MENLO ABROAD

GUATEMALA

Discover Your Interests. Find Your Voice. Enjoy the Journey.

JOIN US: May 19 - June 7, 2020
IN BRIEF
Menlo Abroad travel develops global competencies, engagement, and self-knowledge. Through facilitated curricula, service-learning, and homestay, students immerse themselves in foreign cultures, make friends, connect with communities, and use their skills to address common problems. They emerge with a better understanding of themselves and their world.¹

Menlo Abroad: Guatemala introduces students to the contrasts of Guatemala. Exploring urban and rural areas, the mountains and the lakes, the group settles in the artisan community of San Juan La Laguna, overlooking Lake Atitlan, where students live with host families, take daily Spanish language lessons, and engage in one of several dynamic projects that develop or sustain interests for further study at Menlo and beyond. This program is offered in affiliation with Where There Be Dragons.

**Dates:** May 19-June 7, 2020
(Note that participants will be out of the country and unable to return for Commencement or related activities. June 12 is a day of reflection and celebration on campus.)

**Enrollment Limits:** 16 students

**Enrollment Eligibility:** Menlo students in grades 9-11

**Trip Leaders:** There will be four trip leaders: Spanish language teacher Adriana Diaz-Ross, Spanish language teacher Joel Colom-Mena and two country experts/instructors from Where There Be Dragons.

**All-Inclusive Fee**²: $5500. Financial aid may be eligible. Current financial aid recipients should contact Rose Garza (rose.garza@menloschool.org) for information.

Menlo Abroad service participation earns students 8 community engagement credits. Participation in Menlo Abroad is recommended for Menlo IP: Global Scholars.

1 Menlo Abroad is an elective option for M Term and is considered and assessed as an M Term course. But while other M Term courses will end June 1, Menlo Abroad courses complete on the evening of June 7, 2020.

2 Fee includes all flights • hotel accommodation • all meals • all surface transportation • museum, park, and temple entrance fees • course preparation manual and 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. The fee does not include trip cancellation insurance or expenses for petty cash expenditures (est. at $100), travel medicine or immunization or obtaining passports and visas.

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Guatemala is a country of contrasts: it has stunning beauty, with complex biodiversity in volcanoes and cloud forests, but also landscapes marred by the effects of extractive industry. It has a long history of social injustice and subjugation of indigenous people but also a culture of celebration and revival. Menlo Abroad: Guatemala introduces students to these contrasts through experiential learning in colonial and modern Latin American history, contemporary campesino culture, and the struggles for social and environmental justice. This is a holistic program, offering students opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with the people and landscapes of Guatemala, sharing personal and cultural narratives, while simultaneously cultivating a deeper sense of leadership, global engagement, and self-awareness through service.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

We meet our Dragons instructors at the airport in Guatemala and complete orientation at a hostel in the lovely environment of San Lucas Sacatepéquez. In addition to exploring, hiking, and sampling local cuisine, we practice foundational skills in communication and navigation for the journey to come. The next stop is San Lucas Tolimán, home to the Instituto Mesoamericano de Permacultura (IMAP). Here on Lake Atitlan we begin to focus on the first of three essential themes of the course, namely the connection to agriculture. Working with a team of agro-ecologists under the tutelage of regionally renowned Ronaldo Lec Ajcot, we learn about traditional farming techniques, such as the milpa system, as well as contemporary and innovative technologies rural communities are using to raise the quality of life and sustain cultural identity in the face of myriad challenges. From San Lucas Tolimán we travel by boat to San Juan La Laguna, a small Mayan town on the western shores of Lake Atitlan with deeply-rooted artisan traditions of weaving, cooking, and painting. Here we investigate the second theme, collective identity that manifests as culture. The town brims with life and bright murals depicting the Mayan worldview of rich relationships between humans and the universe. As we begin homestays, we embark on a longer, more individualized phase of the course with small group language lessons at a local school. These lessons include explorations in the town, coffee fields, churches, and beautiful surrounding areas.

As students practice and gain confidence in Spanish language and communication skills with their homestay families, who speak both Spanish and Tzutujil, the local Mayan language, they have the opportunity to engage in service-work with local organizations in a number of interest areas, including ecology, economics, and arts. During the stay in San Juan, students will have opportunities to do such hands-on activities as making tortillas by hand and weaving dazzling textiles, as well as—a perennial favorite—playing basketball or futbol with locals. As students engage with the daily lives of of traditional Maya people in both their homestays and in community service they come to appreciate the challenges of a people negotiating the tides of tradition and modernity.

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Departing San Juan La Laguna, we travel west into the mountains under the shadow of the Santa Maria volcano to the K‘iche’ Maya community of Pachaj, an aldea (hamlet) of the Cantel municipality, just thirty minutes outside of Guatemala's second largest city and “Indigenous Capital,” Quetzaltenango (Xela). In Pachaj, we are warmly welcomed into the community for two days of service learning work. Here, we consider the third theme, the relationship between people and nature, including clean water and oxygen. Our host, Armando Lopez, founded the Chico Mendes Project, which seeks to maintain healthy forests and water supplies through reforestation and stewardship initiatives. Armando works with international volunteers and local leaders to provide environmental services and education to the community. He is active in generating awareness about the privatization of communal resources, and the negative repercussions of mining and resource extraction activities. We have the pleasure of spending a day touring the nursery and forests and working with the reforestation crew on tree planting activities. We’ll spend the nights outside of Pachaj in a guest house.

In the final phase of our journey, we travel first to Antigua, the beautiful and well-traveled Spanish colonial city, and then to our final destination, a picturesque retreat space atop the coffee-laden mountainous surrounding Antigua in the small town of El Hato. In the folds of an avocado farm with breathtaking volcanic views, the Earth Lodge is an inspiring, relaxing, and spacious place to wrap up our journey and prepare for the long trip home. At Earth Lodge, we reflect on the elements of the program together, looking back to the experiences we’ve had and the lessons we learned, reflecting on the essential themes and questions of the course. In addition to looking back at where we’ve been, we also look forward to what’s next, asking ourselves how we’ll carry our experiences in Guatemala forward into our lives. After returning to SFO, we reunite the next day on campus for final reflection activities and a celebratory dinner.

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ITINERARY

Note: Itinerary is subject to change.)

May 19  Flight from SFO to GUA. Transfer to San Lucas Sacatepéquez
   Arrive in Guatemala City, meet Dragons instructors, and take private shuttle to San Lucas Sacatepéquez.
   Settle into guesthouse.

May 20  San Lucas Sacatepéquez
   Continue the orientation process of goal-setting, cultural dos and don'ts, and navigating and communicating basics.

May 21-23 San Lucas Tolimán
   Get an early start, bound for San Lucas Tolimán and settle into hostel. Head out on a tour led by local resident and
dip our toes into Lake Atitlan. Take a shuttle to the Instituto Mesoamericano de Permacultura (IMAP) for a late
lunch, as well as a tour of the grounds. Spend the next afternoon and two days working with our hosts at IMAP,
learning and practicing permaculture principles, and helping local residents with projects. Interview residents and
explore permaculture systems in neighborhoods and on residential property. Meals at Los Volcanes, local hotel, or
at IMAP.

May 24-June 1 San Juan la Laguna
   After breakfast, take a boat to San Juan and meet up with our hosts at the Eco School and homestay families. In
San Juan, we settle into a rhythm with our homestay families. Days typically begin with morning check-ins for the
group and notes for the day, followed by group lessons and Spanish classes that take place in a variety of places,
including markets, farms, classrooms, and kitchens. After lunch with homestays, we work on a variety of learning
and service projects based on student interest. Evenings are typically spent with homestay families.

June 2-3  Xela and Pachaj
   Bidding San Juan goodbye, we transfer to Xela and explore this cosmopolitan city, a stark contrast to the Maya
village we have just departed, and nearby Pachaj. We orient to our new community with a brief tour and history of
Chico Mendes and the agricultural and environmental community with our main host Armando Lopez. We’ll spend
two days with Armando for a service project with the Chico Mendes Project that might include tree-planting,
creating compost, preparing seedlings, and other needed tasks related to the project.

June 4-5 Antigua and El Hato
   After an early start we transfer to Antigua for an exploration of the artisan markets and investigation of this
beautiful, historic city. In the evening we take a short trip to Earth Lodge, a picturesque eco-retreat center and
avocado farm nestled in the mountains above Antigua. Here we’ll engage in group reflection and activities for the
next few days in preparation for the return home.

June 6  Transfer from Antigua to GUA and flight to SFO
   Travel day from Antigua to Guatemala City and the flight home.

June 7  Menlo campus
   Post-trip activities and reflection; evening dinnertime celebration

3 Students must attend the final day to receive full credit for the course.

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TIMELINE OF APPLICATION AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS

November 12  
Announcement of Menlo Abroad programs

December 3  
Applications due

December 11  
Participants notified

December 18  
Forms and payment due by 3:00 pm

February 25  
Additional forms due

February-April  
Flight arrangements finalized

April 13, 6:00 pm  
Menlo Abroad mandatory meeting for participants and their parent(s) in Martin Family Hall

May 19 - June 6  
Menlo Abroad (in country)

June 7  
Final day reflection and celebration (on campus)  

4 Students must attend the final day to receive full credit for the course. The time and nature of the celebration is to be determined.

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May 19-June 7, 2020
Menlo Abroad: Guatemala

Menlo Abroad: Guatemala is built around interrelated academic and experiential program components intended to create the most holistic experiential immersion possible. Below is a list of these components as they relate to this program.

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 reforms. 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 Tzutujil, Kaqchikel and K’iche’ Maya communities we visit we will interact with the spiritual beliefs, relationships to land, and ritual practices of our host culture.

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 San Juan, we will conduct formal language activities and lessons in Spanish in small groups with local and Menlo’s professional language teachers. Students will also have the opportunity to learn basic K’iche’.

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, pick-up, and chicken buses for shorter, local routes. Students should expect to cope with cold water showers, basic infrastructure, and pit toilets in the 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 experience in cultural and language immersion possible. In San Juan, homestays are coordinated through community leaders. 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 and in San Juan students will have the opportunity to focus in an area of interest.

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. Students will journal and blog frequently.

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MENLO ABROAD ASPIRATIONS

1. Knowledge and Global Competency: Menlo Abroad programs advance students’ self-knowledge and global competencies, including intercultural capabilities, historical perspectives, and attentiveness to diversity. Through direct experience, students develop awareness of global systems and issues impacting host communities.

2. Dispositions of Global Engagement: Menlo Abroad programs cultivate internationally minded students who recognize their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet and strive to create a better and more peaceful world. Among the many positive dispositions they develop are agency, leadership, confidence, empathy, compassion, humility, feelings of interconnection, and respect.

3. Relationships: Menlo Abroad programs build sustaining relationships between students and diverse, underserved foreign communities and individuals through shared common experiences of everyday life.

4. Learning Service: Menlo Abroad programs contribute to solutions based on mutually beneficial work, apprenticeship, or study, in activities that at the same time support students’ knowledge of and appreciation for local cultures and issues at hand.

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

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5 Global competency includes 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.

6 By Global engagement we mean the dispositions necessary to be connected and of service to others, including those beyond national borders.

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May 19-June 7, 2020
TERMS AND CONDITIONS

This program is being offered by Menlo School in conjunction with Where There Be Dragons. In cases of programs offered in conjunction with other organizations, participants are expected to complete registration, waivers, and medical forms provided by both Menlo School and the third party organization.

By December 18: To secure a place in the program, each of the following must be submitted.

1. A check payment payable to Menlo School for $5,500. Financial aid recipients will be contacted by the financial aid office with a revised program fee.
2. Completed and signed Parent Permission and Waiver, Medical Release, Emergency and Medical Information Form - Overnight
3. Completed and signed Waiver and Release for Foreign Program
4. Completed and signed Menlo School Trip Contract
5. Copy of the participating student’s current passport with visa stamp, if possible. The passport must have two blank pages and expire six months or more after the return from the Menlo Abroad trip. If participant does not have a current passport or visa, these need to be obtained and copies submitted by February 25.

If your trip involves a third party organization, health forms, equipment lists, air travel instructions, and further information about the program will subsequently be provided to you by the other organization. You may also be asked to sign a release form for that other organization.

By February 25: The following additional forms must be submitted

1. A copy of the participant’s current passport. The passport must have three blank pages and expire six months or more after the return from the Menlo Abroad trip.
2. A signed and notarized Parent Authorization Letter for Minor Traveller
3. All forms required from any third party organization involved.

Our intention is to address the goals and program elements listed in the program description, but all participants are advised that course itineraries will likely change to incorporate participant goals and interests, to adjust to the health of members of the group, or in response to weather conditions, problems with transportation, political unrest or other unforeseen problems. Regardless of such changes, we will always work to structure and implement the course so that it stays true to the original intent.

REFUND POLICY: If the participant or participant’s family delivers a written message of intent to withdraw from the program to Menlo School 30 days or more prior to departure, Menlo will refund all recoupable fees minus a $1,000 non-refundable application-processing charge. If notice of cancellation is received within 30 days of departure, the participant will forfeit the entire program fee. Any participant who returns home early will not receive any refund.

MEDICAL AND EVACUATION EXPENSES: It is the responsibility of the student and the student’s family to understand the limits of any medical and evacuation policy, and to provide up-front payment of emergency services when required.

CELL PHONES: In order to maintain the integrity of the immersive experience Menlo Abroad requires students to relinquish cell phones to trip leaders upon entry into the target country.

VIOLATION OF RULES AND REGULATIONS: If a participant acts in a way that is injurious to himself or herself, people of the host country, or 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 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 absorb travel and related costs associated with an unscheduled departure.

CANCELED TRIPS: A full refund will be made for canceled trips that arise out of insufficient registration, though Menlo is not responsible for other costs incurred by the student or family preparing for the trip. For trips canceled due to any other circumstance that is beyond Menlo’s control, Menlo will refund all recoupable tuition.

Please contact Peter Brown with any questions at 650.330.2001 ext. 2238 or email pbrown@menloschool.org.

READ THIS DESCRIPTION CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING FORMS.

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