RCDP International Volunteer Program

- Pay as low as $125 per week to volunteer
- Pay directly to the projects and host families in Guatemala
- Over 14,000 satisfied volunteers since 1998
- RCDP has gone global, partnered BTCV (UK), AID Camps (UK) and Yeti (US)
- We’ve worked with various US and UK based volunteer organizations
Dear Volunteer,

Thank you for inquiring about RCDP volunteer program in Guatemala. This pre-registration booklet will provide you with valuable information on RCDP volunteer programs in Guatemala. It will also give you tips about how to make your volunteer experience rewarding as well as memorable.

In Guatemala, you will enjoy the warm hospitality of the local people and enjoy magnificent ruins found all over the country. RCDP International offers various volunteering opportunities in Guatemala like working in orphanage, teaching English, street children and volunteering in a healthcare project.

Many volunteer organizations run programs in Guatemala. But RCDP programs are completely different from others in many aspects, most importantly in terms of how low our program fee is and how we allocate the program fee directly to the projects and the host families. In the pdf, you will also find how our meaningful our programs really and how as a volunteer you can empower the locals.

Please remember this booklet is just the beginning of the wonderful support you will enjoy when volunteering with RCDP. You will be helped every step of the way when you volunteer with us and have a meaningful and rewarding. If you have any questions after reading this pdf, please feel free to contact us.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

RCDP International Volunteer Program

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I found out about RCDP on the Internet. How do I know that RCDP is a legitimate organization?

Brief Internet research will confirm the legitimacy of our program. We are registered with the government of Nepal’s Social Welfare Council. RCDP has been running volunteer program since 1998. Since then, we have served nearly 14,000 volunteers. You can find hundreds testimonies, photos, and blogs of our past volunteers at [http://rcdpnepal.org/about_rcdp/testimonies_nepal.php](http://rcdpnepal.org/about_rcdp/testimonies_nepal.php) RCDP has been working with many leading UK- and US-based volunteer organizations. Some of our partners include: Experiment in International Living, US (experiment.org/) the British Trust for Nature Conservation, UK (btcv.org.uk) AIDS Camp International, UK (AidCamps.org), Youth Enhancement and Training Initiative, US. If you are still not convinced we would be glad to give you the email addresses of at least 10 volunteers who have joined our program recently.

There are hundreds of volunteer organizations every where. Why should I join an RCDP volunteer program?

In RCDP we aim to offer all kinds of volunteering opportunities to all kinds of volunteers. We don’t want affordability to hinder anyone’s willingness to serve humanity. Therefore, our volunteer programs are humanitarian missions. We do not run our volunteer programs to make profit or earn money. We do not get external funding. Our program fees are world’s most affordable, starting as low as $250 per week.

Why isn’t RCDP based in a developed country like the US, UK, Australia or New Zealand?

Yes, our main office is based in Kathmandu, Nepal. But many UK- and US-based organizations run programs through local organization like us in many countries. Just being in the US, the UK, New Zealand, or any developed countries does not make any organization genuine. As we are increasingly in the Internet Age, why can’t an organization run a program just as effectively from Kathmandu as in New Zealand?

I found the orphanage to be run very well and the kids well taken care of. I had an excellent time, working with the children on their homework and playing with them after school. I chose orphanage project because I have never been around children before and it was a great personal challenge to work with 28 kids. Thank you so much for everything.

- Stacy Schrader, USA
1. You directly pay your host families and projects

Except in the Nepal office, where we collect program fees and allocate funding to host families, projects, and our ongoing community projects (two orphanages), you pay all of your money directly to host families and projects. In some countries, you pay our coordinators, who will arrange room and food. Otherwise you directly pay your host families and projects, which make sure that your money does not go to middlemen or as a profit for company but go directly to people who deserve it. We challenge you to find any other organization that runs program this way.

2. Our services

RCDP feels proud of its efficient communication and prompt delivery of services. RCDP guarantees an efficient and accurate reply to your email within 48 hours. If you send your telephone number, we guarantee that you will be called within 48 hours. From our many years of experience, we have learned the importance of quick communication. Please drop us one email and see how efficient we are!

3. Program quality

■ Do you believe that by just charging you $2,000 for two weeks of volunteer program, good-quality services are guaranteed?
■ Do you believe that volunteer fees are very high for many US and UK volunteering organizations because of expenses such as salaries, or profiteering?
■ Do you believe that many UK- or US-based organizations that run their program through local partners (like RCDP) keep a large chunk of your fee as profit?
■ What would you feel when you meet many volunteers from leading UK, US, Australia, New Zealand organizations working in the same orphanages or teaching projects, and living in the same host families, basically getting the same shelter and food, but paying nearly 1,000% more in program fees?

You may associate low program fees with low program quality. This should not be done. Since 1998, we have been running extremely affordable, safe, and yet high-quality programs serving nearly 14,000 volunteers. Please read our testimonies or please ask us for the references of volunteers who have joined our program recently and find the quality of our program. As a humanitarian organization, we aim to grow and serve humanity. This is only possible if we win your trust. Therefore, we want to provide you with the best volunteer experience with the cheapest price possible. When you land in developing countries and when you find everything so cheap, you might wonder where all of your program fee is being spent. With RCDP, payments are directly made to families, to get the best experience and best value for your money.

“RCDP have helped in many ways to ease the problems or difficulties that volunteers face. All in all, I had a wonderful time; I have learnt a lot and hope that students and teachers at my school have learnt some worthwhile things from me too.

- Emily Thorn, England”
4. Experienced staffers/host families and screened projects

When we started our volunteer program in 1998, nearly 100 enthusiastic volunteers from different parts of the world joined the RCDP-Nepal program. In the first year, we understood the importance of having an organized program, dedicated service, meaningful projects, and concern for safety. Ever since then, RCDP has been a respected and recognized name in the field of volunteering. We are committed to maintaining our reputation.

When we develop a new program in a new country, we do not just do it by email correspondence. We travel each country and spend at least one month time recruiting local staffers, visiting many host families and projects. We select a few host families and projects which have worked with or served the volunteers from UK- and US-based organizations. This way, we ensure the safety and quality of the program. RCDP feels proud of our staffers and host families. All of them are socially respected, experienced or worked with international volunteers, and believe in making your volunteer experience wonderful.

5. Flexibility—customized projects

We understand that every volunteer has different needs and expectations. Therefore, in each location, we have developed partnerships with different kind of local projects like orphanages, schools, healthcare centers, HIV/AIDS programs, women’s empowerment projects and NGOs working in different areas. Therefore, we can tailor your need and meet your expectations. We know that some volunteers want to work many hours while some want to travel more. Some enjoy rural areas and some need cities. Some volunteers want to stay in host family for cultural experience while some prefer living with other volunteers in a hostel. Therefore, before assigning any project or host family we carefully read your application, try to understand your needs and expectations, and match the best placement for you.

6. Ongoing Support

From the day we receive your email, we take care of you. We work hard to make sure that you are getting all support. Our support structure is varied.

- When we get your email, we reply within 48 hours
- When we get your telephone number, we call you within 48 hours
- Before you apply, we send you a pre-registration package
- When we get your application, we guarantee placement within four weeks
- Before your departure, our country coordinator will email or call you to answer last-minute questions
- Before your departure, you get a comprehensive booklet
- Our coordinator and staffers come to welcome and pick you up at the airport
- Our coordinator introduces you to the projects and host family, and gives a short orientation about country
- Our coordinator meets or calls you every two week to find how things going
- If you need any help our group coordinators are always there for you
7. Safety first

Like your parents, we are concerned about your safety. Safety is the first priority of RCDP volunteer programs. We ensure your safety in many ways.

- Our pre-departure booklet explains many safety issues
- RCDP places you in trustworthy, screened projects where volunteers from other organizations work
- We screen host families carefully and place you with a host family with high social status and previous experience with volunteers
- Our country coordinator will visit or call you regularly
- We train our staffers, host families, and project workers about the importance of safety
- Our offices are available 24/7 for you
- If you prefer, we guarantee that you will live and work with other volunteers

8. A sense of family and friendship

RCDP volunteer programs are humanitarian missions. The RCDP founder, staffers, host families, project workers and volunteers are all considered to be a family working for the noble cause of serving humanity. Many host families and volunteers develop strong ties of friendship. We recently launched a Facebook website where you can see our growing family. It is our sincere hope that our program will develop a friendship between you and RCDP and help us to grow and better serve communities in future.

9. Our Experience

RCDP has been running its volunteer abroad program since 1998. So far we have successfully placed more than 14,000 volunteers. Nearly 99% of our volunteers were very happy—please ask us for the references of the past volunteers. We offer a thorough, well-rounded, and successful volunteer program which often exceeds the expectations of participants. RCDP volunteer programs are not just a simple volunteer placement services. We aim to offer meaningful abroad programs which include language courses, cultural immersion, volunteer opportunities and amazing travel experience, ensuring that volunteers do not miss out on a single lifelong memory. RCDP programs consist of language and cultural immersion programs, volunteer service projects, and excursions.

"I would recommend RCDP for other volunteers looking for a rewarding volunteering experience. My advice would be to make sure you can stay long enough- I have only been here two weeks and if I could do things over again I would stay for two months or longer. There is so much to learn, see and do.

- Maddy Macdonald, USA"
Program Overview

Do you want to experience a diverse land filled with Spanish heritage and Mayan flare? Try volunteering in Guatemala to have one of the most adventurous and unique travel experiences abroad. Volunteering in Guatemala is a chance to learn about the “country of eternal spring.” In Guatemala there is an essence of continual new life and exciting growth. It is a nation rich in heritage and full of natural beauty.

The land of Guatemala is majestic and the people are equally warm. When you volunteer in Guatemala you will experience the great heart of these people and learn about their Spanish and Mayan roots. While Guatemala is indeed full of beauty and splendor, there is also a great need for help. The nation is developing, but at a slower pace than what is ideal. When you volunteer in Guatemala you can become an agent of change in this highly desirable place in the world. Working with people from impoverished background to open your eyes into the spirit of humanity and our endless potential. When you become a volunteer in Guatemala you will not only have an exciting travel experience, but also make lifetime memories.

Volunteer Locations

All of our programs are available in Quetzaltenano, known locally as Xela. It is the second largest city in Guatemala and known for indigenous people and their culture.

Start and Duration of Programs

All the programs start every 2nd and 4th Monday of each month. Volunteers can choose to volunteer for 1 to 12 weeks.

Skill and Qualification Requirements

No specific skills and qualifications are required to volunteer in this project. However, you must be at least 18 years of age. Volunteers should also be flexible, practical and self-motivated with an open mind to learn new culture. While Spanish is preferred it is not required.

I volunteer at an orphanage and it was really a very nice experience. The children were great and I was made to feel at home there. I also felt I was able to make a difference in their lives even if it was only for a short period of time.

- Darryl Lee, USA
Work in Orphanages

Due to issues of poverty, abuse, neglect, and alcoholism, many children in Guatemala have fled to the streets. They find themselves without support or comfort. They lack education and other basic needs. Some of these children have found temporary relief at an orphanage and that is where you as a volunteer in Guatemala can be so very important.

This project focuses volunteers assisting the needs of the local orphanage where many children call home. Volunteers will act as mentors, teachers, and general support systems for these children. Volunteers will be donating their personal talents and skills to assist these children in living the best life possible. Your role as a volunteer is to offer love and other such resources to keep these children off the streets and help them build a better life.

Although this volunteer project may prove difficult at times, it is also very rewarding. You will find that the love and support you offer these children in Guatemala will give both them, and yourself, an immeasurable amount of joy.

Help Rehabilitate Street Children/Children at Risk

Hundreds of poor children are living in the streets of Guatemala and are in need of your help. They are living in dirty, dangerous, and unhealthy living conditions. The majority of these children are without family or home. RCDP is working with local communities and organizations to help these children get off the streets and on to a better path.

Your role as a volunteer will be to work with RCDP and these partner organizations to provide support and hope for these children living in the streets. You will be sharing skills, talents, and knowledge with the youth. You will be offering your kindness and care. You might be teaching them about health, or helping them with homework. Your genuine support in this project has the unique ability to help these children and get them back on their feet.

Volunteers for this project become mentors for the children of Guatemala and become beacons of support and hope. Your experience may be difficult, but rewarding.

The staffs in the school were equally kind and arranged activities for entertainment outside school hours. I observed teachers the first day and then taught alone. Before arriving I feared that my presence would be unnecessary in the school; I might be assisting only. I was glad to see however that I was needed while I was there.

- Aisling Marron, Ireland
Teaching English in Rural School

As Guatemala continues to develop, education must go with it. Regretfully, due to resource and infrastructure this isn’t always the case. When you volunteer in Guatemala, you are offering the local people a better chance to build their careers and lead a successful life.

The need for English is high because much of Guatemala’s tourism industry depends on it. If a person can speak English they have better opportunities available. For many, the cost or accessibility of learning English is not possible. When you volunteer in Guatemala you will find yourself in front of eager minds ready to learn. The results of this project will prove to have many sustainable rewards.

Work in Medical/Healthcare/Hospital Projects

Volunteers in this project will be working with local doctors, healthcare professionals, and at health camps. You will be assisting local Guatemalan’s who do not have access to proper treatment or care. This project is ideal for students or professionals in the healthcare field. Volunteers can expect to be interacting and assisting with the patients and their needs. If your background permits, you may be directly administering drugs or facilitating serious healthcare conditions.

Volunteers should expect for this project to be very hands-on. In many of these healthcare facilities there is a lack of supplies, or staff. There is a great need for people of healthcare knowledge to come to this project and offer their skills and support. You will find this project both challenging and highly rewarding. The need for volunteers is high for this project.
Help construct Orphanages and Schools

Children, especially orphans in Guatemala lack proper facilities in housing and education. Proper infrastructure of houses and schools is necessary for healthy development and education of a child. RCDP International, through its construction projects, wants to offer safe environment for these children. Under this project, volunteers will repair or build homes and schools for orphaned children. Occasionally, you might also be asked to work in community improvement projects.

Working hours are normally Monday – Friday from 8-12:00 pm and 2- 4:00 pm. Hours may vary based on weather, project needs, and construction schedules. Construction projects are led and organized by a local foreman who will determine specific work projects and guide volunteers.

Participate in Guatemalan Social Work Projects

Guatemala faces various social issues that need to be addressed as soon as possible in order to ensure sound social structure in this immerging nation. Children are usually the ones to suffer the most. With families often unable to support multiple children under one room, some children make the conscious effort to leave their homes – believing their chances for survival are somehow better if they control their own destinies. Such children need to be rehabilitated in their family/society by imparting them proper guidance and counseling. Under this project, our volunteers will do the same - all in hopes of providing a better future for these children amidst their social challenges.

Volunteers will support these children by counseling them to return back to their family and lead a normal life. Volunteers can also teach those children various skills, educate them, tutor them, mentor them and make sure they are living comfortably with their families. Besides, volunteers can organize and run various workshops, social activities to raise awareness in the society.

Our time spent on the conservation project was time well spent. Working with team leader each day made it even more enjoyable. He included the volunteers in all aspects of the project and he is a lot of fun to work with. The RCDP staffs were friendly and helpful, as was the orphanage staff.

- Amanda Provencher (Canada)
- Paul Schults, (USA)
Accommodation

During your volunteer in Guatemala program, you will stay with a host family. The host families are well screened and very familiar with international travelers. Most of the rooms are individual, but sometimes volunteers will share a room. The location of accommodation is in a safe neighborhood where volunteers will feel confident in their security. Staying with a host family is an excellent way to learn more about the culture of Guatemala as well as practice your Spanish. Volunteers receive three meals per day. If you are going to be out and about for lunch, you can request a meal to be prepared to take with you.

The host family will do their best to provide vegetarian options, but please notify RCDP of this request prior to arrival. Food and drinks outside the set mealtimes are up to the volunteer to pursue. There are many restaurants and markets nearby. Many houses do not have hot water. You will have the opportunity to do your own laundry or pay a small fee to the host family to do it for you.

Throughout the volunteer project, our local staff stays in contact with volunteers either with face-to-face visits or via email/telephone. With longer placements, we visit our volunteers every two weeks (when possible).

Food

You will be given 3 local meals every day. You can also request to pack your lunch if you intend to be somewhere during lunch hours. Vegetarian meals are also an option. You are more than welcomed to bring your own special diets and prepare them for yourself. Please be assured that your home stay will be safe and comfortable. RCDP staff will visit you timely to inquire about your health and safety conditions.

My host family is lovely. It was an interesting experience to stay in a real home in a host country, seeing how everything works, sitting with the family and joining in the meal, talking and laughing. The experience allows total immersion in to daily life. The food was good and serving generous. My accommodation was really good-comfortable, private and everything I required there. The family was really lovely and made me feel at home.

- Bronte Prosser
Program Fees – the world’s most affordable

When you join our program, we will make sure that all of your money goes to the projects and host families. Part of your fees also helps us cover our expenses. The program fee is divided in as registration fee of $269 and weekly fee for room, food, coordination, and project donation.

In Guatemala, weekly fee is divided between coordination (services of local staffers), host family (room/3 local foods a day), and project donation. Guatemala is an expensive tourist destination; therefore, nearly 90% of your weekly fee goes to covering your food, room, and coordination. 10% of your fee goes to project as a material donation (not cash). Please find below the breakdown of costs:

<table>
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<th>Programs</th>
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<th>2wks</th>
<th>3wks</th>
<th>4wks</th>
<th>5wks</th>
<th>6wks</th>
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<td>$330</td>
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<td>$1,215</td>
<td>$1,350</td>
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* Spanish Lessons (10hrs a week, M-F) $50/Week
* Comprehensive Travel Insurance $3.49/day

What the program fee covers

- Airport pickup
- Transfer to hostel or host family (one way)
- Accommodation and food (3 meals a day)
- Support from local staffs
- Orientation upon arrival
- Customized volunteer placement
- Regular visit or call (1-2 week intervals)

What the program fee does not cover

- Airfare, visa and visa extensions
- Daily transportation (between project and host family, if required)
- Return/transfer to airport, airport taxes
- Any personal expenses
- Mineral water and soft drinks
- Gifts to project staffs and host family
- Laundry, telephone, immunizations
Visas

RCDP International suggests all volunteers apply for a tourist visa before leaving for Guatemala. Though American, UK and Canadian citizens can acquire visa at the airport, this can be time-consuming and is not guaranteed. Volunteers can acquire a Guatemalan visa from the Guatemalan Embassy or consulate in their home countries. For more information, please visit:


For stays exceeding 90 days, apply for an extension within the first week of arrival with the Guatemalan Immigration Department or exit the country for a minimum of 72 hours before re-entering on a new visa.

Vaccinations

We suggest vaccinations against public health threats and other communicable diseases. Please refer to CDC website: wwwnc.cdc.gov-travel/destinations/Ecuador.aspx

Following vaccinations are recommended.

- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Yellow Fever
- Rabies
- Typhoid
- Malaria
- As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria and measles.

Safety

The safety of our volunteers is our top priority. There are many layers of support for you in Guatemala. You will get support from the country coordinator, project directors/staff, the host family, your embassy, and our Guatemala office. However, your main support comes from our in-country coordinator. Our in-country coordinator is a full time position created to support and help our volunteers (at any point for any reason). In Guatemala, we work with terrific country coordinators. They are mature, educated, socially respected, and have long history of working with international volunteers.

Communication:

There are a number of internet cafes located in some of the major cities such as Guatemala City, La Antigua and Quetzaltenango and usually cost about $1/hour. There are also international phone cards available to make international calls. Also, please use local phone cards for local calls as every minute of local or international use is billed to the families. If you need to contact the local RCDP staff members, your host family or project will generally allow you to use the phone for short periods of time.
3-Step Application Process:

If you want to volunteer with RCDP International and gain incredible experience of helping grassroots communities thrive, please apply online at www.rcdpinternationalvolunteer.org/apply.php

Please make sure you know which program you are volunteering and how long you want to volunteer before filling up the form. For details, please visit www.rcdpinternational.org

First Step:
- Please submit your application using online application system. A $50 refundable application fee is needed to apply.

Second Step:
- Once we receive $50, we will immediately forward your application to country coordinator for processing. Our coordinator will visit the project and confirm the placement for you. We will also make necessary arrangements for rooms/foods. Once everything is confirmed and arranged, we will send you a confirmation letter and placement sheet through email. This process may take up to 2 -4 weeks. Once you receive the confirmation letter, you can start to prepare for the trip as it means you have been accepted in our program. Your preparation includes vaccination, visa, ticket, collecting information about Guatemala etc.

Third Step:
- Once you confirm your flight itinerary, you will pass the information to us. When you arrive at the airport, one of our staffs will be waiting for you. You will pay the weekly project fee directly in the orphanage in the first day. Then start your project without any worries as we will take care of your every need during your stay.

If you have any questions, please email us at info@rcdpvolunteers.org
RCDP-International Office