

Esteemed School Board of Vicksburg Community Schools.

I am writing you to ask for permission to offer a trip for only AP Spanish students to Guatemala over spring break in 2019. I do understand that we are also taking a trip to Costa Rica in the Summer of 2019, pending school board approval, and that trip is open to any student who has completed Spanish II. That trip is tailored for students who don't have as much of a command over the language.

Why offer this trip?

This trip to Guatemala will require the students to communicate solely in Spanish as outside of the capital, as no one speaks English. The students will have to order, make purchases, and communicate in Spanish. Also, this trip will be taking place one month before the AP Spanish test. It will give students an immersion experience, as well as a cultural comparison first hand, instead of only in the classroom. It supports many of the standards required by the AP class.

What we will be doing:

If approved, we would stay two days in the capital city to sightsee. We would take a day excursion out to Antigua, another beautiful city close by where we would go on a coffee plantation tour. Then we would stay in a hotel on Lake Atitlan for swimming and excursions.

We would then travel about 8 hours north, to a small town called Concepcion, Tutuapa, which is in the state of San Marcos. This is the town where my in-laws live, and only my cousin speaks English. There we will see how people truly live. We will go down to the river where they wash their clothes, go to the marketplace, and every meal will be made by my mother in-law. We will set the menu ahead of time and we will pay for the food ahead of time. The students want to see how much work goes into preparing a meal. There are not grocery stores with pre-processed foods there. To make pork, they kill and process a pig, for chicken they kill and process the chicken. My in-laws also own a mill that makes flour and they make and sell tortillas every morning to people in the town. The students have expressed interest in seeing the process.

We are also working with the local school to see if we can get a tour, and maybe some volunteer hours to play with and work with the local children. One of our themes in AP Spanish is Global Challenges, and one of the contexts specifically relates to education. This experience will help our AP students see why completing an education in a developing country can be difficult. They will also get a different perspective on the level of importance that education has in another country.

On our 3rd day in Concepcion, we will take an excursion to [Zaculeu](#), one of the major Mayan city ruins. The archeological park is about 2.5 hours away from Concepcion. We will spend the majority of the day at the ruins and in that town, then return back to Concepcion, where our hotels are for the night.

Transportation:

The flights we are looking at taking are out of Chicago. We will be splitting the cost to rent vehicles there and back. This way we don't have to pay for parking.

Once in Guatemala, we will rent a van and have a local drive us. The guide will be a member of my family that know the area well. I can have them send me a copy of a police report/background check for safety. These are people I have known for 10 years, and feel comfortable having them drive us around. I feel safer using them than I would someone I have not met as a tour guide.

We also have the option of using public transportation, buses and taxis, which are safe, but the convenience of having our own drivers and vehicles will allow us to make the most out of our trip.

We will be flying out of Chicago. The two airlines we are looking into using are Avianca, or American Airlines.

Safety:

Mary Zemlick, the other Spanish teacher, and I will be traveling with the group together. We will have 2 adults to the maximum of 9 kids, if they all go, at a time. This allows one of us to be free if there does happen to be an emergency.

According to the travel.state.gov, Guatemala is a level 2 out of 4 levels of concern for travel. This is the same level for concern as Spain and France. There are parts of the capital city that are dangerous. We will be staying in secure hotels, not near the airport, with doormen and secured parking. We will only be visiting tourist areas in the capital city, and will not venture out into areas we do not know. We will be using a taxi phone number for a company to call for a taxi and not hailing cabs on the side of the street. We will exercise the same caution we would when traveling to any country.

The town of Concepcion is a very tranquil town without violence. We will walk to our destinations while in the town. The following two links show what the town looks like. It is not an impoverished town. We will have electricity, running water, hot water, and access to internet-although it may not be the best.

Concepcion:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkUOczlPzwo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdIJ0M00MTc>

Cost:

- Flight and car rental: \$600
- Hotels in Guatemala City \$150
- Hotel in Santa Cruz, Lake Atitlan \$50 - 2 nights
- Hotels in Concepcion \$50- for the week
- Excursion to Antigua \$70
- Excursion to Zaculeu \$50
- Money for food, gas, van, guides \$500 for the week there
- Entrances to sites \$100
- Money for other expenses: \$200-\$500
 - Food while at airport
 - Souvenirs
 - Any toiletries or items forgotten

Total Cost:

Between \$1600 and \$2000 / person

Paid for completely by students

Full Itinerary:

Thursday Night: 3/28
Friday Morning early:

Drive to Chicago
Flight to Guatemala City

Friday 3/29

Excursion to [Antigua and coffee plantation](#)
(8 am. - 8 p.m.)
Maximum of 12 people- 1 vehicle

Saturday 3/30
Sunday 3/31

Head to [Santa Cruz](#) on the Lake Atitlan - 3 hr trip
sightseeing, swimming, walking jungle paths,
mayan weaving course, hammock laying, kayaking

Monday 4/1- Saturday 4/6

We will be staying in [Concepcion](#)
Cooking with the locals
Visiting a school
Conversing with locals

Wednesday 4/3

Excursion to [Zaculeu- Mayan Ruins](#)
Not overnight

Thursday 4/4

Market Day!

Friday:

Make our way back to Guatemala City

Saturday 4/6

Guatemala City sightseeing [options](#):

- Cathedral
- National Palace
- Plaza
- Popu vol museum
- Market
- Anthropology Museum

Sunday 4/7

Flight back to Chicago and then back home

More Photos from Concepción Tutuapa below

