Guatemala

Medical Summary

The health risk information presented here is summarized from Shoreland Travax®, a decision-support tool used by health care providers to perform a detailed health risk analysis based on specific locations, individual travel styles, and traveler risk behaviors. Travax provides practitioners current, independently researched malaria risk and prevention recommendations in a map-based format that goes beyond the annual WHO and US CDC statements included here. Not included here are current reports from Travax of disease outbreaks or environmental events that may pose elevated risks to travelers' health and safety. The Providers ***section of this site offers a directory of health care providers who utilize Shoreland Travax for travel health counseling.*** Learn more about the detailed reports and maps available from these practitioners ***(includes links to samples).***

General Information

Guatemala is a developing nation classified as upper middle income. Located in Central America (south of Mexico and west of Belize), the climate is classified as humid equatorial (long dry season) in the south and humid equatorial (no dry season) in the north, with cooler temperatures in some high-altitude areas.

Vaccinations

Yellow Fever

Although yellow fever does not occur in Guatemala, an official yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required depending on your itinerary.

- ***Requirement:*** A certificate proving yellow fever vaccination is required for travelers aged ≥ 1 year coming from countries with risk of YF transmission. This also applies to airport transit stops (no exit through immigration checkpoint) longer than 12 hours in risk countries.

Other Vaccines

Depending on your itinerary, your personal risk factors, and the length of your visit, your health care provider may offer you vaccination against COVID-19, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, influenza, measles, mumps, rubella, rabies, or typhoid fever. Routine immunizations, such as those that prevent tetanus/diphtheria or "childhood" diseases, should be reviewed and updated as needed.

Malaria

The following is current information as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

WHO—***International Travel and Health*** (current online update, Country List)

(2021) Malaria risk due almost exclusively to ***P. vivax*** (99.9%) exists throughout the year below 1500 m.
Malaria risk is highest in the departments of Escuintla (especially in the municipalities of Gomera, Masagua, Santa Lucia Cotzumalguapa and Tiquisate) and Alta Verapaz (in the municipalities of Telemán, Panzós and La Tinta).
Malaria risk is moderate in the departments of Suchitepéquez, Retalhuleu and Izabal.
Malaria risk is low in the rest of the departments (Chiquimula, Zacapa, Baja Verapaz, San Marcos, Peten, Jutiapa, Jalapa, El Progreso, Santa Rosa, Guatemala, Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango and Quiche).

- Recommended prevention in risk areas: **B** - Risk of ***P. vivax*** malaria only. Mosquito bite prevention plus chloroquine chemoprophylaxis.[a]

  [a]Alternatively, for travel to rural areas with low risk of malaria infection, mosquito bite prevention can be combined with stand–by emergency treatment (SBET).

WHO Country List footnote: When available, the date of the most recent update or confirmation is indicated in parentheses in the country list. If no date is indicated, the most recent update or confirmation was provided before 2013.

CDC—***Health Information for International Travel*** (current online edition)

Areas with malaria: Rural areas only at altitudes < 1,500 m (4,921 ft). None in Antigua, Guatemala City, or Lake Atitlán.

- Drug resistance[3] : None.
- Malaria species: ***P. vivax*** 97%, ***P. falciparum*** 3%.
- Recommended chemoprophylaxis: Escuintla Province: Atovaquone-proguanil, chloroquine, doxycycline, mefloquine, or tafenoquine.[4] All other Areas with malaria: Atovaquone-proguanil, chloroquine, doxycycline, mefloquine, primaquine,[4] or tafenoquine.[4]

[3] Refers to ***P. falciparum*** malaria unless otherwise noted.

[4] Primaquine and tafenoquine can cause hemolytic anemia in people with G6PD deficiency. Patients must be screened for G6PD deficiency before starting primaquine or tafenoquine. See ***Tafenoquine Approved for Malaria Prophylaxis and Treatment*** for more information.

Other Concerns

Travelers' Diarrhea

High risk exists throughout the country, including in deluxe accommodations. Community sanitation and food safety measures are generally inadequate. Some itineraries (e.g., remote destinations, austere accommodations) and activities (e.g., ecotourism, eating street or local-market food) further increase risk.

Travelers should observe food and beverage precautions, which reduce the likelihood of illness.

Travelers should carry loperamide for self-treatment of diarrhea and, if risk is moderate to high, an antibiotic to add if diarrhea is severe. Consult a knowledgeable health care provider regarding which antibiotic is appropriate for you and most effective for your destination.

Other Food-Borne Illnesses

Precautions to prevent seafood poisoning may be needed.

Insect- and Arthropod-Borne Diseases

Chagas' disease (American trypanosomiasis), chikungunya, dengue, leishmaniasis, West Nile virus, Zika may pose a risk. Personal protective measures are important.

Other Disease and Health Risks

Additional concerns include air pollution, anthrax disease, helminths, leptospirosis, marine hazards, melioidosis, sexually transmitted infections, snakebites, tuberculosis.

Consular Advice

The material below includes information from the US Department of State (DOS), the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCO), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), as well as from additional open-source material. Standard safety precautions that apply to all international travel can be found in the Library article Safety and Security***.***

Consular Travel Advice

Due to crime, US (DOS) advises avoiding travel to Zone 18 of Guatemala City, Villa Nueva (Guatemala Department), San Marcos Department (except the city of San Marcos), and Huehuetenango Department (except the city of Huehuetenango) and advises reconsidering travel (or avoiding nonessential travel) to the rest of the country. UK (FCO) and Canada (GAC) have more limited warnings. Australia (DFAT) has no current warning.

Terrorism Risk

No intrinsic risk of attack by terrorist groups exists, but unforeseen attacks are possible.

Crime

High risk of violent crime (armed robbery, sexual assault, carjacking, gang-related violence, and murder) and high risk of petty crime exist throughout the country, especially in Guatemala City; in areas frequented by tourists (including national parks and

volcanoes); on roads between international airports hotels in Guatemala City and Antigua; in areas bordering El Salvador, Honduras, Belize, and Mexico (particularly Sierra del Lacandón and Laguna del Tigre national parks).

Theft of valuables from unattended accommodations is common.

Express kidnappings to force cash withdrawals at ATMs may occur throughout the country.

Scams involving ATMs and false identity (such as criminals posing as police officers and tour guides) have been reported.

Risk exists of robberies and/or assaults occurring after consuming intentionally drugged food or drink; tourists are frequently targeted.

Civil Unrest

Protests and demonstrations occur throughout the country and are generally peaceful but have the potential to turn violent without warning. Bystanders are at risk of harm from violence or from the response by authorities. Disruption to transportation, free movement, or the ability to carry out daily activities may occur.

Unsafe Areas

A dangerous security environment exists in areas bordering Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, and Belize. Piracy involving private leisure vessels may occur in the Lake Isabal area.

Water Safety

Hazardous water conditions (including currents, tides, and undertows) may occur, especially along the Pacific coast. Heed posted warnings, and avoid beaches that are not patrolled. Do not swim alone or after dark, and do not walk on any beach after dark.

Rent water sports equipment from reputable operators. Scuba dive only with personnel certified by PADI or NAUI, and use equipment only from PADI- or NAUI-certified dive operators.

Transportation Safety

High risk of traffic-related injury or death exists. The road traffic death rate is 12 to 24 per 100,000 population. The rate is less than 10 in most high-income countries.

Seat belt laws are poorly enforced.

Drunk driving laws are poorly enforced.

Structural standards for vehicles may not meet international standards.

Natural Disasters

The hurricane season is from June through November. The rainy season is from May through November. Floods, mudslides, and landslides may occur.

Seismic and volcanic activity frequently occur.

Consular Information

Selected Embassies or Consulates in Guatemala

- United States: [+502] 2326-4000; gt.usembassy.gov
- Canada: [+502] 2363-4348; www.guatemala.gc.ca
- United Kingdom: [+502] 2380-7300; www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-embassy-guatemala
- Australia: [+502] 2334-6817

Guatemala's Embassies or Consulates in Selected Countries

- In the U.S.: [+1] 202-745-4953
- In Canada: [+1] 613-233-7237
- In the U.K.: [+44] 020-7221-1525
- In Australia: [+61] 02-6189-1311

Visa/HIV Testing

HIV testing is not required to obtain a tourist, work, or residence visa.

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