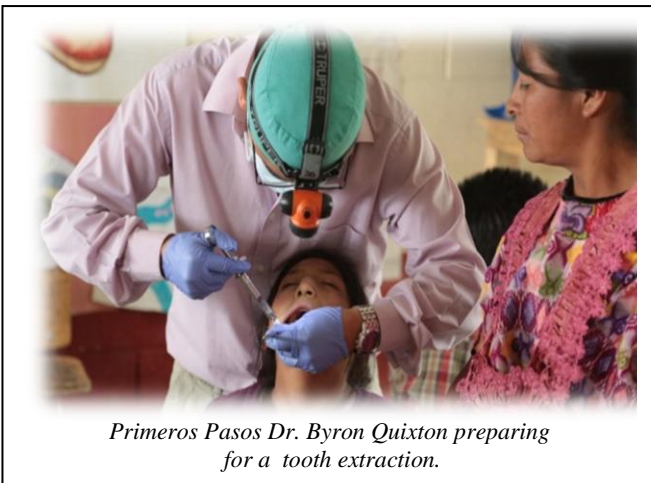
Our Mobile Clinic Program seeks to improve the health of people from remote communities in the Palajunoj Valley by assembling a mobile healthcare provider team and taking the care directly to the areas in need. Since 2009, Primeros Pasos has been employing the use of Mobile Clinics to reach out to four distant communities in the Valley. These populations are isolated enough that travel to and from the clinic for health concerns and check-ups poses a hardship. Each year, our teams of medical professionals and health educators go out into these communities for approximately four to five days and set up temporary medical, dental and pharmaceutical stations.

Because primary schools are centralized points in the communities, Primeros Pasos use these facilities as centers for operation as well as tools for advertisement. The team begins by giving check-ups and health lesson to the students, and over the course of the week, word of mouth helps spread the message and community members come in to receive treatment. Mobile Clinic patients have access to medical examinations and medications, as well as dental care and antibiotics for patients suffering from acute dental pain and decay. As the only source of dental care in the Palajunoj Valley, Primeros Pasos is working to make sure that all Valley residents have access to this important medical service.



Volunteer Registered Nurse Rachel McDonald taking vital signs during a mobile clinic in Escuela Bella Vista!

Medical and Dental Services



Primeros Pasos Dr. Byron Quxton preparing for a tooth extraction.

Our Medical and Dental Clinic aims to provide reliable and affordable local health care to adults and children in the Palajunoj Valley. Primeros Pasos originally started as a children's clinic with the mission to serve students in the 10 primary schools in the Valley. However, the general population remained without a good source of health care. In 2005, with increased funding and volunteers, we began to see walk-in patients, including children not enrolled in school and adults. On average, our Clinic sees 4,000 walk-in patients annually.

Although the Valley is home to one government-sponsored health post, the resources they offer are inadequate to serve the health needs of the population. Primeros Pasos offers medical, pharmaceutical and lab services, and we are also the only dental provider in the entire Valley.



Guatemalan medical student Alejandra Molina treating a patient during a mobile clinic in Escuela Las Majadas!



Guatemalan Medical Student Valeria Mazariegos treating a patient during a mobile clinic in Escuela Xecaracoj!

We staff medical professionals in addition to hosting medical students completing clinical rotations. We ensure that patients have access to complete quality care at affordable prices with enough staff to see patients in a timely manner. Most commonly, our Clinic staff sees patients with respiratory illnesses, intestinal infections and parasites, malnutrition, dermatological issues, and hypertension. For many patients, this is their first time to receive comprehensive care.



WHERE WE WORK

The Primeros Pasos Clinic is located in the Palajunoj Valley, just 10 minutes south of the city center of Quetzaltenango by bus. Quetzaltenango, or Xela as it is locally known, is the second largest city in Guatemala with a population of 250,000 urban inhabitants. The city is situated in the heart of the Sierra Madres Mountains about 125 miles northwest of Guatemala City at an altitude of 8,000 feet. Quetzaltenango is home to several schools and universities, and is very important economically, not only for agricultural production, but also for the industrial and commercial activity it develops.



Guatemala's government is divided into three basic levels: national, departmental, and municipal. Guatemala has 22 departments and 330 municipalities. The city of Quetzaltenango is the capital of the department and municipality which both share the same name. The Palajunoj Valley is part of the same municipality and is home to more than 15,000 people, spread throughout 10 communities. The majority of the population works in the production of corn, vegetables and flowers for home consumption and market supply. Others make their living in quarry work or domestic care. Guatemala's overall population is 60% indigenous, primarily of Mayan descent. However, in more rural areas such as the Valley, over 98% of the population identifies as indigenous.

In 1954 a U.S. sponsored coup initiated a civil war in Guatemala that lasted over thirty years. The ramifications of this conflict are still being felt by the country and have led to critical shortages in health care professionals, medicine, and health centers throughout the entire country. In Quetzaltenango, most public resources and services are focused within the city center, leaving rural areas, like the Palajunoj Valley, without adequate public medical care.

Despite the large population, the Valley is home to only one public health post that employs one doctor and one nurse. Like most public health centers in Guatemala, they often do not have enough resources and many patients must wait hours to be seen. Without the means to travel to receive health care, many residents of the Valley are left without many options to access care.

The top two national causes of morbidity are acute respiratory infections and intestinal parasites. Unfortunately, these treatable illnesses can mean fatality for many, as the two main causes of death for Quetzaltenango are pneumonia and diarrhea. Malnutrition is also a very serious problem across Guatemala. According to USAID, the overall chronic malnutrition rate in Guatemala for children less than five years old is 50 percent, higher than any other country in Central America and higher than many African countries. Consequently, death during childhood is all too familiar, as infant mortality accounts for almost 25 percent of all deaths in Guatemala.

Because the public health system does not work, there is an increased demand for private care, which has led to higher prices. About 10 million people, 77 percent of the population, have no Social Security coverage or private insurance. Worst affected by the lack of healthcare are the indigenous Mayan populations, who tend to live in rural areas, are extremely poor and have little education. Many use home remedies to treat themselves and have never seen a doctor.

Primeros Pasos aims to improve the quality of life of the rural communities of the Palajunoy Valley through integrated health education programs and access to medical services. We are the only comprehensive and affordable source of local health care in the area, offering medical, dental, and lab services to both adults and children, and providing health education classes year-round to participating schools and community groups.

CANTÓN/ALDEA	TOTAL
Las Majadas	1,593
Bella Vista	226
Tierra Colorada Baja	917
Tierra Colorada Alta	489
Chucaracoj	161
Xepache	298
Chuicavioc	1,395
Candelaria	287
Xecaracoj	4,556
Llano del Pinal	5,181
Total	15,103

QUICK STATISTICS AND HOW YOUR CONTRIBUTION HELPS

Many of the people that you know have never visited Guatemala, and some may never visit at all. When talking to potential donors, it is important to share details that will help people relate more to the communities that Primeros Pasos serves. One way to do this is by sharing statistics about health and education in Guatemala. Many people might feel that they cannot do much to help, but let them know that even the smallest donation can make a big impact. Primeros Pasos does a lot with a little, and no donation is too small.

WHY WE WORK IN GUATEMALA

- 56% of the population in Guatemala lives under the poverty line, and 81% of rural, indigenous populations live in extreme poverty (*UNDP 2008*).
- Guatemala suffers from one of the highest rates of chronic malnutrition in the world. This results in poor growth, decreased cognitive function, and lower adult income potentials. The World Bank estimates that Guatemalan GDP loses more than 300 million dollars annually due to malnutrition and its effects. The Guatemalan government has declared its intent to lower the rate of malnutrition by 10 percent over the next four years.
- In developing areas, more than 40% of diarrhea cases in school children result from transmission in school rather than at home (*UNICEF 2010*).
- Simple hand washing, when taught, can prevent pneumonia by at least 23% (*Rabie T and Curitis V, 2006*) and diarrheal diseases by about 45% (*UNDP Human Development Report 2006*).
- In a four-year study tracking the prevalence of parasites in children participating in the Healthy Schools Program at Primeros Pasos, there was a noted decrease of parasitic infections (*Cook et al. 2009*).
- According to USAID, the overall chronic malnutrition rate in Guatemala for children less than five years old is 50%, higher than any other country in Central America and higher than many African countries.
- Indigenous women in Guatemala are three times more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth than non-indigenous women (*MSPAS, 2003*).
- Guatemala suffers from the second highest maternal mortality rate in Latin America, behind Haiti at 290 deaths per 100,000 live births (*World Bank 2008*).
- About 65 percent of mothers of malnourished children have no formal education, and less than 20 percent of mothers with a secondary education have malnourished children (*Center for Economic and Social Rights, 2009*).





YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE, NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU CAN GIVE

- Just \$1 allows a mother to create her own homemade recipe book.
- \$10 provides comprehensive clinical care and health education to a child for one year.
- A one-time donation of \$20 provides anti-parasite medication for 1,500 children.
- Just \$50 a month covers laboratory supplies used to diagnose and treat patients.
- A one-time donation of \$65 provides cervical cancer screenings for 25 women.
- \$100 covers the cost of transportation for a weeklong Mobile Clinic.
- An annual donation of \$130 provides a child with a yearly supply of multi-vitamins and fortified beverages.
- \$200 covers the cost of 100 pregnancy tests.
- An annual donation of \$500 provides comprehensive clinical care and education to two classrooms.



- A monthly donation of \$850 keeps our pharmacy well stocked for walk-in patients.
- A one-time donation of \$1,000 pays for one student to finish three years of secondary education.
- A one-time donation of \$2,500 allows us to visit each remote community in the Valley twice a year.



INFORMATION AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Primeros Pasos! We want to make sure you feel prepared before arriving in Guatemala. In this document you will find some general information as well as Frequently Asked Questions to help give you an understanding of what to expect when volunteering with Primeros Pasos and living in Quetzaltenango (Xela), Guatemala.

ARRIVING IN GUATEMALA AND TRANSPORTATION TO QUETZALTENANGO (XELA)

It is safest to travel between 5:00 am and 2:00 pm, when it is still light out. If you arrive in Guatemala City after 1:00 pm, it is recommended that you stay the night there. We recommend the Quetzalroo Backpacker's Hostel. Their staff will pick you up from the airport and take you to the bus terminal the next day.

Quetzalroo Backpacker's Hostel

www.quetzalroo.com

(502) 5746-0830, (502) 4581-1360

Patricia's Bed & Breakfast

www.patriciashotel.com

(502) 54023256 / (502) 22614251

If your flight lands before 1:30 pm, you can go straight to the bus terminal and arrive in Quetzaltenango (Xela) the same day. It takes approximately 4 hours to travel from Guatemala City to Xela. To travel from the airport to the bus terminal, you need to take secure transportation. There are two options to make sure your ride to the bus terminal is safe: 1. You can stop by the InGuat information desk, the government tourist bureau, in the airport terminal (just before the front entrance) and ask them to call you a registered taxi or 2. There are registered taxis waiting outside of the airport as well. You can call Patricia's Bed & Breakfast (502) 54023256 / (502) 22614251, www.patriciashotel.com who will personally transfer you from the airport to the appropriate bus station for \$10 (Q80). Please refer to the bus schedule below for a list of first class, non-stop bus services from Guatemala City to Xela:

Linea Dorada

8:00 am, 3:00 pm

Guate: 16 Calle & 10 Av, Zone 1

Tel 2220-7990

Xela: 12 Av & 5 Calle, Zone 3

Tel 7767-5198

ADN

7:00 am, 3:00 pm

Guate: 8a Av 16-41, Zona 1

Tel 2251-0610

Xela: 7a Calle & 24 Av., Zona 3

Tel 6649-2089

MONEY & ATMs

The official currency in Guatemala is the Quetzal. The exchange rate is approximately 7.5 Quetzales to the US Dollar. There are ATM machines located in all main cities in Guatemala. The volunteer coordinator can direct you to the safer ATMs upon arrival in Xela. You can travel with traveler's checks although not all banks will cash them.

PHONES AND COMMUNICATION

Primeros Pasos requires that all volunteers have a Guatemalan cell phone where they can be reached. Cell phones are widely available for purchase in Guatemala. You can easily acquire a phone for Q100-200 (\$15.00-20.00). You can also bring a cell phone with you and buy a SIM card once you arrive in Guatemala. You must have your cell phone provider unlock your phone do to this. Internet is widely available in Xela and all tourist destinations in Guatemala. There are many internet cafés in Xela as well as a large number of cafés and restaurants with wireless connectivity. Should you want more reliable internet during your stay you can purchase a small USB internet modem.

SPANISH SCHOOLS



Xela is the epicenter of the immersion Spanish school industry in Guatemala. It offers a wide range of 50+ schools. Most provide up to 5 hours of one-on-one Spanish instruction daily, along with room and board (with a local family) and cultural activities. As a volunteer we recommend that you take 3-4 hours a day alongside your volunteer work. Below are the six Spanish schools that we recommend:

Spanish School Sexto Estado	http://www.sextoestado14.com/
Spanish School Celas Maya	http://www.celasmaya.edu.gt/
Spanish School La Paz	http://www.xelapages.com/lapaz/
Spanish School Miguel Angel Asturias	http://www.spanishschool.com/
Spanish School Proyecto Linguistico Quetzalteco	http://www.xelapages.com/plqe/
Spanish School Sol Latino	http://www.spanishschoolsollatino.com/
Ulew Tinamit Spanish School	http://www.spanishguatemala.org/

HEALTH

It is very common for foreigners to experience stomach problems while traveling. The most common illness is diarrhea, which is caused by an infection with microorganisms (bacteria, viruses or parasites). To avoid becoming ill, we recommend the following:

- Only drink purified water—either bottled water or water that has been boiled for at least 10 minutes (All students will be provided with ample purified drinking water—in the homestay, at the school, and the clinic).
- Avoid eating food from street vendors.
- Do not eat raw fruits or vegetables unless you have peeled or properly washed them yourself, or know for a fact they have been disinfected.
- Avoid food that has been allowed to stand for a long period of time at room temperature—reheat the food thoroughly before consuming.
- Avoid undercooked or raw meat, fish, and shellfish.

If you do begin to get sick it is best to seek medical attention quickly. Our volunteer coordinator will be available to consult with you on where to receive care based on your symptoms.

SAFETY

Most crimes committed against tourists in Guatemala are crimes of opportunity. There are a variety of ways to lower your risk of being a target:

- Do not travel at night.
- Do not hike volcanoes alone/in small groups.
- Do not walk around at night; take a taxi.
- Avoid dark lonely streets.
- Whenever possible, stay with a group of people and look out for each other.
- Do not flash money in public.
- Leave expensive jewelry, watches, rings, and gadgets at home.
- Do not keep all your money in one place. Use a money-belt and spread valuables through your luggage.
- Dress conservatively; avoid low-cut tops, short shorts and skirts, and especially tight clothing.
- Be aware and alert of your surroundings at all times day or night.

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

As a Primeros Pasos volunteer you are expected to act as a responsible adult. Alcohol use is legal in Guatemala. Beer, wine, and liquor are readily available. However, participants should be cautious with drinking in Guatemala, especially when staying with a host family as alcoholism is a huge problem and drinking may not be accepted. Excessive drinking put you at risk. Marijuana and other drugs are illegal in Guatemala and strictly prohibited for volunteers.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GUATEMALA

These sites are a combination of tourist sites, commercial sites, and US government-affiliated sites.

www.travel.state.gov

Access the site and search “Guatemala”

www.infoplease.com

Access the site and search “Guatemala”

www.visitguatemala.com

The official tourist site of Guatemala

www.goto-guatemala.com

A reasonable tourist-oriented site

www.usaid.gov/gt

Website for USAID (International Development)

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT XELA

www.xelapages.com

www.xelawho.com

www.entremundos.org

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHERE CAN I STAY AND HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Primeros Pasos does not provide or arrange housing through our volunteer program. The cost of housing depends on where you choose to stay.

- The majority of our volunteers choose to stay with host families. These can be arranged through a Spanish school. Generally homestays cost about \$40-\$75 a week and include meals. A list of recommended host families can be provided upon request.
- There are many rooms and apartments available for rent in Xela. Very few can be reserved in advance. The following guesthouses reserve rooms online ahead of time, however, may not be the most economical options:
 - EntreMundos www.entremundos.org
 - Casa Renaissance www.casarenaissance.com
 - Casa Xelajú www.casaxelaju.com
- There are also a variety of hostels in Xela, which vary in price. These can be used for long-term stay or short-term stay while you look for other housing options:
 - Casa Argentina (\$5/night) 7761-2470
 - Hostal Don Diego (\$6/night) 7761-6497 www.hostaldondiegoxela.com
 - The Black Cat Hostel (\$8/night) 7761-2091 www.blackcathostels.net

HOW MUCH DO I NEED TO BUDGET?

Depending on your lifestyle, our volunteers live comfortably spending Q.2,000-Q.4,000 (\$250-500 USD) a month during their time in Xela. If you are staying with a family, expect to spend next to nothing on food—three meals a day are included in the cost. Groceries are relatively cheap, unless you choose to buy imported products. Restaurants can cost from \$3 a meal to \$10 depending. Be sure to budget for transportation, food, and lodging, as many foreign volunteers travel during the weekends, either on their own, with their school, or with a tourist agency.



HOW DO I WASH MY LAUNDRY?

You will be responsible for taking care of your own laundry. Depending on where you stay, your host family may wash your clothing by hand, you can wash your clothing by hand, or there are a number of Laundromats which will wash and dry your clothes for Q.15-Q.20 (\$2-3USD) a load.

DO I NEED A CONVERTER OR ADAPTER?

Guatemala runs on the same voltage as the United States and Canada (110 volts). If you are bringing electronics from the US or Canada you will not need a converter or adapter. Most sockets are designed for North American Grounded and North American Non-Grounded plugs. You can easily buy adapters to change three-pronged plugs to two. Appliances and electronics from Europe and other Latin American countries many need converters or adapters.

WHAT VACCINES WILL I NEED TO TRAVEL IN GUATEMALA?

Primeros Pasos recommends that all volunteers have their Hepatitis A/B and typhoid vaccines. You may want to have a travel consultation with your health provider. He/She can help you to evaluate the risks of your trip. The western highlands, including Xela are not a malaria risk area. You may wish to get prophylactic medications at home if you are planning to spend time on the coast or tropical areas.

WHAT IS THE WEATHER LIKE?

From November – April, weather in Xela is generally sunny and dry, with warm days and cool nights, ranging from 25°F – 77°F (-3°C to 25°C). Rainy season lasts from May to October, with temperatures ranging from 50°F to 82°F (10°C to 28°C). During the rainy season, it usually rains steadily for a few hours every afternoon, however if a tropical storm passes it may rain for several days continuously. We recommend heavy rain gear: rain jacket, umbrella, and boots, should you choose. Although the temperatures are not too cold, the buildings in Guatemala are not heated. This means that the temperature inside is at least as cold as the weather outside. Please bring enough warm clothes – sweaters, jackets and long pants.

DO YOU HAVE AGE LIMITS FOR VOLUNTEERS?

Primeros Pasos does not accept volunteers under 18 years of age. We do not have an upper age limit, however all volunteers must be in good physical shape: able to walk mid-long distances, able to stand for hours of work, etc. This can be discussed on an individual basis.

HOW MUCH FREE TIME WILL I HAVE AS A VOLUNTEER?

The clinic is open in the mornings Monday to Friday from 8:30 am- 1:00 pm. Volunteers generally use their free afternoons to take Spanish classes, explore the city, or do independent projects for the clinic.

WHAT SHOULD I WEAR AT THE CLINIC?

Female volunteers should avoid low-cut and tight clothing. No tank tops, short skirts, shorts, leggings, or ripped jeans are allowed. Non-medical volunteers may wear clean jeans and appropriate t-shirts. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended. Medical volunteers should wear scrubs or professional clothing (slacks, collared shirts, or blouses) when working. As a reference, our medical director and local medical students all wear white medical coats.

CAN I BRING GIFTS OR TOYS FOR THE PATIENTS?

No. Under no circumstances are you allowed to give gifts, food, or money to any members of the community in which the clinic works. If you want to make a contribution to the community talk to Primeros Pasos.

HOW MANY VOLUNTEERS DO YOU GENERALLY HAVE WORKING AT THE CLINIC AT ANY ONE TIME?



The number of volunteers varies from month to month, usually ranging from 5 to 15. Some volunteers stay for a few weeks, some for several months. From November to January the work load at the clinic significantly diminishes and volunteers are focused on independent projects.

AS A MEDICAL STUDENT OR MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL, WILL I NEED MEDICAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE?

No. Primeros Pasos does not require this.

AS A MEDICAL STUDENT OR MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL, WHAT MATERIALS DO I NEED TO BRING?

Primeros Pasos asks that all volunteers providing medical care to patients bring a stethoscope, a blood pressure cuff, and an otorinoscope as well as either a white coat and/or scrubs. Other materials that you may want to bring include, a pen light, a medical Spanish/English dictionary, and a Tarascon pocket pharmacopoeia (or equivalent).

WHAT SORT OF ILLNESSES DO YOU GENERALLY TREAT AT THE CLINIC?

The most common illnesses that our patients present are upper respiratory infections, gastrointestinal parasites and infections, dermatological irritations and infections, and malnutrition.

CAN I CONTACT PREVIOUS VOLUNTEERS?

Yes. Request emails of previous volunteers from the Volunteer Coordinator.

WHO CAN I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS?

Jamie de Guzmán Pet

Volunteer Coordinator / Coordinadora de Voluntarios

info@primerospasos.org