

## GUATEMALA INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY SCHEME WRITE UP

Brogan Boonham, *Geography*

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of July we embarked 5,348 miles for 3 weeks across the Atlantic Ocean to a small city - previously Guatemala's colonial capital surrounded by volcanoes in the South of the country.

We spent our first 5 days getting accustomed to our local area, exploring the rich heritage the city had to offer walking the cobbled streets thriving off small local businesses surrounded by volcanoes at the end of every street it was clear to see Antigua had so much to offer and soon began to plan many exciting excursions when we had free time from volunteering in our coming weeks of the trip.



Our first week of volunteering began with Spanish lessons at the "Nino's de Guatemala" main office in Antigua where we were personally assigned a one on one tutor and had 4-hour intensive Spanish lessons every morning Monday to Friday. This was a once in a lifetime opportunity to develop such a crucial life skill in the ever-growing interconnected world, where in the future we will be in contact with opposite ends of the world in business and ensures a smoother process the more proficient at a second language we become.

It was also particularly useful as we were living in a homestay for an entire week, housed by Maria Lina an older Guatemala local grandmother who accommodates volunteers on their journeys, this experience particularly improved my patience, confidence and understanding as we had to speak Spanish whilst we stayed in her home and met a variety of people during our stay there. An essential skill when we must begin networking for future jobs soon during our time at university.



We also spent a few afternoons at a local school outside of the city, funded by a non – profit organisation called "Nino's de Guatemala" where we worked alongside school children, helping to teach English and getting involved with their school day. These hours were so insightful as it shows us the value of quality of education in order to break the cycle of poverty in the country, the school children seemed genuinely so happy to see us helping out at the school and were extremely friendly.

We then moved 72 miles South towards the coast of the country to a small village called Monterrico known for its volcanic black sand beaches and annual influx of sea turtles. During our last week we worked closely with a local organisation researching the nesting habits of local turtles and built an enclosure on a local beach to bury the nests of eggs we found on our night-time patrols. We also took part in local beach and mangrove clean ups, removing plastic and



wastage off these precious eco - systems. This particularly linked to my ecology and conservation module and gave me first hand insight into environmental pollution and how damaging it is from a local level all the way to globally and has inspired me to carry on researching this further during my last 2 years at university.

We carried out our volunteering through the organisation <https://www.gooverseas.com> and worked with the Monterrico adventure programme, although the organisational ability of our specific programme was not carried out to a high standard it only helped us grow as individuals during our time abroad. As a result of having to adapt, plan and overcome difficult situations whilst in a foreign country we now feel more confident and prepared to tackle problems that come our way in the future both academically and socially.

