

A Nutritionist's Trip Abroad

Dr. Tina shares her recent trip to Guatemala with us and how it expanded her view on diet

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As a traditional naturopath and nutritionist from Vibrant Living Wellness Center, Tina Paul is passionate about pursuing a healthy lifestyle. This PhD holder in Naturopathy from Clayton College and Natural Health and Health Sciences graduate from the Mercy College in Detroit believes that we are in total control of our bodies and can defend ourselves from diseases as long as we practice a proper diet and lifestyle.

This passion of hers has led her to travel to other cities and countries, where she observes the residents' diet and takes notes about their lifestyles. Not only does this endeavor broaden her knowledge about nutrition, it also enables her to champion her cause and inspire her patients. A recent trip to Antigua, Guatemala exposed Tina Paul to a new cultural, culinary and nutritional experience. She shared her trip and how it changed her with us:

I just returned from a week in Antigua, Guatemala with my husband. It was a place with a lot of history. My husband and I really paid attention to the people and culture. Given my background, I'm always looking at how healthy the people are. Guatemala is technically a 3rd world country with a large portion of the population not receiving any healthcare services.

The first thing we noticed is that people walk. They walk everywhere. My husband wears an activity tracker bracelet that tracks steps and miles walked. At home we walk for health before and after work. He's lucky to reach a goal of 7,500 steps. But in Guatemala, just going from our hotel to town and then sightseeing and going to restaurants for meals, he was hitting 14,000 steps a day. And none of that was by "exercising". In fact, he was surprised he was hitting his old goal before noon.

Walking as a part of everyday life is nothing like exercising. It just happens and you don't even realize it. The American culture has grown to move fast and walking places is just too slow.

The next thing we noticed was the food. Guatemala has a very similar climate to California. They grow so many fruits and vegetables and have wonderful markets where much of this fresh produce is sold.

Guatemalans make most of their meals from scratch. In fact, we took a Guatemalan cooking class to learn how to make some of the classic Guatemalan dishes. It was a lot of fun and everything was made from fresh locally grown food. Nothing is imported. We prepared a wonderful meal over a 2-hour period. I don't think many Americans would spend 2 hours preparing and cooking dinner.

The time went by fast. We were drinking wine, and talking amongst ourselves (including an instructor who spoke little English). I have to admit, as I was mincing garlic with a knife, I did wish I had my garlic mincer. It would have made the job so much faster. But then again, fast wasn't the purpose. We minced lots of vegetables with just a knife. I have to say... when we sat down at the end to eat what we made, it was so rewarding knowing we made it with only a knife and gas burner (Guatemalans don't have ovens, just a stove top).

Now the bad news: we saw McDonalds, Burger King, Wendy's, Dominos and Little Caesars Pizza there. Fast food is everywhere now. We saw lines out the door for Little Caesars when we were walking by at 10:30 am. The Domino's pizza delivery motorbikes were constantly on the move. So unfortunately, as the younger crowds are raised alongside these fast food places, the SAD (standard American Diet) will creep in. I just hope the kids of today grow up to be as active as their grandparents are now.

Vibrant Living Wellness Center is located at 144 W. Sierra Madre Blvd. Sierra Madre. For more information, call (626) 470-7711 or visit www.vibrantlivingwellnesscenter.com.

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