CULTURE OF GUATEMALA

GENERAL
The culture of Guatemala reflects strong Mayan and Spanish influences and continues to be defined as a contrast between poor Mayan villagers in the rural highlands, and the urbanized and relatively wealthy mestizos population who occupy the cities and surrounding agricultural plains. Many traditional foods are based on Mayan cuisine and prominently features corn, chilies and beans as key ingredients.

RELIGION
Roman Catholicism combined with the indigenous Maya religion to form the unique syncretic religion which prevailed throughout the country and still does in the rural regions.

BASIC ECONOMY
Guatemala’s most important resource is its fertile land. The country has traditionally produced many agricultural products for export, including coffee, sugar, cardamom, bananas, and cotton. In recent years flowers and vegetables have become important. However, Guatemala is not self-sufficient in basic grains such as wheat, rice, and even maize, which are imported from the United States.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND CONTROL
Since the signing of the Peace Accords in December 1996, there has been continued social unrest and a general breakdown in the system of justice. In many Mayan communities, their traditional social organization having been disrupted or destroyed by the years of violence, the people now take the law into their own hands...the police and judges are poorly trained, underpaid, and often corrupt.

DOMESTIC UNIT
The nuclear family is the preferred and most common domestic unit. Among both Ladinos and Mayan, a young couple may live at first in the home of the man’s parents, or if that is inconvenient or overcrowded, with the parents of the woman.