

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 a cozy guest house, the group will spend 3-4 days setting the foundations for an 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 finds us based at a school outside the city, in the rural coffee growing region of Guatemala. Here, the group will study Spanish, participate in community projects and activities, and learn about the history of the region. The second week you'll head in to Xela and move in with local homestay families. You'll continue Spanish classes in the morning and spend the afternoons participating in activities like cooking classes, dance classes, and perhaps a local soccer game.

Week 4 - 5: Trekking, Yoga and Sustainable Agriculture: Lago Atitlan, Guatemala

After two weeks focusing on the Spanish language, we'll get out of our heads and into our bodies as we trek from Xela to the ancient volcanic crater lake of Lago Atitlan. Spending 3 days and 2 nights hiking through forests, cornfields, and coffee plantations, we make our way from the bustling city to the tranquil shores of Lago Atitlan. Once there, we'll settle in for a reflective retreat, learning about yoga, meditation, and self care. After grounding ourselves through yoga, 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.

Week 6: Student Directed Travel: Guatemala

Put your newly acquired travel skills to use! 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 7 - 8: Spanish and homestays: Turrialba, Costa Rica

Adios Guatemala, Hola Costa Rica! Spend the next 10 days weeks studying Spanish in the charming town of Turrialba in Costa Rica's central valley. With nearby rivers, volcanos, and rainforests, you'll live with local families and study Spanish in the mornings, and have afternoons to connect with host families, learn salsa dancing, explore Costa Rican cooking, take rainforest walks, and participate in language exchanges with local English students.

Weeks 8-9: Natural Building and Food systems: 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- 11: Turtle conservation and SCUBA: Quepos, Costa Rica

Spend your final 10 days on Costa Rica's Pacific Coast! We'll spend 5 days helping with turtle conservation efforts through night patrols on the beach to watch for nesting sea turtles. Perhaps we'll even see baby sea turtles making their way to the ocean! Then we'll shift our focus underwater with a PADI Open Water SCUBA certification course. We'll also learn about coral reef conservation and restoration programs. 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.***