

Greetings from the Center for Global Education and Experience (CGEE) at Augsburg College. We are pleased that your student will be a participant in “Social Change in Central America: Exploring Peace, Justice and Community Engagement” this coming semester.

Here is [a link to the Pre-Departure Guide](#) that was provided to program participants. In particular, please note the information about communication (telephone, mailing address, etc.) in the General Information section.

Accommodations

Students will be living in a variety of accommodations during the semester:

- Guatemala: students will live with an urban family in the city of Panajachel, after a brief stay at a local hotel.
- Costa Rica: students spend a few days in a San Jose guest house and then live with families southeast of the city. There will be two other shorter homestays in a community north of San Jose, and one several hours south of the city.

We have competent, well-experienced staff in each country who will provide excellent leadership during the program. In addition to the resident staff in each country, a Study Abroad Facilitator will be traveling with the group throughout the term. (See the Local Information section in the [Pre-Departure Guide](#).)

Safety and Security

Two concerns that are frequently expressed when it is learned that the students will travel to Central America are health and safety. Please be assured that the safety of our program participants is of the highest priority. Basic recommendations on personal safety and health are given in [Pre-Departure Guide](#), and more detailed information is provided to students during orientation in each country.

We keep a very close watch on the situation Central America. CGEE has permanent staff in Guatemala and Nicaragua, consultants and other numerous resource persons in the region with whom we keep in close contact. We monitor security issues through regular contact with our on-site staff who are, in turn, in contact with U.S. Embassies. We also receive regular safety and security reports from the [Overseas Security Advisory Council](#) (OSAC) and we regularly check international travel warnings and public safety announcements, provided by the U.S. Department of State.

Additionally, our medical and emergency services provider, [Educational and Institutional Insurance Administrators, Inc.](#), (EIIA) sends us regular international security reports and provides us with pre-trip resources.

Over the past 40 years CGEE has coordinated more than 1,700 semester and short term programs around the world for over 20,000 participants, and has therefore gained a great deal of experience traveling in these regions. We would not hesitate to cancel or to re-route any portion of the program if we it unsafe to travel there.

Health Issues

As far as health is concerned, many students will have to endure a bout or two of diarrhea sometime during their stay, but reasonable precautions in eating and food preparation can minimize the occurrence of this "discomfort." Our staff will be instructing the students about preventive measures, as well as what to do during the family stay.

In the case of a more serious illness, there are good doctors and hospitals in Guatemala and Costa Rica if a situation calls for professional health care. Insurance is also provided through the program (see Insurance Information in the Health and Safety Matters section of the [Pre-Departure Guide](#)).

Contact Information

Center for Global Education and Experience, Augsburg University, Minneapolis, Minnesota:

24-hour Emergency Cell Phone: 612/817-2830

[Margaret Anderson](#), U.S. Manager

Phone: 612/330-1685

Center for Global Education and Experience Staff in Central America:

Study Abroad Facilitator (travels with students to all three countries): [Ruth Garrido](#)

- Cell phone: Guatemala: 011-502-5896-8303
- Cell phone: Costa Rica: 011-506-8349-9382

Guatemala: [Fidel Xinico](#)

Office Phone: 011-502-7830-8436

Cell phone (emergencies only): 011-502-4031-7917 or 011-502-5047-3961

Costa Rica: [Cesar Acevedo](#)

Cell phone: 011-506-8496-4557

Educational and Institutional Insurance Administrators, Inc.

- [FAQ](#)
- [General Information Brochure](#)
- [Member Card](#)

Helpful On-line Resources

- [Center for Global Education and Experience](#)
- U.S. Department of State: Of particular interest:
 - [Countries and Regions](#)
 - [Travel and Living Abroad](#)
 - Official Blogs: ([Guatemala](#)) ([Costa Rica](#))
- On-line news sources: [CNN Americas section](#)
- [Advice for Parents at StudentsAbroad.com](#)

As you may realize, the experience your student is about to have is a very intense and challenging one. For many, the study abroad experience will stimulate a great deal of reflection about personal values and life directions, and you may notice changes upon return home. Your student will likely want to share all the adventures with you and may, at times, find it difficult to communicate the intensity of the experience. An accepting and open environment will make it easier to share and integrate the experience.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns:

612-330-1159

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