



Youth group mission trip information sheet

HOUSING

During your PVM youth group mission trip you will most likely be housed in several different situations. During your first 2 ½ days you will be housed at our camp on mattresses and bunk beds in large dormitory type rooms. We cannot provide separate housing for families or couples.

During your outreach you will be sleeping on a mattress or a cot. The accommodations could range from a hotel to the floor of a church. During outreach we can promise showers, but not necessarily HOT!

WHAT TO BRING

- Sleeping Bag and pillow
- Bible, notebook/journal, and pen
- Camera and film
- Jacket or sweatshirt – **IMPORTANT!**
- Work Clothes (clothes that you don't mind if they get paint on them or mud stains)
- Set of church clothes
- Towels and toiletries
- Casual clothes, preferably not shorts for the guy
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Hat/visor
- Bug spray
- Flashlight
- Any medications

- Raincoat and/or umbrella – **IMPORTANT!**
- Water bottle
- Swimsuit (one piece or tankini)
- A small backpack or duffle bag

CLOTHING

Some of you may have heard that in Latin American countries the church is more conservative and that girls need to dress in skirts and dresses, this is not the case in Costa Rica. However, here are a few rules to go by.

Girls:

- Please be modest at all times.
- No short skirts or shorts.
- Please **ONLY** bring one piece bathing suit. Tankinies are acceptable.
- No spaghetti strap shirts.
- During ministry times, you will be asked to wear either a skirt, capris or pants.
- You may wear shorts on vacation day or while working.

Guys:

- Latin guys do not often wear shorts. (It is alright for you to wear shorts to work and on vacation days, but during ministry times, we ask that you wear pants.)

Simply, please be sensitive to the culture around you and remember you are a guest in this country.

We do not provide laundry services during your trip. It is necessary that you bring all the clothes you will need.

WEATHER

Most people come to Costa Rica expecting it to be very hot. However, this is not necessarily the case. Costa Rica has many different climates. While you are in the central mesa (the area surrounding San Jose) temperatures can be as cold as 55 degrees Fahrenheit at night. In la Cueva de Elias where training is held it is windy as well which makes it feel even colder.

From December to April is summer, which means that it does not rain and the weather is beautiful. From May to November is winter, which means that it usually rains in the afternoon after 1:00 (some days it rains all day long and other days it doesn't rain). If your time with us takes you out of the central mesa be prepared for hot weather and rain intermittently, no matter the time of year.

BAGGAGE

Go to your airline's website prior to packing to verify baggage limitations and any embargo restrictions. Each person traveling with PVM is permitted one standard checked bag and one carry-on plus personal item. Pack at least one set of clothes, personal necessities, and any valuables in your carry-on. It is always possible that luggage will arrive later than you. Remember to pack light. You will be responsible to handle your own luggage when you arrive.

Mark your entire team's checked luggage with either a bright colored strip of cloth or string. You may also want to number your luggage with markers or stickers. (1a, 1b, 2a, 2b) Make sure you have a count of total checked baggage.

<p>Standard <u>Checked</u> baggage limitation 50 lbs and 62 linear inches (length + width+height)</p> <p>Standard <u>Carry-on</u> baggage limitation 40 lbs and 45 linear inches (130)</p>
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CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION

While on the plane, you will be given an immigration form and a customs declaration form. In regards to the questions asking what you are bringing into the country, be honest but not too detailed. Generally team members will have nothing of value to declare. You will be traveling as “tourists.” Your foreseen address will be Heredia, Costa Rica.

PASSPORTS

Each traveler needs to obtain a valid US passport before traveling to Costa Rica. For forms and information you can visit <http://travel.state.gov>.

To obtain a passport you will need:

- 1) *The application for a passport* – obtained at a local courthouse or some US Post Offices or online.
- 2) *Proof of citizenship* – birth certificate with the official raised seal or a certified copy. These can also be obtained at the local courthouse.
- 3) *Proof of identity* – this can be a valid driver’s license or an accompanying parent if the child is under age 18/
- 4) *Two passport photographs-2”x2”* – these can be taken at a local AAA, License Bureau, Walmart, or other local photo studio.

Take the above-mentioned items, along with the required fee(s) stated on the passport application to your local Clerk of Courts’ office. It may take up to six weeks to get a passport by mail.

Don’t carry your passport WITH YOU. It is your ticket out of Central America. Make a copy of you passport and keep it with you. It is best to have someone

keep your passport at the base. Team leaders should also have copies of each team member's passport.

MEDICAL VACCINATIONS

All team members need to have current Tetanus shots.

Each participant is encouraged to receive further medical advice from your local physician or public health office prior to traveling. Some physicians will recommend taking malaria pills. It is not a requirement here and most teams do not take them. Often team members become ill during their stay here because of the medication. Each one must make their own decision. You can also obtain information online at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov.

CURRENCY

The Costa Rican currency is Colones. The current exchange rate can be found at www.oanda.com and go to fxconverter.com.

It is best to bring cash in small denominations. Traveler's checks are very hard to exchange and bills higher than \$20 can be difficult as well. The smaller bills you have, the easier it is to exchange. You will want to have spending money for drinks, snacks, and offerings at church services. There will also most likely be a chance to shop for souvenirs at a market. 90% of shops and stores in Costa Rica receive American dollars.

PACKING TIPS

- 1) If you can't afford to replace it, don't bring it. – This is a general rule of thumb for cameras, personal electronics, irreplaceable family objects, etc. Travel under the assumption that anything you carry may be stolen or lost.
- 2) Make sure all bottles are sealed tightly and wrapped in Ziploc bags or placed in a plastic container. You don't want to smell Pepto-Bismol every time you wear your sweater.
- 3) Take all film, batteries, and such that you think you will need. It can be very expensive overseas.
- 4) Consider leaving things with people you meet on outreach. This will make room in your luggage for souvenirs and such. Another option is to pack a collapsible duffel bag or back pack to bring extra things home in.
- 5) If you are staying in a host home, it is culturally accepted to give host gifts. Bring something unique from home or a picture. Be creative.

GIFT IDEAS

Pictures of your family / Candy / Toys & Games – jacks, marbles, uno, bubbles, crayons, markers, coloring books, Frisbees, dolls, miniature cars, etc. / Balloons, face-painting, small souvenirs from the US

SIMPLE RULES FOR A GREAT TRIP

1. **Relationships** Focus on the people. Relationships are more important than projects. People are eternal – projects are temporal. The Latin culture is more focused on relationships than on work.
2. **Flexibility**. You will encounter many situations to which you are not accustomed. Be prepared that other cultures do not place the same value on efficiency and time management that we do. Be flexible: don't complain. Allow God to work in the times of waiting, canceled plans, and work that does not get done. Discover the enrichment of experiencing a totally different way of life.
3. **Don't over do it** When you are tired take a break. Take care of yourself by drinking lots of water. It may be hotter than what you are used to.
4. **Culture sensitivity** Be a student of the culture. Listen and watch what the natives are doing. Don't talk too much or too loudly. North American travelers have the reputation of being loud, boisterous, and demanding. Prove them wrong.
5. **Humility** Travel with a sense of humility with genuine desire to learn more about the people in the culture and to serve them. You are one out of a thousand tourists. Don't expect special privileges.
6. **Bargaining** Don't try to bargain too hard. These people are making their living from this. The markets in Costa Rica generally don't bargain. They do give you discounts. If you think that something is overpriced ask one of the natives or staff to find out if the price is too high.
7. **Language** It is very exciting to the natives if you try to learn to speak and use a few phrases in their language. Even if you only know a few words, use them.
8. **Try to do things the way the natives do and be open to new experiences**