

## **La Antigua Guatemala COV 12. Safety considerations and emergency links and phone numbers.**

### **1. Safety considerations**

Violent and non-violent crime are unlikely but nonetheless real possibilities in Guatemala, and following some basic rules can help minimize the chances of becoming a victim to these.

**Avoiding unsafe areas and situations is the most important rule to consider.** Antigua Guatemala is a relatively safe city, but as in many cities around the world, walking alone late at night in solitary parts of the city may expose you to potential robberies. Walking accompanied at night also reduces the chances for robberies. Guatemala city can be more risky from this perspective, particularly if you are not familiar with the city and end up in the wrong place. The areas around hotels are usually safe, but it is always a good idea to ask the hotel personnel if that is the case of what areas nearby are safe. Non-violent crime also includes pickpocketing, particularly in crowded places like markets or public transport like buses. Keeping your personal belongings, in particular your wallet and important documents protected and in a safe place, is very important. Avoiding very crowded places is also a good strategy to minimize the chances for pickpocketing.

Transportation like taxis and shuttles are usually safe, particularly if you use a reputable company or arrange the ride through the hotel or a tourism service provider. Uber is also widely available. Public transportation (e.g. public buses), although widely used by Guatemalans, can be less safe, with armed robbery and pickpocketing in buses happens occasionally, especially in places like Guatemala City.

All robbery and theft cases should be reported immediately to the Guatemalan police. If you lose or have your identification or other important documents stolen, notify the authorities and your country's diplomatic representation in Guatemala or in the nearest country where there is one. You may also need to immediately start your document replacement process. If possible, when going to public and crowded places, don't take with you any documents that you won't need, although it is recommended to always have an identification document with you. Most hotels are safe places to leave your documents when you are out in the city or at the conference, and some provide security safes for putting your documents or other valuable items. Credit and debit cards cloning is also a possibility, so try to make sure that the ATMs you use are not rigged, e.g. using ATMs inside banks instead of those located on the street.

Roads in Guatemala, including those connecting Guatemala City and Antigua, can be steep and winding, and take by surprise drivers who are not familiar with them, so take that into consideration if you plan to drive yourself. Public transportation and in particular the cheaper buses that travel between cities, can be overcrowded and safety conditions are not always optimal in them.

Field trips to volcanic areas associated with the conference, including trips to actively erupting volcanoes, will have safety protocols that take the potential risks into account. But visitors going

to volcanic areas on their own should also be aware of the potential hazards associated with the volcanic activity and the terrain in general.

Some country governments also give recommendations to their citizens about traveling to Guatemala, (e.g. “travel advisories”) regarding safety and what to do in different scenarios of needing assistance or help from their respective diplomatic representations. Make sure to read such recommendations if your government provides them.

In case of emergencies, you should contact authorities immediately, depending on the type of emergency. For security related emergencies (robberies or any violent attacks or threats) contact the **Guatemalan National Police at the emergency phone number (dial): 110**. For medical or other health emergencies you can call the **firefighters, who also provide ambulance services at the emergency phone numbers (dial): 122 or dial: 123**. Notice that emergency services usually do not speak English, only Spanish.

Also useful is the phone number of the **tourism office emergency assistance (dial): 1500**. Assistance in the English language may be available through that phone number. To call any of these numbers you will need a local telephone number (i.e. through a local registered SIM card or a locally bought phone).

Medical assistance can be obtained from the national medical emergency system and its network of hospitals and clinics, although this system is often overcrowded and understaffed. Private hospitals and clinics can also provide emergency medical assistance, but costs can be high. International medical and emergency travel insurance often cover medical expenses up to several hundreds of thousands of dollars and more, including services provided in-country, and can also cover medical evacuation to the traveler’s home country, but such insurance services can have somewhat expensive insurance fees. If you suffer medical conditions that require specific medicine or treatment, make sure to bring enough medicine with you or that the medicine or treatment you may need is readily available in Guatemala.

## **2. Resources and links (all phone numbers are local):**

### **National Tourism Institute (INGUAT):**

<https://inguat.gob.gt/>

### **INGUAT office in Antigua Guatemala:**

Address: 5ta. Calle Oriente No. 11 Antigua Guatemala

Open Monday through Friday from 8:00 to 16:00 hrs.

Phone: **2290-2800 Exts. 6030 and 6001**

**Tourism assistance program (PROATUR) hotline: 4796-8164**

**Tourist assistance hotline: 1500 and also 2290-2810**

**National Civil Police emergency line: 110**

**Firefighters and medical emergencies: 122 and 123**