

School and conservation project, Guatemala

Shania Pallicer McPherson, *Geography*

Me and another two girls from Geography travelled all the way to Guatemala for two weeks of volunteering. The first week involved Spanish lessons with native speakers in the organisations teaching school, and we also volunteered in a school that they ran / funded. This was based in Antigua, Guatemala. We helped the children learn some English, even helped some of the teachers! We also helped out in the kitchen and got to play games with the children. In the second week we travelled down to Monterrico, Guatemala where we had extra lessons of Spanish and did beach conservation, like beach clean ups, plus looking after turtles! We had spare time on weekends and some evenings to do exciting things like, visit Lake Atitlan, climb up Pacaya Volcano and much more.

We did this through a website called Go Over Seas, it is a very simple and easy website that has multiple opportunities all over the world! I definitely recommend this website. However, although the website was good, the organisation we did the volunteering through wasn't very organised once we actually arrived in Guatemala (Cambio NDG and an independent host). This made part of our trip very stressful, although we did have a great time. However, don't let this put you off, not all companies will be like this, we dealt with it and had the best time either way.



This trip has definitely helped me in several ways. My confidence in speaking Spanish has increased. In Guatemala, many of the locals don't speak English at all, so it encourages you to try your hardest. The lessons definitely helped; the teachers were great. Helping the young children and listening to them really opens your eyes to how other people live and gives you a feeling of wanting to help them achieve their goals. It also helped me with leadership and management as we had to plan English lessons, I used certain little memory games. Being in Monterrico, it definitely helped with my future career ideas as I would like to be in a line of work helping the environment, in connection to coastal areas. Travelling to the other side of the world and dealing with the stress from the company really helped me to be more independent and use my indicatives to get what needed to be done correctly and encouraged me to be more organised. Going to Guatemala has also made me want to travel the world as much as possible and help as many people as I can with the type of career I go into. I would definitely recommend leaving your comfort zone and going for it!