



GPSA for Health 2012 Frequently Asked Questions

I am a senior. So, I will have graduated by the time the program starts. Can I still apply?

Absolutely.

What are the dates for this year's program?

The dates are different each year. To find your dates, visit the program details section of the web site.

I have never traveled before. Will I be able to do this?

No one but you can tell you if you are ready. However, many of the past participants in GPSA trips have never traveled before. Our staff are experienced travelers; good guides as well as talented faculty. They will be there to help you.

Is it safe?

Traveling can be scary. But a GPSA trip is the one of the safest trips you can take. There is less violent crime in the developing world than in the United States. Also, you will be accompanied by the GPSA faculty at all times. At no time may any GPSA program participant travel alone. GPSA has selected sites very carefully with safety in mind. If you or your parents are concerned about safety, GPSA encourages you to contact us at info@gpsa.us We'll discuss the risks and the steps we take the minimize them.

I really want to go, but my parents are freaking out. What can I do?

Your parents may have valid concerns about your safety. Or, they may simply not know enough about GPSA to feel secure. Tell your parents to write to us at info@gpsa.us. Tell them to request that the Director call them back. Dr. Malkin has dealt with hundreds of parents over a decade of running summer programs. He will work with your parents to find a comfortable solution for everyone.

I'll be able to call home every day, right!?!?

No! Homesickness and culture shock are a challenge for everyone on a GPSA summer program. The food will be new and so will be the language and the people. However, calling home tends to prolong the period of homesickness, rather than shortening it.

But what if I need to get a hold of my son/daughter right away?

Parents of participants are provided with a US phone number that they can call 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. The phone rings in Guatemala and parents can speak to GPSA staff at any time of the day or night.

I guess I can call my son's cell phone, anyway.

No! GPSA participants are not allowed to bring cell phones on the trip.

Can I bring my laptop?

No! In addition, iPads, iPods, MP3 players, CD players, Game Boys and all other electronics, including cell phones, are forbidden on all GPSA trips. These are frequent targets for petty crime, placing our participants at unnecessary risk. Also, they are a distraction from helping the communities we are serving. All electronics are confiscated at the beginning of the trip.

What about my camera?

Digital cameras are allowed (unless they are part of a cell phone, in which case they are not allowed). We recommend that everyone bring a digital camera.

What if my son gets sick?

Fortunately, GPSA trips are always accompanied by medical staff. Minor illnesses are dealt with immediately on site. For more serious illnesses, GPSA staff will contact you and SOS (our medical evacuation insurance) to coordinate treatment.



What will I be doing each day?

Helping! The program description has more details specific to your trip.

Do I work every day?

GPSA trips are rigorous and demanding. You should expect to be working most days of the experience. There are some planned social trips however, your main objective is to learn and to help.

My parents would like to visit me during the trip. OK?

No.

I'd like to visit my daughter on site. Can I?

No.

I'd like to extend my stay to visit some cool ruins. How do I arrange that?

The GPSA trip starts and ends at the GUA airport. Normally, all students elect to fly on the same flights. However, if your parents are with you or make special arrangements with GPSA, it is possible to make other plans.

Can I use my Dad's frequent flier miles?

Yes. Please see the departure dates information for the latest departure restrictions.

Will I be traveling alone?

No. Once the trip has started, all GPSA participants travel as a group.

Can I get financial aid for the non-refundable deposit?

No.

How much spending money do I need to bring?



You may need money on the first and last day of the program for food in the airports. In addition, there are some tourist shops near the sites we will be visiting. There also small shops in most towns where we work. A total of about \$5 USD per day plus what you think you're going to spend on souvenirs is about right. There are no locations that accept credit cards anywhere on a GPSA trip. Checks are also not accepted (including traveler's checks). There are no ATM cards machines. There is limited access to money changers at some sites.

Recommendations concerning spending money change frequently. Check with your coordinator during the last month before leaving to get the latest advice.

Almost everyone speaks English. So, will I really need to struggle in another language?

Everyone does not speak English where you are going. You may find a few people who do, but very few. You are genuinely expected to learn a substantial amount of the local language and use it. Some people find it quite advantageous to start studying as soon as they are accepted into the program. Often your level of enjoyment of the summer and your acceptance will be proportional to your speaking attempts of the local language. Fortunately, mastery of the language is not required. Trying is enough.

I know that it is poor in the developing world, but my living conditions will be pretty close to what I am used to in the US, right?

No. Living and working in the developing world is quite difficult. You should expect to find significant challenges in the simple tasks of your daily living (including such basics as drinking water and going to the bathroom) and at work.

Showers are typically cold, if they are available. There is typically no heat and there is never air conditioning. You may need to walk long distances. Some sites are quite cold. Be sure to carefully check the packing list for your trip before departure.

What if I don't want to use the flights arranged by GPSA?

Check the departure dates for the latest information on travel. Most programs do not require a specific flight, but one may be strongly recommended.



I won't be able to participate in some of the summer because I have a family commitment. Is that OK?

No. If you cannot be part of the program from the first day to the last, then you cannot participate.

I've been raising money and I've been successful, but I'm concerned that I might not get into the program. What happens to that money?

For students who are not accepted into the program, all funds paid to GPSA are returned. Students who are accepted into the program, but choose not to go can either have all the funds returned to them (except the non-refundable deposit), or they can have GPSA hold their funds and defer placement for up to one year.

Is there any physical activity?

Yes. Quite a bit. You can expect to be walking many miles some days. People in the developing world do not have personal cars. Some sites are remote and mountainous. Be sure you're ready for frequent, vigorous walking. In addition, you may be asked to do physical labor in the construction of schools, churches or clinics. Check with your trip director for specific details.

My site is called Calhuitz, Guatemala but I can't find it on a map?

This is a beautiful site in the mountains of Guatemala. There are no paved roads to Calhuitz. You won't find it on Google maps, or any maps for that matter!

To find a satellite image of Calhuitz on MapQuest, go to

<http://classic.mapquest.com/maps?l=15.7569&g=-91.6258>

Or, go the www.mapquest.com, select "Go to Classic Mapquest" and under "International" select "Map by Lat Long" then select "Degrees"

and type in 15 degrees, 45 minutes, 25 seconds by -91 degrees, 37 minutes, 33 seconds.

If you prefer Google, go to:

<http://bit.ly/gZTkwq>

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or go to www.google.com/maps. In the search box, type "15.7569 -91.6258." Google has the Spanish names for the towns. But the inhabitants do not use these names much.

You won't see much, but the arrow is centered on Calhuitz. If you zoom in, you'll just be able to pick out a "town" northeast of the center of the image. That town is called San Jose (not what Google calls it) and it is the nearest market town. There are no paved roads there either but there are many buildings and some shops.