



CASA  
HERRERA

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

## Antigua, Guatemala

### Health and Safety

#### Insurance

All students participating in a UT Faculty-Led Program are covered by a comprehensive international health insurance plan from **CISI (Cultural Insurance Services International)**. This insurance plan works through reimbursement, which means you will pay for services out-of-pocket first and then need to file for reimbursement upon your return home. You can download reimbursement forms online at <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/downloadclaimform.htm>.

In addition, all students enrolled in a Faculty-Led Study Abroad Program are registered for **International SOS**, an international emergency assistance program that provides students with a global 24 hour help line, 7 days a week. The International SOS Philadelphia office can be reached by **dialing (001) (215) 942-8226** and providing **UT's ID number (11BSGC000037)**. Calling this service can help you identify hospitals or pharmacies, identify English-speaking health professionals, request emergency medical assistance including evacuation, and request assistance securing treatment when prepayment of medical services is required. This is **NOT** insurance, but an additional service made available to all students and faculty in UT study abroad programs.

Although not required, we encourage students to also purchase the **ISIC (International Student Identity Card)**, which provides two major benefits: 1) an alternative form of

identification aside from your passport, and 2) travel insurance and service for lost luggage, travel delay or a lost passport. In addition, card members may have access to discounts with participating businesses in Guatemala. For more details, please visit the International Office at UT or the ISIC website at [www.myisic.com](http://www.myisic.com).

### Special Medical Needs

Should you have any special medical needs, please notify Casa's On-Site Coordinator as so that we may accommodate your stay in Antigua accordingly. An example of a special medical need that requires attention may be a particular physical disability or food allergy.

### Other Special Needs

Upon your arrival to Antigua, please be sure to communicate any special needs you may have to Casa's On-Site Coordinator.

### Staying Healthy

#### General Tips

Before doing any travel, please visit and consult with your doctor about your plans. If you take any prescription drugs for allergies or any other medical condition, be sure to acquire enough to last you throughout the duration of your time abroad. If you have any concerns regarding refilling prescriptions or the availability of a medication in Guatemala, contact International SOS.

#### Digestive Problems

Many travelers may experience digestive problems or "Traveler's Diarrhea" (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2010/chapter-2/travelers-diarrhea.aspx>) while abroad because of dietary conditions that differ from their home country and greater exposure to bacteria. Before departing for your program, we recommend obtaining a course of antibiotics from UT Health Services or visiting your independent health services provider for medication advice. It is also a good idea to bring Imodium and Pepto-Bismol with you.

Here are some tips to help prevent a stomach infection:

- **Do not drink water from the tap**  
ALWAYS drink bottled, filtered or boiled water. Even when brushing your teeth, you should use filtered water.
- **Remember to wash your hands thoroughly before eating**
- **Do not eat food from vendors on the street or in the market**  
Although it might be tempting to purchase food from street vendors, sanitary conditions under which the food was prepared are often questionable. In

addition, you will not know how long the food had been sitting out before you arrived. This puts you at greater risk for contracting a bacterial infection.

- **When purchasing produce from the market, be sure to thoroughly clean it before eating**

You can clean fruits and vegetables with a special liquid sold at La Bodegona Supermarket called “Salvavidas,” which is a chlorine-based solution that is dissolved in water and used to disinfect produce.

- **When eating out, avoid eating uncooked meats or raw foods such as salads**

Be cautious about your meal choices when eating at a restaurant. Because many businesses and restaurants in Antigua cater to tourists, there is often little problem with sanitary conditions. Nevertheless, it is prudent to be cautious of what you consume.

Because your homestay family has hosted several students before, you should not worry about undercooked or spoiled foods. Your family does their best to take care of you and your health. If you do have a concern, please feel free to politely ask your family about it or consult with Casa staff.

Should you have any severe illness, digestive or otherwise, and would like to see a doctor, please contact the On-Site Coordinator at Casa Herrera.

### Immunizations

When visiting with your doctor prior to your trip to Guatemala, you may consult with he/she about any recommended immunizations, which may include those for malaria and dengue fever (<http://www.cdc.gov/dengue/>). Malaria and dengue fever are NOT common in Antigua; only in remote parts of Guatemala. Currently, there are no required immunizations for US travelers to enter into Guatemala.

### Mosquitoes

During the rainy season (May – October), mosquitoes are prevalent throughout the region. As part of your first-aid travel kit, you may want to include mosquito repellent and cortisone cream for mosquito bites. Although malaria and dengue fever are not common in Antigua, the mosquitos can be pesky!

### Personal Safety

Because of the high volume of tourism in Antigua, a special unit of tourism police is visible throughout the city. They usually are seen on street corners dressed in navy blue uniforms with yellow fluorescent stripes and wearing navy blue baseball caps.

Nevertheless, petty crime such as ATM fraud and theft occurs daily. Here are some tips to help make your stay safe in Antigua:

- Remember to keep any expensive electronics such as iPods, iPhones, laptops, and digital cameras out of sight when walking in Antigua. If you don't need to carry these items, please leave them at your homestay.
- Dress conservatively and avoid wearing any flashy or expensive clothing and jewelry that might attract unwanted attention.
- Never carry large amounts of cash or your passport. Carry only what you need and your ISIC card or a photocopy of your passport as a form of identification. Always carry your cell phone in the event that you should need to reach Casa Herrera staff at any time.
- Be careful carrying large backpacks or purses – these can often be tempting invitations for thieves. Keep these items close to you and in front of your body. Never leave your backpack or purse unattended.
- Place your money and other small valuable items in your front pockets.
- Remember that your person is more valuable than your possessions. If you should find yourself in the position of being a victim of robbery, cooperate and immediately report the incident to Casa's On-Site Coordinator.
- When out late at night, avoid walking alone. Travel in small groups. Avoid walking lonely streets (during the day or night) where there is little traffic or people. Always stay alert and use good judgment.
- If you go out at night and choose to drink, please remember to drink responsibly and determine a plan with your peers about how you will be traveling home during the late hours. Bars typically close by 11pm and restaurants at 10pm. It is extremely important for your personal safety to be conscious of your person, behavior and your surroundings so that you do not make yourself a target for crime.
- If you need to use an ATM, have a friend accompany you and go during the day. Use ATMs sparingly and only those that are inside a bank and with a guard (such as Citibank and Banco Industrial). Also, avoid consistently using the same ATM.

NOTE: Because of the many tourists who arrive to Antigua, ATM fraud is a common crime. ATM fraud involves the unauthorized copying of your ATM card number and pin number and, subsequently, having large sums of money withdrawn from your account. This can be avoided by being cautious and following our guidelines. Before leaving the US, please be sure to talk to your bank about how to protect your accounts while you are abroad.

- If you are sitting in the Central Plaza, it is common for female and child vendors to approach tourists and ask them to buy something (e.g., young men looking to shine shoes for money). Even if you politely tell them that you are not interested in buying anything, they may be very insistent. Know that this is normal and continue to politely tell them “no” and go about your business.
- If you are sitting at the Central Plaza in the late evening, young men interested in selling drugs sometimes approach tourists. As always, stay away from drugs and decline the person’s offer. Remember - Any individual caught with illegal drugs in a foreign country is subject to the drug laws of that country, not those of the U.S.; as always, ignorance of the law is no excuse. Because of recent drug trafficking problems in Mexico and gang-related activity in Guatemala City, Guatemalan officials and police have a no-tolerance policy for anyone caught with illegal substances. If you are caught, you go to jail and are treated as a gang affiliate.

### **Special Considerations for Women**

Women should avoid wearing any revealing clothing while out in Antigua, as this may be interpreted as an invitation for unwanted attention from Guatemalan men. Also, women should be advised to be careful when meeting and conversing with strange men. What might seem as a friendly conversation could be misinterpreted as a sexual advance.