Menlo Abroad: Guatemala
offered in partnership with Where There Be Dragons
June 14–July 4, 2016
IN BRIEF

Menlo Abroad: Guatemala introduces students to indigenous environments where they develop self-knowledge, global competencies and global citizenship. Through mentorship and facilitation, students learn first hand about realities facing different populations and work to contribute positively to solutions.

**Dates:** June 14 - July 4, 2016

**Enrollment Limits:** 16 students

**Instructors and chaperones:** There will be four teachers with the program: two Menlo teachers, Jennifer Bailey and Carmen Borbón, and two country experts/instructors affiliated with Where There Be Dragons.

**All-Inclusive Fee**¹: $4,300. *Financial aid recipients might be eligible for financial aid. For information, contact Rose Garza (rose.garza@menloschool.org) by Friday, October 9, 2015.*

**How to Apply:** Complete and submit the [application](#) by October 9 for preferential and/or financial aid consideration, or by February 1 (at the latest).

INTRODUCTION

A three-week experience in Guatemalan culture with guided immersion, Menlo Abroad: Guatemala visits two communities, one in the town of San Lucas (near Lake Atitlan) and a second in the Altiplano surrounding Quetzaltenango (Xela). In each location students engage in hands-on learning related to ancient, colonial, and modern history, and contemporary Maya culture, religion, and struggles for social and environmental justice. An overarching theme is the relationship between local communities and land viewed through the lenses of resource management, spirituality, and culture.

Menlo Abroad: Guatemala provides students with the opportunity to live with host families and work together with local people and communities on issues of environmental sustainability. Students will participate in dynamic local responses to problems involving food, water, and sustainability; learn to interact effectively with local populations; and will emerge with a sharpened understanding of themselves, their world, and the issues of their age. Students will also develop Spanish language skills and new or sustained interests for further study at Menlo and beyond.

¹ Fee includes all flights; hotel accommodation; all meals; all surface transportation; museum, park, and temple entrance fees; journal packet and comprehensive reading materials; donations to charitable causes in the host country; instructor and extra guide fees; on-site equipment rental where needed; comprehensive risk management systems and administrative support 24/7; and pre-course visit by Dragons instructor. **The fee does not include expenses for obtaining passports and visas.**

Interested in applying? [Download the application now!](#)
This is a holistic program, offering students opportunities to develop meaningful relationships to the people and landscapes of Guatemala while simultaneously cultivating a deeper sense of agency, self-awareness, and global citizenship.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Our program begins on an avocado farm and guesthouse perched above the mountains surrounding the colonial capital of Antigua, Guatemala. Delicious home-cooked food and an inspiring backdrop offer students a slow immersion into the hustle and bustle of life in Guatemala. We spend two days acclimating, orienting ourselves to important topics of health and safety and constructing a solid group identity and culture. In Antigua we begin building basic skills in navigation and self-reliance and introducing contrasting perspectives on Guatemalan history and of contemporary social and environmental issues.

Moving from Antigua to San Lucas Toliman on the southeastern shores of the majestic Lake Atitlan, we shift our focus to an exploration of sustainable agriculture and the inexorable cultural ties to the milpa system of farming. Here we work with agricultural technician, teacher, and activist Ronaldo Lec Ajcot (Roni), who has dedicated his life to supporting farmers seeking sustainable methods for producing food and livelihood from the land. He is internationally active in promoting the reintroduction and preservation of traditional farming practices as a mechanism for communal, cultural, and environmental health.

During our four days in San Lucas, we will work with the staff of the Instituto Mesoamericano de Permacultura (IMAP), founded by Roni over fifteen years ago, and get better oriented to Guatemalan life. The group then travels to the traditional K’iche’ Maya hamlet of Pachaj to more deeply immerse in rural agrarian life and the spiritual and cultural connections between Maya people and the local landscape. Pachaj is a peaceful community that exemplifies many of Guatemala’s most pressing social justice and environmental concerns. Pressure on forest resources, water privatization, and mining interests are prevalent, while more subtle influence from evangelicals, consumer culture, and globalization all effect what we call “indigenous” in contemporary Guatemala. During our time in Pachaj, we will work with Armando Lopez, the founder of the Chico Mendes reforestation project, engage in focused Spanish language acquisition, and live with local families. As part of our close engagement, students will participate in lessons on the complexities of development and volunteerism. There will also be opportunities to meet with NGOs and other organizations in the nearby city of Quetzaltenango.

Interested in applying? Download the application now!
ITINERARY

**June 14:** SFO – Guatemala City
Afternoon arrival. Private bus to Earth Lodge, arriving for dinner and opening of the program.

**June 15-16:** Earth Lodge near Antigua
Orientation activities include orientation to health and safety, group container building, opening ceremony, local hikes and excursions down into Antigua for a scavenger hunt, and introductions to Guatemala History and contemporary social and environmental justice topics.

**June 17:** Antigua – San Lucas
Private shuttle to San Lucas, settle into Hotel Volcanes. Afternoon introduction to Instituto Mesoamericano de Permacultura (IMAP) and the work of their team.

**June 18-19:** San Lucas – IMAP
Workshops on introduction to traditional agricultural practices and Maya cosmovision. Visit coffee plantation, local community-based and Church sponsored development projects. Skill building in permaculture practices.

**June 20:** San Lucas – Pachaj
Private shuttle to Pachaj, introduction to Armando and the Chico Mendes Project, meet homestay families, get settled.

**June 21-July 1:** Pachaj
Daily gathering at Armando’s compound for group check-in and activity. Spanish lessons, working in the reforestation project, impacts of mining and water privatization, Maya ceremony and teaching around relationships to land.

**July 2:** Pachaj – Laguna Chicabal
Private shuttle to Laguna Chicabal national park. Hike to sacred lake and time for reflection and processing. Preparing to return to California. Closing ceremony.

**July 3:** Laguna Chicabal – Antigua
Early departure for Antigua in private shuttle. Afternoon in Antigua, celebratory closing dinner.

**July 4:** Guatemala City – SFO
Early departure to airport
Menlo Abroad: Guatemala
June 14 – July 4, 2016

NINE PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Menlo Abroad: Guatemala is built around nine interrelated academic and experiential program components. These components are intended to create the most holistic experiential immersion possible:

Academic themes

1. Survey of Development Issues: Our program explores a range of development issues, from issues in resource management and environmental impact, to indigenous rights and market-oriented reform. Through meetings with development professionals, participants learn through hands-on experiential education how the efforts of community leaders and aid organizations both positively and negatively impact the region's people, culture, and environment.

2. Introduction to Indigenous Spirituality and Practice: In the Kaqchikel and K'iche' Maya communities we visit, we will encounter the spiritual beliefs, relationships to land, and ritual practices of our host culture through direct exchange with local spiritual leaders or aj q’ijab (day keepers).

3. Independent or Small-Group Study: Menlo students will have the opportunity to investigate individually or in small groups a topic of particular interest, availing themselves of local knowledge and resources.

4. Language Study: We do not expect participants to come with language skills, nor to master them. We do expect that students will want to interact with locals as closely as they can, and few things do more to empower participants and facilitate an ease of cultural understanding than frequent language lessons with supportive instructors. In Pachaj we will conduct formal language activities and lessons in Spanish in one-on-one or small groups with local professional language teachers. Students will also have the opportunity to learn basic K'iche'.

Experiential Themes

5. Immersive Travel: Traveling to traditional communities in developing countries requires students to get out of their comfort zones. In Menlo Abroad students are travelers rather than tourists. They travel in a style that enables them to genuinely know the people of the countries they visit. For adaptable participants it offers the most authentic experience and profound learning adventure. In Guatemala, we will use private transportation for longer travel and utilize boat, pickup, and chicken buses for shorter, local routes. Students should expect to cope with cold water showers, primitive infrastructure, and pit toilets in rural areas.

6. Homestay: Often the most challenging and fulfilling component, homestays take students to the core of their experiences. Homestays are carefully set up with each student’s individual personality in mind in order to provide the best possible experience in cultural and language immersion. In Pachaj, homestays are coordinated through community leader and environmentalist, Armando Lopez, also the president of Chico Mendes. Each student will be placed in homestays and the group will gather each morning to check in and engage in group activities.

7. Community Engagement: In our travels students will learn about themselves and each other, build strong bonds as a group through designated activities, hikes, and discussions, and learn about the communities they are visiting through talks and visits with local experts.

8. Apprenticeship: During our time at IMAP in San Lucas, we will have the opportunity to participate in work around the educational center. Through Proyecto Chico Mendes, we will work to sustain the communal forest and water resources in the mountains around town through planting trees and maintaining the seed nursery.

9. Guided Reflection: Students will regularly meet with Menlo and Dragons staff to investigate, monitor, problem solve, and reflect on events or issues particular to the individual students.

Interested in applying? Download the application now!
MENLO ABROAD ASPIRATIONS

1. Knowledge and Global Competency: Menlo Abroad programs advance students’ self-knowledge and global competency. Through direct experience, students develop awareness of global systems and issues and how they impact particular communities.

2. Dispositions of Global Citizenship: Menlo Abroad programs cultivate internationally minded students who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, strive to create a better and more peaceful world. Among the many positive dispositions are self-knowledge, agency, confidence, courage, empathy, humility, and respect.

3. Relationships: Menlo Abroad programs build sustaining relationships between students and diverse, underserved foreign communities and individuals. These relationships develop from shared common experiences of living, work, or study.

4. Work: Menlo Abroad programs contribute to solutions based on mutually beneficial work, apprenticeship, or internship, which in turn support students’ knowledge and appreciation for the cultures and issues at hand.

5. Connections: Menlo Abroad programs generate sustaining interest and connections with Menlo curricula and program.

Knight School Connection: To introduce and prepare students for their Menlo Abroad experience the following summer, Menlo teachers Matthew Nelson, Adriana Diaz-Ross, and Jennifer Bailey are offering a campus-based Knight School trip preparation course Stamp Your Passport: Going Global with Menlo Abroad in March 2016. Students enrolled in Menlo Abroad should also enroll in this course.

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2 *Global competencies* include the abilities to investigate the world beyond the immediate environment, the recognition of one’s own and other perspectives, the ability to communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences.

3 By *Global citizenship* we mean the dispositions necessary to be connected and of service to others, including those beyond national borders.
### TIMELINE OF APPLICATION AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week of September 18</td>
<td>Announcement of Menlo Abroad program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 21 &amp; 24, 12:15 pm</td>
<td>Informational meeting for students, A246 (lunch provided)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 28, 6:00 pm</td>
<td>Informational meeting for parents and students, G-06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 5</td>
<td>Deadline for financial aid application to financial aid office⁴</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 9</td>
<td>Preferred application and financial aid application deadline.</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 16 - November 2</td>
<td>Notifications of acceptance</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 1</td>
<td>Deposit and permission form due</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 1</td>
<td>Final application deadline</td>
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<td>February 15</td>
<td>Balance due to Cathy Rettberg or Peter Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 1</td>
<td>Preparatory materials and additional medical forms sent out</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 21- March 24</td>
<td>Knight School preparatory course</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 1- April 30</td>
<td>Flight arrangements finalized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2, 7:00 pm</td>
<td>Pre-trip orientation for Guatemala-bound: required for all enrolled students and their parents, A246. Medical forms due.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 3, 7:00 pm</td>
<td>Pre-trip orientation, required for all India-bound: required for all enrolled students and parents, A246. Medical forms due.</td>
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⁴ Applications should be delivered to Cathy Rettberg at Library Circulation or to Peter Brown and are evaluated for completeness, thoughtfulness, and alignment with program goals. Students who submit applications by the preferred deadline have a higher likelihood of acceptance. All things being equal, acceptance will be based on seniority.
TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Application for reservation of space on this program requires a $1250 deposit payable to Where There Be Dragons, an application form, as well as all Menlo and Dragons pre-registration forms. Once an applicant has been approved, the deposit is non-refundable. Health forms, equipment lists, air travel instructions, and further information about the program will then be provided from Dragons. The applicant must electronically sign the registration form. Payment and form schedule is attached.

Our intention is to address the goals and program elements as listed in the program description, but all participants are advised to note that course itineraries will likely change to incorporate participant goals and interests, adjust to the health of the group, or made necessary because of foul weather, problems with transportation, political unrest, or any other unforeseen problem. Regardless of programmatic changes, we will always work to structure the course so that it stays true to its original intent.

REFUND POLICY: There is a $1250 per student non-refundable application-processing fee. If a participant cancels and has paid more than $1250 Menlo will refund any costs it can recover in excess of the $1250.

MEDICAL AND EVACUATION EXPENSES: Menlo applicants will have group travel, health, and medical evacuation insurance purchased on their behalf for this trip. It is the responsibility of the student and the students’ family to understand the limits of any medical and evacuation policy. Menlo School assumes no liability for costs not reimbursed by the policy.

MENLO-DRAGONS RULES AND REGULATIONS: If a participant acts in a way that is injurious to himself or herself, people of the host country, other participants on the trip, or generally conducts himself or herself in a way that is disruptive to the trip, we reserve the right to send the participant home at parents’ expense and without refund. Underage use of alcohol and the use of illegal drugs are cause for dismissal. Participants sent home early or who choose to return for any reason, including sickness, personal emergencies or injury, will be responsible for all medical costs, and will be responsible for travel and related costs associated with an unscheduled departure.

CANCELED TRIPS: Dragons and Menlo reserves the right to cancel any trip if there are insufficient registrations or for any other reason. A full refund will be granted for canceled trips that arise out of insufficient registration, though Dragons is not responsible for other costs incurred by participants in preparation for the trip. For trips that are canceled due to events beyond their control, Dragons will refund all tuition but $850.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS: Applicant must be in possession of a valid passport for international travel, complete with usable visa pages. The date of expiry must be beyond 6 months from the date of course departure. Upon admission to the program, detailed instructions for acquiring appropriate visas will be provided to the applicant.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: All trips are rugged, and all require good physical conditioning. All participants will be responsible for submitting to Dragons a completed health form that is signed by a physician, and that completely and accurately represents the current mental and physical well-being of the participant. Dragons and Menlo instructors have the right to disqualify any member from the group if considered medically necessary, and will do so if a participant or family member falsely represents the student in interviews, the application, the participant’s health form, or any other required paperwork. In the event of a medical emergency, Dragons and Menlo will attempt to procure medical treatment; however, Dragons and Menlo assumes no liability regarding provision of medical care. All applicants will have group travel health insurance purchased on their behalf for this trip. A pro-rated medical and evacuation policy will also be offered through Dragons to all participants. Travel to developing countries inherently involves exposure to food and water borne illness. While Dragons and Menlo exercise careful oversight of food and water, the potential for students to contract gastro-intestinal illness is a continuing concern.

FORMS: Participants will be required to read and sign forms such as an “Acknowledgment and Assumption of Risk and Release and Indemnity Agreement” prior to participating in our program.

Please contact Peter Brown with any questions at 650.330.2001 ext. 2238 or email pbrown@menloschool.org. You can also contact Simon Hart at Where There Be Dragons at 1.800.982.9203 or simon@wheretherebedragons.com.

READ THIS DESCRIPTION CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING FORMS.