



Health and Safety Questions Delegations to Central America

In this document, we address some of the most common questions about health and safety. In addition to providing information here, we also encourage you to reach out to us for further conversation. Security and health concerns are valid and important to talk about as you consider traveling to Central America.

Safety and Security

The levels of violence are high in both Guatemala and El Salvador. Though tourist groups do face certain risks, the risks are much greater for Central Americans than for people visiting the area. A lot of the news stories focus on forms of violence that specifically target Central Americans.

While we cannot make guarantees, we do take your safety very seriously and we take all available precautions. We travel in private vans during the day; we provide in-country orientation for delegates; we stay in places that we know; and we watch current events and create safety plans accordingly based on our knowledge of the area. We also ensure that delegates are accompanied by staff and/or community members at all times. Our hosts are our best resources because they know their environment best.

The majority of the Sister Parish communities are in rural areas that are considerably safer than the big cities. We usually like to spend a day or two in the capital city to learn about the history and visit historical sites, but we are also open to talking about other options, if that would help alleviate safety concerns for future delegates.

The safety precautions we take vary somewhat from community to community. Please reach out to us if you would like more information about a specific community or if you would like to talk through any of your concerns.

Mosquito-borne Illnesses

The appearance of mosquito-borne viruses like Zika and Chikungunya is a serious health concern for Salvadorans and Guatemalans living in high-risk areas. Dengue and malaria are also present in some parts of the country (although most communities we visit have not had any recent cases of malaria).

We recommend that people wear protective clothing and use mosquito repellent (at least 30% Deet is most effective, but there are other options on the CDC website). During the rainy season, we may recommend wearing repellent during the day as well as at night because the mosquito that carries Zika, Chikungunya and Dengue is active during the day as well as at night. We will talk with groups about using mosquito nets while visiting higher-risk areas. Some delegates also choose to treat their clothing and bedding before

leaving the U.S. We recommend you check the CDC website for up to date information about the risks, as well as prevention measures.

Please talk to us about the specific risks in your sister community. Some Sister Parish communities are in the highlands and have no cases of mosquito-borne viruses in the community.

Food Safety

The delegation orientation manual has a list of recommendations for delegates that we also review in-country at the beginning of the delegation. To prepare for homestays, we meet with host families, answer any questions they have, and review recommendations for food preparation. Most host families follow these recommendations for their own family as well. In planning for the travel outside of your sister community, whenever possible, Sister Parish staff arranges meals in restaurants that we know or that have been recommended.