

## Rainbow World Fund Guatemala Journey July 20-30, 2023

Link to online information about the trip: <http://www.rainbowfund.org/guatemala-travel>



*Arco de Santa Catalina in Antigua*

***Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy; else we may find ourselves treading on someone's dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was there before our arrival. - Max Warren***

The Rainbow World Fund Guatemalan Journey is an educational and cultural experience. We will learn from Guatemalans about the realities in their country by visiting projects that serve the Guatemalan people and engaging in social, cultural and artist exchanges. The trip includes visits to diverse communities, meeting with leaders from a variety of fields, and spending time with the LGBTQ community to learn about their struggle for full civil rights. We will experience great Guatemalan hospitality and there will be plenty of opportunities to practice your Spanish. The program strives to connect participants with the realities, struggles and hopes that Guatemalans experience each day. We also hope to bridge connections with Americans and Guatemalans in order to build understanding and partnerships. This is RWF's ninth trip to Guatemala.

Rainbow World Fund (RWF) is partnering with World Pilgrims to create our journey to Guatemala. Our guides for the trip are Julio Alva, a native of Guatemala, and Doris Kizinna, a native of Canada. They are world travelers and seasoned guides. Rainbow World Fund has worked with them for many years. They have amazing knowledge and connections that make our journey extraordinary.

**Every trip is unique. Here are a few of the many highlights from past trips:**

- Help deliver humanitarian aid
- Learn about life on a coffee plantation



***Church ruins in Antigua***

- Sit with a weaver as she designs fabric of brilliant color and listen to her dreams for the future
- Visit schools, medical clinics, and the other institutions
- Shop at the the largest outdoor craft and art market in Central America
- Meet with the mothers of the civil war disappeared
- Encounter a variety of lawyers and activists working for human rights
- Dialogue with religious leaders and ecumenical health care workers in marginalized areas of Guatemala City
- Learn about US foreign policy and the School of the Americas
- Visit ecological areas and learn about the fair trade and organic movement
- Make friends with other LGBTQ+ and cool straight people who are traveling with you on this journey
- Use the journey as a path for personal growth, transformation and healing with the help of our facilitators
- Learn about the reality of street children
- Participate in dialogues with diverse communities discussing LGBTQ+ issues
- Spend time with a Mayan Shaman - participate in an ancient healing ritual
- Journey underground through sacred Mayan ritual caves
- Be inspired by, poets, theologians and human rights advocates

- Shop at the the largest outdoor craft and art market in Central America
- Visit an LGBTQ+ nonprofit - learn about HIV care and services
- Visit the Women In Solidarity Clinic - learn about the healthcare system
- Meet the women of OTRANS - brave transgender activists
- Deliver supplies to orphanages and children's homes
- Tour the historic center of Guatemala City, including the Cathedral and National Palace
- Hear the stories of the survivors of the 36 year civil war
- Spend a few days in colonial Antigua where the architectural glories of the past provide the setting for the struggles of today
- Reflect on the war history in the Quiche in an afternoon with the local leadership
- Spend two days on Lake Atitlán area getting to know the local community
- Meet the founders and members of internationally renowned NGOs
- Witness religious rituals of the local people in Santiago Atitlán
- Visit Art and Historical museums and other places of cultural interest

### **Save A Life**

Since 2004, over 100 RWF volunteers have delivered 7000 pounds of medical and school supplies and \$150,000 in financial grants. Projects that RWF supports include a women's clinic in Guatemala City, an orphanage in Santa Apolonia, a water project in the Mayan village of Tapesquillo, a school in Santa Cruz del Quiché, Project Safe Passage at the Guatemala City garbage dump, and projects that support the LGBTQ community in Guatemala City.

Trip participants are asked to collect medical and school supplies during the months prior to departure. Each person is allowed two 50 lbs bags plus carry-on baggage on this international flight. We encourage people fill their suitcases with over the counter



*Visiting the Women and Solidarity Clinic - the operating lamp was a gift from RWF*

medications, vitamins and school supplies that we will distribute in Guatemala. Simple medications like Aspirin, Ibuprofen, Imodium, and Hydrocortisone cream are beyond reach of most Guatemalans and are greatly appreciated. The antibiotics, anti-fungals, diabetes medication

We will provide guidance on what medications to collect. Our groups have made a huge difference in the lives of hundreds.

### **Pre Departure Preparations and Arrival guidelines**

We are still recruiting people for the trip. Please ask your friends to join us.

**Getting there:** You are responsible for arranging your own flight. Fly in and out of Guatemala City Airport (GUA). We will suggest a flight for you so that everyone will arrive at or near the same time.



### ***Making new friends***

**Supplies:** Every one is encouraged to collect medical and educational supplies to bring to Guatemala (in your suit cases). Here is a list of suggested supplies: <http://www.rainbowfund.org/links/supplies.html> We will give you an email and a snail mail letter for you to send out to your friends, family, co-workers, doctor, dentist, ... explaining the journey and asking that they help you collect supplies. You will be surprised at the quality/quantity of supplies that they collect.

As you are traveling internationally you are allowed two 50 lbs bags, a carry-on suitcase, and a shoulder bag. Participants should consider filling at least one 50 lb bag with medical and schoolsupplies for Guatemala. We encourage you fill the other bag. As this is a jeans and a t-shirt trip, most people live out of their carry-on suitcase. You can have laundry done on the trip. We will not be moving the bags around too much once we're in Guatemala.



When you get there and see the impact of these supplies you will wish you were able to bring more. For San Francisco folks, you can purchase large duffel bags and suitcases many stores on Mission Street for about \$10.

You do not need shots or vaccines or a VISA to go the Guatemala -- just a current passport.

**Communication:** it's a small world, Internet is available at or near all the places we will be staying. Most people's cell phones will work in Guatemala – please be mindful of the cost of international service. Though, we encourage you do not use your cell phone – unplug from your life back home and be fully present in Guatemala.

### Sample Trip Itinerary

Below is a sample schedule from a previous trip. It is here to give you an idea of what a previous trip was like. We are currently working on this year's itinerary. We will be adding some more cool stuff like time with a Mayan Shaman. Keep in mind that it is best to



be flexible with group travel schedules in a developing nation. We may have to delete something in order to make room for something else.

**Airport:** We will be meeting at the Guatemala City airport.

**Day 1-2:** Arrive at Guatemala City airport. After we land and gather our suitcase, we will meet our guides and then we will travel an hour away to Antigua. The nearly 500-year-old city is surrounded by three volcanoes - it is like being transported back in time. Antigua will be a base for us to visit humanitarian projects and sites of cultural interest. We will meet with OTRANS a nonprofit that services the transgender population. OTRANS runs a defacto "underground railroad" that helps transgender woman from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras find safety, supportive community, and work. While in Antigua will have and chance to visit the towns historic plazas, churches, and ruins. We will visit Coaba Farms and learn about organic farming and how climate change is impacting the country.



**Day 3-6:** We will then head 2.5 hours south to stunning Lake Atitlán - a UNESCO World Heritage Site. On the way there we will stop in Iximche an ancient Mayan City archeological site for a tour. We will stay on the northern shore of Lake Atitlán in the town of Panajachel (aka "Pana") a cosmopolitan crossroads. The town offer stunning views of the volcanic lake and is a home to many artists. We will stay in Pana for four nights and use it as a base for our adventures.

We will take a day trip to Chichicastenango, a town in the El Quiché Department, known for its traditional K'iche' Maya culture. 98.5% of the municipality's population is indigenous Mayan K'iche. We will visit the 400-year-old church of Santo Tomás and be there for the famous outdoor market - the largest in Central America.

We will take a boat over the lake to San Juan La Laguna one of the villages around the lake. We will visit a coffee project, and the artisans of San Juan, visual artists and see their incredible paintings. We will visit the Natural Dye Weaving Centre and the Chocolate Café.

We will participate in an ancient healing ceremony with a Mayan Shaman. We will learn about the 36-year civil war (1960-1996) and how it continues to impact the country. We will learn about the many forms of mysticism practiced in the area. We will visit a variety of humanitarian projects. There will be an opportunity to hike in the Reserva Natura Atitlan.

We will visit Santa Lucia Utatlan, our guide Julio's community, and meet the women of the Mayan Skills Project. We will attend a local concert.

**Day 7-8:** We will travel one hour to the mountain valley city of Quezaltenango and stay there for two nights. On the way there we will go to Chwitiziribal and visit a school and the Fuentes Georginas hot springs. Quezaltenango has a mix of architectural styles from Spanish colonial, to neoclassical, to gothic. Among other highlights we will visit a fair trade weaving cooperative and learn about this ancient tradition.

**Day 9-10:** We will return to Antigua for the last two nights of our trip. We will meet with the leaders of Transiciones (Transitions) a nonprofit that is dedicated to advancing the rights, dignity and social inclusion of Guatemalans with disabilities by providing mobility equipment and opportunities for independent living. Transiciones makes personalized wheelchairs suitable for local conditions, as well as prosthetic legs and orthotic braces. Most of the staff in the wheelchair factory have mobility impairments from gunshots, polio, motor vehicle accidents, spina bifida or other birth defects. As wheelchair users themselves, they understand the fundamental importance of having the right wheelchair for each user.

\*\*\* There may be time for an optional trip up to the northern jungle to visit the Tikal - a city and cultural center for ancient Mayan civilization. Many beautiful buildings have been uncovered and many more wait to be discovered. Among the many Maya sites in Central America, Tikal is perhaps the most breathtaking because of the scattered impressive pyramids and buildings which have been restored in an area with many more ruined buildings still enveloped by the jungle. Please let us know ASAP if you are interested in a day trip to Tikal.

**Day 11:** After breakfast we will depart from Antigua and drive 1 hour to the airport in Guatemala City.

We can help make arrangements if you wish to stay beyond Day 11.



*Delivering school supplies.*

## What to Bring

- \$7-10 US for the bus shuttle to the airport on departure
- Spending money \$150-\$400 should be enough for buying water and drinks and snacks along the way, arts & crafts to bring home from cooperatives and markets. The higher range is for people that want to purchase lots of gifts. It is good to bring your spending money in US cash. Travelers cheques are harder to change into quetzals. In Guatemala City and Antigua you will have the opportunity to exchange some of your money for quetzals. \$1 US = 8 quetzals. You can generally use your US dollars throughout the trip if you wish.
- Money Belt or Money Pouch (very important) under your clothes, not a fanny pack or simply be careful – use your front pants pocket. RWF groups have never had any problem with theft so this is a precaution.
- Passport and one photocopy to give to the leaders. Please leave one photocopy at home with your family as well. Take a picture of your passport and email it to yourself.
- Snacks for the plane ride and a water bottle so you don't get dehydrated.

**Clothing:** Because we are traveling in a delegation representing Rainbow World Fund and the LGBTQ+ community and will be visiting groups and people in an official capacity we recommend ~~clothes~~ ~~clothing~~ that reflect the respect we have for our hosts.... in choosing your clothing please be aware on how you will be perceived.

- Summer clothing, light layers, t-shirts, light long sleeve shirts, skirts, pants, dresses and shorts. It is recommended that you bring clothes that will protect you from the sun. Historically the weather on our trips has been pretty mild. Even though we are in the tropics we are around 4k-5k feet (Denver, CO is just over 5k feet, to give you an idea). Previous trip's temperatures have ranged to the 65Fs to 80F.
- It might not be very hot but being closer to the equator the sun is more powerful than what we are used to – so keep that in mind.
- Bathing suit (optional for the pool in San Lucas Toliman)
- Two pairs of shoes, one walking, one sandal
- Light rain jacket
- Hat
- Safety pins, needle and thread, extra buttons
- Most of the hotels we are staying at offer laundry service.

### **Toiletries:**

- Toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, soap
- If you wear glasses or contact lenses, bring contact lens solution and a copy of your prescription in case you loose your glasses.
- Sunblock, depending on your skin type 30 spf is recommended
- Lip balm with sunscreen
- Other personal items you may need:
- We will have a group first-aid kit but if you'd like to bring your own band-aids, Tylenol, etc that is a good idea.
- Hand sanitizer
- Insect repellent containing 30% DEET (optional, as we will spend most of the trip at 5000 ft.) We have not had any problem with

mosquitoes. If you plan to go to Tikal to see the Mayan pyramids in the jungle (closer to sea level) the end of the trip, bring some.

- A roll of toilet paper (optional)

### **Medicinal:**

- Multivitamins (if you generally take them)
- Tums or Roloids or Pepto bismol (tablets or liquid)
- Your regular prescription medicine (if you take it) in clearly marked bottles
- Tylenol or other pain medicine
- Imodium (you will most likely have no need for any of the above- we eat at good restaurants and there will be free safe bottle water available through out the trip).

### **Other:**

- Small day pack to keep your things together when we are on day trips
- Water bottle (to refill)
- Film, batteries and camera (if you wish)
- Journal or notebook to chronicle your experience
- Pen and pencil
- A good book
- A watch
- Downloaded music if you need quiet time alone
- Earplugs
- Flashlight
- Alarm Clock
- Photos of home, family and friends to show those you may meet
- Addresses for sending postcards home
- Sunglasses

### **Do not bring:**

- Alcohol or drugs
- Knives or weapons or any kind
- Expensive or expensive looking jewellery
- Flashy or expensive looking clothing
- Political t-shirts, magazines, buttons
- Suggestive or revealing clothing

**Please Note:** Packing light is the best idea, a suitcase, duffel bag, or backpack is fine. You may need to carry your bag at times but not for far distances. Do not carry scissors or nail clippers in your carry-on luggage, they will be confiscated at the airport.



*Visiting Project Safe Passage*

### Conduct Guidelines

- When our group is acting in its official capacity (meetings, tours, visits) it is important to be prompt, alert, and aware and appear interested. At times this will be difficult because you may be tired and translation is sometimes a slow process.
- Be patient and flexible. We can expect delays and possible changes. It helps to keep in mind the situation of economic crisis that Guatemala faces. Please be understanding if things suddenly don't go the way we were expecting them to go.

- Plan for interesting and busy days. Take what you need with you when we leave our accommodation in the morning.
- Try to make it easy for those who will be hosting, guiding and feeding us. If you do have special needs we will do our best to meet them.
- Excessive drinking and taking non-prescription drugs is not permitted.
- Never take a persons photograph without first asking permission. If they refuse please respect their wishes and take the photo only with your eye and heart. You may be asked for money if you try and take a picture of someone. It's up to you if you decide to pay for the photo.
- Do not take pictures of police or government officials in uniform.
- Never leave the hotels or the group alone. Always go out in at least 2 or 3 people and let Jeff or our guides know where you are going and how long you will be gone. In Antigua you can go out alone but just let someone know.
- Some days there may not be a lot of time for quiet or alone time, if you feel you need some personal space, let the group know so they can help you out.
- Connect with your buddy and agree to keep an eye out for each other and for your belongings.
- Keep a small amount of money in your pocket or bag. If you are robbed this way you can give away only some of your money without losing everything. It is also a good idea if you are purchasing items in a market or store, then you don't need to empty out your money belt in public to make a small purchase. If you are robbed the best thing to do is to let the person take what they take, money and valuables can be replaced, you cannot! We have never had an issue with this – this is just a precaution.
- Please be aware that you will be asked for money a lot during the trip. You are seen as wealthy and people know you have money with you. Please be aware that giving money or gifts (pens, pins etc.) while a great connection with one person could result in a many people being attracted to you. This is not how we wish to build relationship with people, we have stuff....we give it away.....we don't have enough stuff to give away....people are

disappointed....you are the giver.....they are the receiver.....this often perpetuates a victim/poverty mentality.

- Keep the photocopy of your passport with you at all times.
- Traveling in a group is a different experience than traveling alone or with only a few others. We need to cooperate and seek to understand one another. We will be living closely together for 10-11 days. If a problem arising within the group or with another person try and come up with a solution together or talk with Jeff, or our guides for some ideas.
- We will have a few mandatory meetings/reflections to evaluate the day and provide a forum for discussion. Participants often find these to be invaluable in helping with process all they are seeing.



## Health Concerns

Getting sick on this trip or any trip is a possibility. Common sense, good personal hygiene and knowing your body are the best tips for staying healthy.

- It is important that the Jeff know if you are suffering from any medical concerns prior to the trip; please talk to us before departure so we can make special arrangements if required. It is





also important that if you are feeling unwell during the trip you let us know so we can check in with you.

- It is a good idea that your tetanus booster shot is up to date (most people get one every ten years). No immunizations are required to travel to Guatemala. Check with your doctor.
- Whenever possible eat a balanced diet. The food will be especially prepared for us and will be safe to eat. The meals are hearty and delicious; however, it will not be your typical “American” chow. We encourage you to try new things. It’s important to try and not be too fussy and to show you have enjoyed what our hosts have prepared for us. Get used to tortillas with most meals! Guatemalan food is very mildly spiced. Most people say they actually eat much better on the trip than at home.
- Walking barefoot is a bad idea. There are parasites that are found in the ground and can be transferred to you through barefeet. The best idea is to wear closed shoes but sandals are ok. Be aware that the sidewalks and ground will not be even like in the USA, pay special attention to where you are walking and how uneven the ground is. A twisted ankle is a terrible waste.

- Animal bites: rabies is more common in tropical countries as are stray animals, especially dogs. Please stay away from stray dogs and cats. Rabies shots really hurt.
- Sun exposure: It is important to expose yourself gradually to the sun and stay out of the sun if possible between 11 am-2pm. The tropical sun is extreme and will burn you before you know it, even if you think you are someone who doesn't burn. Use a sunscreen or sunblock (SPF 15-30 or more is recommended). Wear clothing that covers your skin, hats with brims and sunglasses. The sun can make you really sick...it feels great at the moment but....
- Jet lag: Get enough sleep before the trip. Eat light meals while traveling and try to sleep on the plane. When you arrive in Guatemala, eat and sleep according to local time and you will acclimatize quite quickly.

### **Traveler's Diarrhea:**

- Tea, coffee, soft drinks, pasteurized milk, boiled bottled water are safe to drink.
- If we eat out we will be going to restaurants where filtered/bottled water is used. If you have a concern order a coke or a beer in a bottle (that way you can be sure of safety).
- Use your water bottle when you brush your teeth, do not use tap water to brush your teeth. Avoid getting water in your mouth in the shower.
- Drink plenty of water so you don't get dehydrated. It is important to tell Jeff and our guides if you aren't feeling well.
- Taking Pepto Bismol is a good idea if you have an upset stomach, it will calm and sooth your system
- You should only take Imodium if you are traveling or needing to be out and you will not be able to get to a bathroom if you need one. Imodium actually blocks up your system and while it helps in the short term it doesn't allow the bacteria that is causing the problem to leave your system quickly.
- If you do start to feel dehydrated (fever, dry mouth, dark urine, reduced output of urine) we will give you a supplement, which will help to balance the salt, sugar and potassium in your system.

You may wish to ask your doctor for a prescription for antibiotics that will cure your traveller's diarrhea or related GI problems.

- If you are really sick we will consult with our hosts regarding seeing a doctor about your ailment. There are clinics/hospitals and doctors in all of the areas we are visiting.



### **Dengue Fever:**

Note this is mainly informational. Dengue Fever is present in Guatemala; however, we will be at 5000 ft. during most of the trip and mosquitoes will not be around. If we do go to lower altitudes it will be during the daytime, not at dusk or dawn when mosquitoes are out. For those of you who are staying extra days and traveling

to the jungle of Tikal, we will give you simple instructions on how to avoid any problematic exposure. Bring Insect repellent containing 30% DEET - if you forget to bring it just ask another group member for some.

Dengue Fever is a viral infection that is spread to humans by the bite of female Aedes mosquitoes.



## Remembering your experience - Journaling...

Keeping a journal can be an important part of your cross-cultural experience. A journal will record your observations, your insights and feelings.

The first few days of your travel take everything in with your senses. Notice colors, the sights, the sounds, the language, the smells, and the smiles on the faces of the people you meet. Make yourself aware of what surrounds you. Write it down while it is still fresh in your mind and heart. You may ask yourself these questions:

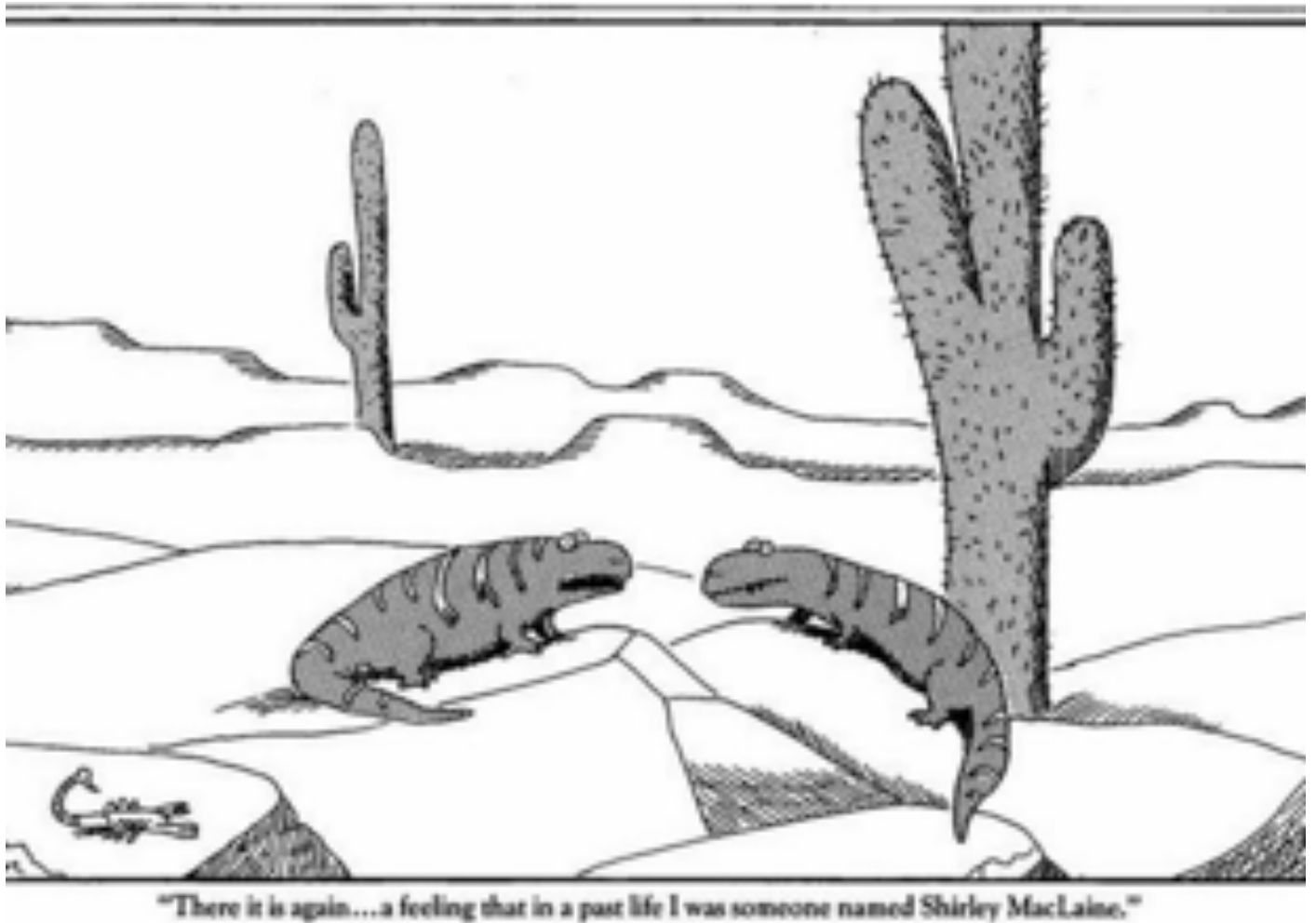
What strikes you each day and awakens a new insight in your heart and soul? How do you feel?

What do you see that cries out for justice?

What stories have you heard?

What do you believe God/the Universe/Shirley MacLaine/your heart/your higher power/(fill in the blank) is trying to say to you. you feel?





Stream of consciousness writing: if you do not know what to write about or want to try a new way of journaling, take your pen and journal and simply begin writing words or phrases that come into your mind. Do not stop writing; don't think about what you are writing. Write this way for at least 5 minutes. When you are done take a read at what you've written. This type of writing can often have profound insights into what you are thinking and feeling if you feel you are unable to access it and may give you clues and a start to what else you like to write about.

You are encouraged on this trip to keep a journal. If you are someone who doesn't enjoy writing, you may wish to keep a photographic journal. Take a picture and keep track as you are taking them....make quick notes for later use: what was that picture

of, how did you feel taking it, what sense words describe the scene. You may also wish to bring a small sketchbook where you could sketch some of the scenes you are witnessing. The purpose is to broaden the experience you are having by intentionally reflecting on it.

Happy journaling...



## Coping with a Crisis Situation

Even though every effort will be made to maintain the safety of the entire group it is important for us to examine how people cope when situations arise and to recognize that there are some helpful ways to react and to act during a crisis. A crisis situation could happen to our group: someone gets lost, someone gets injured, there is an accident, someone is robbed, for example.

These are some standard approaches in how to deal in a crisis situation:

**Body Language:** non-aggressive body language in a crisis situation:

- Keeping hands visible
- Non-aggressive eye contact
- Relaxed stance, arms at side
- No sudden movements or gestures
- Breathing slowly
- If you must move, explain what you are doing.

**Planning for a crisis:**

If you find yourself in a crisis situation, how can you plan for the best possible outcome?

- Use non-aggressive body language
- Pre-determine who will be the group spokesperson
- Positive visualization: don't think of the worst possible scenario but rather the best possible outcome.
- Check-in with yourself, be conscious of your feelings and physical health
- Maintain your humanity and connection as a human being.

**Self Care:**

- Check in with yourself, remember to breath, try and remain calm,
- Communicate your needs after the crisis.