

Dear School Board Members of Vicksburg Community Schools.

I am writing you to ask for permission to offer a trip for only AP Spanish students to Guatemala in June 2021. Due to the Covid-19 situation, our department's originally planned trip to Spain in June 2021 has been postponed to 2022. The seniors felt that Guatemala would be a great experience for them still if we can arrange to go.

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. 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 will stay the night in the capital upon arrival. The next day we will start the 9 hour drive to Tikal, the largest Mayan ruins in Central America. We will spend the night and the next morning spend the whole day trekking the ruins. We will then leave and spend the night in Coban, 4 hours away from Tikal. We will visit a botanical garden and do a short hike through the area. After that we will continue our trip to Concepcion Tutuapa, where my family lives. We will spend 4 days with them. We will take small trips to different areas of the town. We will see the school, how clay bricks are made, a waterfall/river, we will cook with my mother-in-law and enjoy the immersion aspect of the trip.

Once we leave Concepcion Tutuapa, we will spend one night in Quetzaltenango. We will visit hot springs, see the Spanish plaza, do some shopping, and go out to eat in a popular restaurant with live marimba playing.

Then we will travel south towards Lake Atitlan. The largest freshwater lake in Guatemala that is surrounded by 3 volcanoes and is breathtaking. We will take a weaving course, visit the oldest church in the country, visit hot tubs created by Mayans, and much more.

After Atitlan, we will travel to Antigua, the previous capital of the country full of history. We will have the option to do a volcano hike. We will do a coffee tour, a tour of the city, try Mayan soups, and do more shopping.

Finally, we will make our way back to the capital city to spend the night before our flight home.

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.

We are also looking at flights out of Kalamazoo, which would save us some of that travel cost to Chicago.

Once in Guatemala, we will rent a van and have a local drive us. The guide will be a member of my family that knows the area well (my husband's uncle). My father-in-law will also be traveling with us. 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 will be flying out of Chicago. The two airlines we are looking into using are United 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 3 out of 4 levels of concern for travel currently due to the Coronavirus. Travel is not restricted, but at the moment a negative Covid-19 test is required upon entry, or up to 72 hours before arrival. Guatemala is still accepting travelers and the country is open with Covid-19 protocols in place. We will wear our masks, social distance and follow all necessary protocols that are in place in June.

There is a risk of violence in the country, especially in the capital. 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 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 the 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/ luggage \$500-650
 - (potential cost to Chicago) \$75
- Hotels in Guatemala City 1st night \$65
- Hotel in Flores \$30
- [Tikal entrance](#) \$25
- Hotel in [Coban](#) \$30
- [Botanical Garden Entrance](#) \$30
- Concepcion Tutuapa (4 nights) \$50
- [Quetzaltenango](#) Hotel \$40
- [Fuentes Georginas](#) \$25
- [Panajachel](#) Hotel \$100
- [Weaving course](#) \$30
- Boat rides \$10
- [Antigua](#) Hotel \$100
- [Coffee Tour](#) \$15
- [Bean- to- Bar Chocolate workshop](#) \$30
- [\(optional\) Volcano tour with hot springs](#) \$100
- [Guatemala City Hotel](#) \$60
- Van \$150
- Gas \$50
- Guides \$75
- In-laws for food \$50
- Money for other expenses: \$200-\$500
 - (meals not included, items forgotten, souvenirs, activities not in the itinerary)

Total Cost:

Between \$1600-1800

Plus \$200-\$300 for spending money

Paid for completely by students and chaperones

Prices are subject to change once reservations start being made. Families will receive an updated list of costs before departure.

Full itinerary available upon request. Still working out some of the activities with students. We won't have a full itinerary until the school board approval and first meeting with parents.

I will require that students have health insurance, or purchase insurance for the duration of this trip. There are plans as low as \$200 that I can share with students so they are covered in case of an emergency.

Tentative Itinerary:

June 15th- depart from either Kalamazoo or Chicago and arrive in Guatemala City

June 16th- depart from Guatemala City to Flores, Guatemala (9 hours)

June 17th- excursion through Tikal. Then depart to Coban (4 hours)

June 18th- botanical tour then finish route to Concepcion Tutuapa

June 18-June 22/23 Stay in Mrs, Rodas's family

June 22-23 Quetzaltenango excursion

June 23- hot springs and then depart to Panajachel

23-25 Panajachel

Weaving course, pool day, visit the church, eat at two restaurants on the lake

25-27 Antigua Guatemala

Coffee tour, optional volcano hike, shopping, etc.

27-29 Guatemala City

29 depart back to Michigan from Guatemala City