



Ixcán Ministries
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Dear Potential Volunteer:

Thank you for your interest in visiting our mission in the Ixcán, Guatemala. We believe that experience in another country and culture is fulfilling and potentially life-changing. For this reason we are open to receiving guests to join us for short-term visits and/or long-term service as volunteers. Whatever the length of visit, it is important that you are aware of some of the realities and risks involved as well as understanding Ixcán Ministries' philosophy of ministry. We ask that all possible guests/volunteers enter a time of discernment with us to see if God is calling you to visit.

Our mission is mainly that of presence as we live among the Maya indigenous in Santiago Ixcán, a village of approximately 250 families who are predominantly poor farmers growing corn and beans. Short-term visits are not "service-oriented" but rather "relationship-oriented" and we are receivers as well as givers, learners as well as teachers. Out of relationships of mutual respect and care, service can and does happen, be it offering someone a glass of water or helping financially with an emergency trip to the doctor two hours away. For longer-term guests, service work will be determined by the gifts of the volunteer/missioner and the needs of the mission and the people following a time of acclimation and discernment.

We are a Christian, predominantly Catholic mission - contemplatives in action. We respect the faith traditions of all and don't require that visitors/volunteers believe as we do. However, we ask for that same respect of who we are as we live and serve together.

The Ixcán (pronounced "ish - con") region is in the northwest corner of Guatemala in the Department of El Q'uche. It is remote and not easily accessible, with travel from Guatemala City to Santiago Ixcán taking approximately two days in crowded mini-vans.

The Ixcán region is a tropical rain forest with a hot and humid climate and temperatures ranging from the upper 80's to 100 degrees Fahrenheit most of the year. It rains to varying degrees for 9 to 10 months out of the year, making travel difficult be it on foot, mule or by vehicle due to the poor road conditions and mud. During the dry season – April and May – the weather becomes oppressively hot with little or no rain and water scarce.

In the village of Santiago Ixcán the environment is more like a farmyard rather than a jungle with roosters, chickens, hogs, dogs, cats and mules. Native inhabitants also include tarantulas, scorpions and snakes.

Guatemala is still recovering from a 36-year civil war which ended in December of 1996. Unfortunately, insecurity and violence still plague the country. As we live and serve in solidarity with the Guatemalan people and are not immune to these dangers, we do everything possible to avoid such occurrences. Information on current political unrest or other dangerous conditions in an area of Guatemala can be obtained from the U.S. Dept. of State website: <http://www.state.gov>.

If you still are interested in volunteering with us, we would welcome you! Please fill out the application found on our website: www.ixcanministries.org.

Sincerely,
Ixcán Ministries