Esta es la parte exterior de el Mercado en Antigua.
This is the market that we were able to shop at multiple days. Our first trip to the market was on the first day we arrived in Guatemala. Once everyone arrived at the hotel, we walked with Ryan to this market. The part of the market that is shown on the previous page is what I was expecting; surrounded by shops, but still some room to move around. Once we entered the depths of the market, the isles were lined on both sides with shops and thousands of products. We were surrounded by hundreds of shops and it was difficult deciding which way to go!

The first day of the market (and most of the others as well) was difficult to navigate. Not only did we not know which way to turn, but the shop owners were always calling out what products they have and saying English phrases such as “Good price just for you!” and “its almost free!” These phrases being shouted made it difficult to shop, but what was even more difficult was looking around in a specific shop. I could not just look around in a shop without the owner asking what I wanted, what I was looking for, or asking me how much I was willing to pay. I learned to say the phrase “solo mirando” so that the shop owner knew I was only looking. We would usually not browse in a shop too long if we knew we were not going to buy anything. Bargaining for a price was not something that I was good at (but I was able to do it twice!). The language barrier made it even harder to bargain and shop in the market as well. I can see how being a good bargainer is a very helpful skill in the market and one that is valuable to people who have to shop there a lot.

The first time I went in to the depths of the market I was overwhelmed. There was so much to take in, so much to look at, and so many comments to process. Yet being in this market made me realize that this is what a lot of the people who live here do everyday; weather it be shopping at the market or selling at the market. They spend everyday negotiating on prices so they can sell their goods to make a living to support their family. This was a huge culture shock to me, even though we learned about the markets in class. Any amount of preparation in class could not have prepared someone for their first time in the market. It is something that one has to experience to learn. Being in the market made me grateful for what I have at home. Yet, I am still happy that I was able to experience this way of living, and that I learned so much about the Guatemalan culture just by going to the market. Seeing all of the beautiful products, like the huipiles and products carved from wood, showed so much about the culture and the Guatemalan work ethic. It was also amazing to see what we learned about in class come to life.
¡Hicimos tortillas! Era muy difícil.
I was so excited when we had the chance to try and make tortillas! From class readings and experiences told to us by Diana, I knew it was going to be difficult, but I wanted to see for myself! The woman making the tortillas, shown in the previous picture, made it look so easy. This of course is because she has done this many times, as have many other Guatemalan women. The ease in which the woman did this, really shows how tortillas are a huge part of Guatemalan culture. Almost all of the meals that we ate in Guatemala, we were provided with tortillas. It is amazing how such a small piece of food can be such a huge part of the Guatemalan culture.

It is amazing to me that so many women in Guatemala are able to make these tortillas. I am not amazed because of the difficulty in making them, because it will come with practice, but because I love how so many women are involved in this part of their culture. By many women being able to make tortillas, it just shows how important culture is to the people of Guatemala and how everyone wants to participate in it. When I was comparing this with the United States, I was not able to think of something that most women in the United States can do that is a large part of our culture. After going to Guatemala, it made me in a way disappointed in the United States because watching the culture and traditions of Guatemala made me jealous of the rituals that everyone gets to be a part of. Even though many people may not live in the best houses or areas, they still have this huge culture that they get to be a part of, this culture that includes making tortillas.

P.S.
My tortillas came nowhere close to what an actual tortilla is supposed to be! It was way to thick and small. But I loved the experience 😊
I do remember the steps though! Get some water on your hands, grab some dough, and pat, pat, pat!
Lake Atitlán

El lago es muy bonito. Hay tres volcanes alrededor el lago.
Lake Atitlán

The reason that I chose this picture is because I was able to get two of the three volcanoes in. Just like mentioned in the book “Guatemalan Journey”, we were able to see the beauty of the lake and that there are three volcanoes surrounding it. We were also able to experience the sharp curves and steep grades of driving down to the lake that were also mentioned in “Guatemalan Journey”. It was awesome to see the things that we read about come to life. When reading, you can create images in your head, but seeing those images in person creates a story of its own.

While taking our tour of the lake, I could see how it is becoming a tourist place. There were small boats to take us across the lake to the town of Panajachel, and a majority of the people boarding these boats were tourists and not native Guatemalans. There is nothing wrong with this because it would be unfair for the rest of the world not to be able to see this beautiful lake, but I can see where it would start causing problems and dependency for the Guatemalans because of this.

Also while boating across the lake, we were able to see some of the pollution and scum on top of the lake like we talked about in class. This made me feel sad for the lake and all of the beauty it was losing because of this. There is no simple solution to this pollution, but it is a shame that such a beautiful lake has to go through this. There are many people living on the edge of this lake and I can see the concerns this brings to them. Not only is it an eyesore to have the lake covered in scum, but it can also raise some health concerns to the people. Also, the scum limits the uses of the lake for the people. A lake of this beauty deserves a change to happen to it and deserves to be clean to let its true beauty shine.
Panajachel

“Gringotenango”
The ideas that I had before hand of Panajachel came from what we read in “Guatemalan Journey”. What I gathered from that book is that in Panajachel, people will follow you around trying to sell you their goods: and that is exactly what we experienced. As soon as we got off the dock from riding the boat across the lake, there were kids following us around with their baskets of products trying to sell them to us. One girl practically followed me into the bathroom trying to sell me her woven fabric. Although being followed around by people trying to sell you goods is not the most pleasant experience, I just had to remember that this is what these kids and their families have to do to survive. It gives me an appreciation for their work ethic and everything people in Guatemala will do to survive. I give Guatemalans my appreciation because they will do this everyday in order to help their family.

The rest of our journey around Panajachel was an interesting one. We were able to ride standing in the back of pick up trucks on our ride to see La Parque de Paz. Standing in La Parque de Paz was another impactful moment. Knowing what happened where we stood made me stop for a second and think about how the world really works. If someone cannot have a peaceful walk without being hurt and murdered, then there are many things to be worried about. The events that led to the making of the Parque de Paz are just a representation of what goes on all over the world. Being in the park really makes you think about what goes on in the world around you and made me want to be more knowledgeable on world events and pay more attention to what happens around the world.

Another thing that I noticed in Panajachel that we learned about in class were the high curbs. While in Panajachel, we experienced a lot of rain, and the roads became flooded. Yet because the curbs for the sidewalks were built so high, people were still able to walk on the sidewalks. It is a brilliant idea to have these higher curbs because of all of the rain that Guatemala experiences. It was really cool to be able to see the higher curbs put to use and working in a heavy rain.
Iximche

Este es la cancha de pelota.

Iximche es muy hermoso.

Esta es una vela encendida de un ritual.
We were almost not able to go to Iximche, but I am so glad that Steve was able to make it happen. Our trip to the lake lasted a little longer than expected, so when we arrived at Iximche it was closing, but thanks to Steve talking to the worker, we were still able to get in! Even though we saw pictures of Iximche before we went, it was still amazing to see the ruins in person. To actually see the trees growing out of the temples was amazing in itself. I do not know why seeing the trees growing out of the temples was so striking to me, but I think it made me realize how old these ruins actually were. Being at the site of the ruins made me want to know so much what everything looked like before Iximche was abandoned. If the site can still amaze me now and is still beautiful when it is in ruins, it must have been immaculate when it was in its prime condition.

Being at this site gave me once again a huge appreciation for the Guatemalan culture. First off, seeing the ball court was so surreal for me. I was standing where people once played a game where winning meant you were killed, but received honor. Another eye opening seen was seeing where the rituals were preformed in the back of the park. When we were at the back, there was still a candle burning out, letting us know that there was a ritual recently preformed there. It was so amazing to know that this place that was so important thousands of years ago, is still important to the people today. I love how their culture carries throughout the years and they never let it die. Iximche is a great symbol of that. Over all of these years, there are parts of Iximche still standing, just like after such a long time, Guatemalan culture and rituals are still standing and a huge part of their lives.

It was awesome seeing a part of the Guatemalan past that is still part of the future, and that is something that I truly admire about the Guatemalan culture. America may be more developed, but there is still so much we can learn from Guatemala about staying true to your culture.
Esta es un dormitorio.

ABI se parece a una cárcel

Esta es un “holding room”
ABI

I would need three pages to show all the pictures I need to in order to describe ABI to someone. Yet through only a description, one would not get the true feel of ABI. I can sit here and talk about ABI all day, but in order for someone to get a real picture of ABI, they would have to be there to see, smell, and hear everything for themselves. But here I will do the best I can to talk about ABI and my feelings of what I experienced.

ABI is a government run facility with 75 residents who live and sleep there. There are people of all ages living at ABI. These residents usually have problems in their brain from traumatic brain injuries, some type of abuse, burns, or the workers at ABI do not know what is wrong with the resident. Being at ABI, I felt like I was in a jail. There were bars on every door and window, and locks on every door to prevent the residents from escaping. There was also a tremendous lack of resources at ABI. I know the workers of ABI do the best they can with that they have, and it shows, but it is still sad to see the conditions in which these residents live. Obviously there is much that can and should be changed at ABI, but it is not that simple. But looking beyond the conditions, lack of workers and resources, smells, and all of the bars, I could see the love that the Tias (like Nurses) had for their residents. They really did care for the residents but it was sad to see that they could not give them everything they needed.

ABI is the type of facility that was deemed inhumane and banned in the United States, yet here I was in Guatemala experiencing that type of facility. I wish I could describe better of what I felt during my visits to ABI, but it is a place that no one could image and no one can really describe. I had so many mixed emotions while I was in ABI and I do not even know where to start on listing those emotions. Being at ABI made me realize all of the unnecessary items that I possess. I have so much and want more, and the facility and residents of ABI have basically nothing. My group may not have been able to do the therapy that we were expecting to do at ABI, but just being in the facility itself is something that I will never forget, and it left me forever grateful for what I have and the facilities I will be able to work at in the United States.
Colegio en La Vega

¡Nos dieron un desfile de moda!
Our visit to La Vega was such a great experience and one I will never forget. The students and the faculty were so welcoming to us when all we went there to do was learn about their culture from them. Feeling that welcomed from people made me feel so grateful. Knowing that the whole day was planned around us being there was such an honor and I know we all felt so undeserving of it. The school had everything down to the last detail planned. Upon our arrival, we saw dances in traditional costume (shown in the picture on the right on the last slide). The dances were awesome to watch and told us a lot about their culture. Not only did the costumes show their culture, but the stories told in the dances told a stronger story. Stories about the devil and stories about their harvest. The students also put on a fashion show for us, shown on the bottom left picture, which showed us the traditional dress from different places in Guatemala. It was so beautiful seeing all of the different colors used in the huipiles and seeing all the different designs that could be created through weaving.

Another tradition that we were able to see, in mini form, was an alfombra. Like we learned about in class, these alfombras are created for the Fiesta of the Corpus Christi and they take many hours to make. The students recreated a mini alfombra for us and it was beautiful. Not only was it beautiful to look at and a great representation of their culture, but it made the Xavier students feel even more grateful that they went through making all of that for us. The last thing that the students did for us was the most shocking, but at the same time the most special. All of the Xavier students were surprised when the school said they were going to perform a chicken sacrifice for us. We were all so shocked and not ready to see a chicken get its head cut off, but when we thought about it, it was an honor for us to see this sacrifice that is such a special thing in their culture. They told us that it was for our safe travels home. Even though it was not the most pleasant thing to watch, we felt even more honored as we left La Vega, feeling the kindness of all of the people letting us into their culture to learn as much as we could.

Also, on the same topic of schools, I interviewed one of our translators about schools and attendance in Guatemala. What the translator told me was just like what we learned in class. There is a law that requires children to go to school for a certain period of time, but this law is not enforced so it is not always abided by. Also, kids do not stay in school very long because they are needed at home to work, and also they do not always have money to pay for the transportation and books for school. I was informed that it is more important to be at home and working to support the family than it is to go to school. Since family is the most important value in Guatemala, they will always come first before school. It is important to value family and it is a great value to have, but then it leads to detriments in children’s education.
Volcán de Pacaya

¡Esto está en la cima del volcán!
La subida era difícil.
This was the photo we took at the top of the Volcano Pacaya. At the end of this hike, I know we all felt accomplished (and tired!). The view at the top was so beautiful and you felt like you were at the top of the world. Yet at the same time it made you feel so small seeing how big the volcano was. Being on the top of the volcano made me forget everything else just for a few minutes, and I was just able to stand there and appreciate the beauty. Even though it was a tough hike and we had a few falls, it was worth it. I am so glad that I chose to climb the volcano and got the chance to experience all the beauty we saw along the way.

In the crater that we went to, there was a lava shop which consisted of jewelry made out of lava from Pacaya. In one section, there were Mayan zodiac bracelets. Here, we would give one of the workers our birthday and he would look up in the book what our Mayan zodiac was and told us what that meant, (I was the monkey!). Not only was the jewelry cool because it was made out of lava, but also because at the same time it showed the Mayan culture. Being able to hear what the Mayan zodiacs meant and being able to hear mine was so awesome. It really made me feel like I was part of the Mayan culture if only for a minute.

Also, roasting marshmallows in the crater was so awesome. Not everyone can say they roasted marshmallows in a volcano! The whole hike in general was such a great experience and I hold so many memories just from that day. I think that was a great way to close out our whole trip. Being able to see that much beauty on the last day just made me realize how grateful and blessed I am. Now in my life back in Ohio, I can stop and think more about the world around me and how different everything is. I am so glad I was exposed to a whole different way of life. Even though now I am back living the way I am used to, I have a better idea of what other people go through and how different everyone's lives are. This is an experience I would not change for anything and an experience I will cherish forever.