

Sustainability and Spanish Immersion in Central America

Week 1: Arrival and program orientation: Antigua, Guatemala

Departing from Los Angeles, travel with your group to the beautiful and historic city of Antigua, Guatemala. Walk down cobblestone streets, admire the colorful storefronts and colonial churches, visit local markets, and enjoy the taste of freshly made tortillas. Staying in an eco-hostal about 20 minutes outside of the city, the group will set the foundations for the incredible journey ahead. We'll learn more about the program and our fellow group members and discuss strategies for staying safe and healthy while traveling.

Week 2: Green Building: Comalapa, Guatemala

We'll get right to work, diving into our inquiry into sustainability by supporting green building initiatives. Basing ourselves in the small town of Comalapa, we'll work hard on hands-on projects while learning more about Guatemalan life and culture.

Weeks 3-4: Spanish language immersion: Quetzaltenango, Guatemala

Travel west from Comalapa towards Quetzaltenango (AKA Xela), Guatemala's second largest city, to start two weeks of 1:1 Spanish language study. The first week the group will stay together at a small guest house, taking Spanish classes in the mornings and participating in various activities in the afternoons. The second week, continuing with Spanish classes, you'll live in pairs with local host families. Afternoons activities might include a talk with civil war survivors, cooking classes, dance classes, or a local soccer game.

Week 5: Sustainable Agriculture and trekking: Tzununa, Guatemala

After two weeks focusing on the Spanish language, we make our way from the bustling city to the tranquil shores of Lago Atitlan. Once there, we'll take our first day for some self care - with the opportunity to take classes in yoga or meditation, and spend time near the water. Then we'll dive into a week of farming! We'll be working alongside local Mayan farmers in an effort to diversify coffee fields. Through hands-on experience, we will learn about permaculture, organic agriculture, and ecosystem restoration. At the end of the week, we'll take a one night, two day trek from the shores of the lake up to an overlook, where we'll camp and watch the sunrise before heading back down to our next destination.

Weeks 6 - 7: Spanish and homestays: Sam Juan la Laguna, Guatemala

We'll end our hike at the small lakeside community of San Juan la Laguna, where we'll spend two weeks continuing your study of Spanish. You'll work with local teachers and live in pairs with host families. When not focused on Spanish, you'll have the opportunity to take art classes with local artisans. Options often include painting, weaving, natural dyes, or marimba lessons!

Week 8: Student Directed Travel: Guatemala

Put your newly acquired travel skills to use! During your last week in Guatemala, your group will plan, organize and implement the adventures this week - how you get there, where you'll stay, how you manage your budget, and what you'll do are up to the group to decide. Past groups have visited the stunning sapphire pools of Semuc Champey, explored the caves at Lanquin, or visited ancient Mayan ruins. What will your group decide?

Weeks 9: Sustainable agriculture and family farming: Mastatal, Costa Rica

Next we'll head to an eco-retreat and education center to continue our studies in sustainability. We'll spend 10 days learning more about natural building, permaculture, and farm to table cooking. There will also be opportunities for hikes to local waterfalls, visits to the neighboring national park, bird watching, learning how to make chocolate, and relaxing in hammocks.

Weeks 10: SCUBA and rainforest exploration: Drake Bay, Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica

Spend your final week in Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula! We'll take our PADI Open Water SCUBA certification course and do our dives near Caño Island. We'll also get to explore Corcovado National Park, considered one of the world's most biodiverse regions! During this time, the group will explore ways of preparing for the upcoming reintegration to life at home, and strategies in keeping our sense of adventure and inquiry engaged in the context of our daily lives. And of course we'll enjoy and celebrate all of the accomplishments of the semester!

****Carpe Diem reserves the right to make changes to the program at any time, and indeed has the responsibility to do so in some instances; changes may be required to provide the best possible experience, protect the safety of participants, or respond to changes in weather or political conditions.***