



WELCOME AND PREPAREDNESS PACKET SHORT TERM VOLUNTEERS

Bienvenidos!

We are so grateful that you have decided to volunteer with Hope of Life International in Guatemala! Your work with us will help to bring hope and transformation to the lives of many, including your own. This document will help you to prepare for your trip and allow you to know what to expect when you are with us. Please read through each section carefully.

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1. ABOUT HOPE OF LIFE INTERNATIONAL

Hope of Life International (HOL) is a nonprofit, international humanitarian aid organization dedicated to working with children, families, and communities to reach their full potential by tackling inherent causes of poverty and malnutrition in rural Guatemala. HOL works alongside the marginalized and oppressed, implementing programs which are focused on lasting impact and community-driven, sustainable change.

We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with headquarters in Providence, Rhode Island.

OUR MISSION

Saving Lives.

Hope of Life seeks to rescue future generations of Guatemala and the world through the power of a Practical Gospel, in which we never meet a spiritual need without first meeting a physical need. We aim to transform generations from dependence to lasting independence, creating strong leaders for the world and for the Kingdom of God.

OUR VISION

Hope of Life International began with a single outreach to the elderly in 1987 and now encompasses over 3,000 acres with dozens of ministry programs. As a fully functioning humanitarian aid organization, our vision is to provide “hope of life” to the people of Guatemala. By meeting physical and economic needs of marginalized families experiencing extreme hardship, we are able to share the love of Christ in a tangible way, thus sharing the greatest gift of all.

OUR HISTORY

While sick with an unknown illness in 1987, Carlos Vargas returned to his hometown of Llano Verde, Guatemala to live out what he thought would be his final days of life. While in the small village, people who were sick themselves – one elderly gentleman in particular – came to Carlos to beg for help. In a deathbed deal with God, Vargas vowed to dedicate his remaining days to helping those who were infirm or suffering from poverty.

From that day forward, Carlos' body began to heal. The ministry started at the foot of a mountain, on one acre of land, meeting needs of the elderly who were homeless, abused, abandoned, and desperate. Just two years later, in 1989, Jose became the very first infant in HOL's medical rescue program, which has since treated more than 25,000 children for malnutrition.

Now 35 years later, this multifaceted ministry is a 3,000-acre mountain home to more than 600 residents and staff, serving thousands of people each year with one resounding aim: Saving Lives.

OUR WORK

Situated on our campus in Eastern Guatemala, we operate:

- Oasis of Eden: a home for seniors to age with dignity
- Liberty School: preschool to grade 12
- St. Luke's Hospital: a pediatric hospital and nutritional recovery center
- Kelly's House: a home for children with special needs
- Village of Transformation: a family-style foster care community
- Leadership training for pastors and community leaders

Along with our on-campus programs, Hope of Life provides aid in 307 villages across Guatemala by:

- Offering emergency medical support and nutritional intervention to children and adults
- Sponsoring children and seniors in 52 villages
- Empowering small business

- Installing clean water wells and solutions
- Building family homes, schools, churches, and community centers
- Training Pastors and Church Planters

2. ABOUT GUATEMALA

To get the most out of your experience in Guatemala, we suggest learning about the culture, geography, and language before your trip: www.hopeoflifeintl.org is just one of the many places to learn more! We encourage you to seek out information that will prepare you for your trip and make you more knowledgeable and comfortable with the new world you will be experiencing!

THE PEOPLE

Guatemala's culture is a unique combination of Mayan practices and Spanish colonial heritage. Approximately fifty percent of the population is mestizo (a mix of Amerindian and Spanish, called Ladino by the people of Guatemala). The remainder of the population identifies with European, K'iche, Kaqchikel, Mam, Q'eqchi, or other Mayan and non-Mayan groups.

The vast diversity of ethnicities results in nearly 21 different languages spoken throughout the country. The majority of people speak Spanish; however, there are twenty indigenous languages represented.

Many indigenous people of the rural highlands follow traditional religious and social customs and continue a rich tradition of textiles and other handcrafts. This same population practices spiritual acts that are rooted in the country's history prior to the civil war, sometimes blending elements of Roman Catholicism. The majority of the population identify themselves as Roman Catholic, Protestant or part of the Maya-Catholic fusion.

The fourteen million people of Guatemala thrive on the country's fertile land as 52 percent of the population is engaged in agricultural work. Guatemala has traditionally produced a variety of natural exports including coffee, sugar, bananas, and vegetables. The urban areas, however, are heavily influenced by European and North American trends.

The diversity between the urban, modern ways practiced in Guatemala City—the hub of cultural activity—and the traditional practices and customs of the Mayan population gives Guatemala a colorful and unique culture.

THE COUNTRY

Guatemala is home to more than fourteen million people, covers over 42,000 square miles, and is located between Mexico, the Caribbean Sea, the Pacific Ocean, Honduras, Belize, and El Salvador. With lush greenery, 205 miles of coastline, exotic wildlife, majestic mountains, and striking landscapes, Guatemala is one of the most beautiful countries in Central America. The physical appeal of Guatemala, meaning "the land of forests," masks its bloody past and uncertain future.

THE SITUATION

In 1996, the country emerged from a 36-year-long civil war in which hundreds of thousands of people were lost. In 2009, the country declared a "state of public calamity" bringing to the surface a severe hunger crisis that was sweeping the nation.

The "dry corridor," located in eastern Guatemala, is said to be an area of severe malnutrition because of adverse weather, poor soil, and the global economic turndown. In this corridor, it is estimated that 54,000 people go hungry every day. According to UNICEF, nearly half of Guatemalan children suffer from severe malnutrition. The chronic hunger rate for children (49.8 percent) is the highest in the region and the fourth highest in the world.

As a result, over 75% of the country's population falls below the poverty line.

Illiteracy, infant mortality, maternal mortality, and starvation are among the highest in this region. To compound the situation, the country is victim to organized crime and gang-related activity, as well as recurring natural disasters including hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and mudslides, destroying the lives of people living in vulnerable areas.

Infectious diseases complicate the problem. Food-borne or waterborne illnesses such as bacterial diarrhea, Hepatitis A, and typhoid fever are common, as is dengue fever, malaria, and leptospirosis.

This country, though beautiful in appearance—picturesque, even—is overwhelmed by crime, poverty, and severe malnourishment.

THE LANGUAGE

Spanish is the most widely spoken language in Guatemala. With 93% of its residents communicating in this language, we encourage you to have fun practicing and using it while visiting.

Hello	<i>Hola</i>	Please	<i>Por favor</i>
Goodbye	<i>Adios</i>	Thank you	<i>Gracias</i>
Good Morning	<i>Buenos días</i>	You are welcome	<i>De Nada</i>
Good Afternoon	<i>Buenas tardes</i>	What's your name?	<i>Como se llama?</i>
Good Evening	<i>Buenas noches</i>	My name is...	<i>Me llamo</i>
Welcome	<i>Bienvenidos</i>	I am from	<i>Soy de...</i>
How are you?	<i>Como esta, usted?</i>	Friend	<i>Amigo</i>
I am fine	<i>Estoy bien</i>	Yes / No	<i>Si / No</i>

FUN FAST FACTS

Motto: “Pais de la Eterna Primavera” translated “Country of the Eternal Spring”

National Bird: Resplendent Quetzal

National Instrument: The Marimba

Official Currency: Quetzal

Capital City: Guatemala City

Independence Day: September 15, 1821 (from Spain)

Origin of the Name: The name Guatemala means “land of the trees” in the Mayan Toltec language.

Nobel Peace Prize Winners: Rigoberta Menchú, 1992 and Miguel Ángel Asturias, 1967

International Musicians: Ricardo Arjona

Film and Television: Scenes from *Star Wars IV: A New Hope* and *Moonraker* were shot at Tikal National Park, as wells parts of *Apocalypto* were filmed in El Petén, and “Season 11 Survivor Guatemala” was made in Yaxhá-Nakúm-Naranjo National Park.

3. AIRPORT TRAVEL and TRANSPORTATION

AIR TRAVEL

La Aurora International Airport, located in Guatemala City (Airport Code: GUA), is recommended for travel. All major airline carriers serve this airport. As well, we recommend visiting your airline’s website to view the most current travel and TSA requirements for baggage allowance, etc.

TRANSPORTATION

When you arrive at the airport you will collect your luggage and exit through the main doors. We ask that you exit to YOUR right side when leaving the airport. Outside, a Hope of Life International representative and security will be waiting to greet you with a sign reading "Hope of Life International." Your team will then be transported via van or bus to a local restaurant for lunch and then on to the Hope of Life International campus. The drive will be approximately three hours.

4. DOCUMENTATION and CUSTOMS FORMS

PASSPORT

When traveling to Guatemala you **MUST** have a passport. Visas are not required for U.S. citizens visiting the country for less than 90 days. Additionally, we advise that you carry a copy of your immunization record and a list of contacts in the U.S. and Guatemala (name, address, phone number, relation) in case of emergency

We recommend all travelers make three copies of your passport, immunization record, and contact list before travel. Leave one copy at home, pack one copy in your luggage, and carry one with you.

COVID-19 TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS

Updated Requirements for Air Travelers to the U.S. due to COVID-19

*** Effective December 6, 2021, all airline passengers to the United States ages two years and older, regardless of vaccination status or citizenship, must provide a negative COVID-19 viral test taken within one calendar day of travel. Alternatively, travelers to the United States may provide documentation from a licensed health care provider of having recovered from COVID-19 in the 90 days preceding travel. Please check the CDC website for additional information and [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Country-Specific Information

Passengers who are neither Guatemalan citizens nor Guatemalan residents will be required to present **both** of the following:

- For all travelers aged 12 and over: Evidence of receiving a complete two-dose COVID-19 vaccination course (or one dose for Johnson & Johnson), with the final dose being administered at least two weeks before beginning your trip to Guatemala; and
- For all travelers aged 10 and over: Proof of a negative COVID-19 PCR or antigen test from a certified lab conducted no more than three (3) days prior to check in at the airport or arrival at the land border.

Please make every effort to stay informed before making any travel plans by confirming with your airlines and checking the website (<https://igm.gob.gt>) of the Guatemalan government's immigration authority.

CUSTOMS FORMS

While on the airplane you will receive an immigration form. There is a section that asks you to put the address in which you will be staying while in Guatemala. Please write, "Esperanza de Vida, KM. 146.5 Carretera Atlantico, Aldea Llano Verde, Río Hondo, Zacapa, Guatemala, C.A." You will be asked to fill out another form when leaving the country as well. It will be provided to you after check-in at the immigration desk before you enter the security area.

5. IMMUNIZATIONS, MEDICINE, and MEDICAL ATTENTION

IMMUNIZATIONS

We advise you to meet with your family physician to receive all necessary immunizations prior to your trip to Guatemala. It is

important to meet with your physician as soon as possible in the planning process. To obtain the most current immunization recommendations for Guatemala, please visit the Center for Disease Control website, www.cdc.gov. It is at your own risk should you choose not to follow these recommendations.

MEDICINE

Please make sure that you pack a sufficient amount of personal medication or prescriptions for the duration of your trip. A list of all medications and instructions is required in your application. Please see page two (2) in the application.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

It is mandatory that team members purchase short-term medical insurance with international coverage before their trip to Guatemala. Travel insurance can be purchased through Gallagher Charitable International Insurance Services. Information on insurance programs can be accessed at <https://app.travelwithgallagher.com/Affiliate/Enroll/TripLeader/1158> or (800) 22-8438. The average cost of mission insurance is \$4 per day.

MEDICAL ATTENTION

If during your time in Guatemala you should require medical attention, we have a small medical staff on-site and there are hospitals nearby. We have relationships established with many of the doctors in these facilities and are confident in their ability should medical needs arise. These hospitals are clean, modern, and capable of handling a variety of medical emergencies. You will be responsible for all financial expenses involved with your medical care and treatment should it be required. You are required to sign a medical release waiver within your application.

6. MONEY and EXPENSES

MISSION TRIP PAYMENT

All payments for mission trips to Hope of Life International will be handled through your mission trip coordinator. Coordinators will provide cost breakdowns, and other payment information to you as needed.

SPENDING MONEY (optional)

If you would like to purchase souvenirs or other items during your time in Guatemala, we recommend bringing between \$50 and \$150 USD. We can exchange cash at the office on the Hope of Life International campus. All bills must be \$20, \$50 or \$100 and must be crisp and brand new. You do not have to exchange money in the airport if needed Hope of Life with take care of the matter for you.

CURRENCY

The Guatemalan currency is Quetzales (pronounced KETS-ALL in singular form and KETS-ALL-LEHS in plural form). At the date of this publication, there are approximately 7.5 Quetzales to every U.S. Dollar. The currency exchange rates change daily. Visit www.coinmill.com or other exchange rate sites to learn more about the current rates.

7. FOOD and HOUSING

FOOD

Team members are served three meals a day at our "Rancho" near the pools. Our chef and kitchen staff prepare a variety of foods ranging from typical Guatemalan meals to hearty American classics. There are always many options for individuals with specific tastes. If you have any specific dietary needs, please let us know in advance. All foods served within the Hope of Life International campus are safe to eat and are prepared according to recommended health standards.

Hydration while in Guatemala is essential. Due to the excessive heat, it is very easy for persons to become dehydrated. You must conscientiously drink plenty of water throughout the day. Purified water coolers are located throughout the campus. It is recommended that you bring your own individual water bottle in order to refill it throughout the day as needed. The water in all faucets and showers on campus is not purified and should not be used for drinking or brushing your teeth.

HOUSING

All team members will have an assigned room on HOL's campus. Each room is supplied with beds, pillows, linens, blankets, and fans. Housing is located near the top of the mountain, so temperatures are very comfortable during the night.

In each housing area, there are both showers and bathrooms. We ask that you bring your own personal toiletry items and towels. There are also common areas for groups to meet to enjoy devotions and time together.

If any problems arise during your stay, such as damaged or non-functioning items in your room or bathroom, please let your Hope of Life International group leader know immediately.

8. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

AGE REQUIREMENT

All team members must be 18 years old or older to participate in a trip, unless accompanied by a parent, guardian or stated otherwise. Please refer to the liability release form on page three (3) in the application.

PHONE AND INTERNET

Internet access is available for a small fee: \$10.00 per person per week. Please keep usage at a minimum and only use when needed. Group leaders will have a Guatemalan phone for team use.

GIFTS AND PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please **DO NOT** give any gifts or money to locals, children, elderly, or staff without advanced permission. This is for your safety, that of the recipient, and our staff. If you feel compelled to give something including clothing, shoes, or other items, please seek out the permission of a director.

We ask that you **DO NOT** exchange any personal information such as addresses and phone numbers with locals while you are in Guatemala. If you would like to communicate with someone in Guatemala after your trip, please make arrangements with the Hope of Life International staff member working with your group. In addition, we ask that you are careful not to make promises in regard to communication, future visits, or help. Broken promises, no matter the intention, can lead to immense hurt.

FAITH

Hope of Life International is a non-denominational, faith-based organization that works with people of all faith backgrounds. We ask that during your time with us, you practice acceptance of others' beliefs and do not impose your own faith upon them. If you should have any questions in this area, please speak with your Hope of Life International staff member or your team leader. Romans 14:1-12 states, "Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions...So then, each one of us shall give account of himself to God."

DRUG USE AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Drug use is not tolerated at Hope of Life International. If any team member is found in possession of an illegal substance, they

will be immediately asked to leave and will be responsible for all costs associated with transportation back to the United States. At HOL, we seek to provide an encouraging and uplifting environment. Foul language and off-colored jokes are not acceptable, and we ask that you refrain from this type of conversation during your time with us.

9. PACKING LIST, CUSTOMS, AND WEATHER

We have compiled a packing list designed to meet all of your needs during your stay at Hope of Life International. Take special consideration during the packing process to make sure that all of your basic needs are covered. Please check with your airline carrier for information on the weight and number of bags you are able to bring to Guatemala for your trip.

PACKING LIST

- Tennis shoes (may be ruined during work)
- Undergarments
- Active wear (warm weather appropriate that may be ruined during work)
- Sunglasses
- Hat
- Work gloves
- Sleepwear
- Flip-flops or sandals (for shower or evenings)
- Sunscreen and aloe vera
- Toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, conditioner, shave cream, contact solution, brush, etc.)
- Hand sanitizer
- Bug spray with DEET
- Towel and washcloth
- Medicines (Rx, antidiarrheal, headache, etc.)
- Flashlight with batteries
- Reading materials (Bible, journal, Spanish dictionary, reading book)
- Refillable water bottle
- Camera
- Ear plugs/Eye mask
- Modest bathing suit

We advise packing a travel-sized amount of medication and other necessary items in your carry-on bag in case of lost or misplaced luggage.

CUSTOMS

The culture in Guatemala is very conservative. We ask that you pack modest clothing for work and other activities. Tattoos and piercings are considered taboo, and we ask that you are respectful of the cultural differences and cover them when possible. Additionally, please consider the logos and messages displayed on t-shirts and clothing during your trip. Children are very impressionable, and we ask that you are mindful of this during your time at Hope of Life International.

MEN'S ATTIRE

Work/Casual: modest shorts, pants, jeans, and t-shirts. Please note that your clothing and shoes may be ruined during work.

Church: Khakis, jeans, button-up shirts, or polo-style shirts. Attire for church is more casual than formal, but should be respectful.

WOMEN'S ATTIRE

Work/Casual: modest shorts, capris, pants, jeans, and t-shirts. Please note that your clothing and shoes may be ruined during work.

Church: Skirts or dresses (at least knee length) with a sleeved shirt, light sweater/shrug.

During your trip, we aim to create an environment free of distractions in order to allow God to work in our lives. Therefore, we challenge your team to focus on three areas:

1. Practice a "Media Fast"

- a. Please do not bring iPods, CD/DVD players, iPads, personal computers, or video games.
 - b. We understand that most people have a smart phone and will need this for travel, but we highly encourage you and your teammates to limit use of electronic and digital devices while serving with us. Trust us, you and your friends will survive without constant connection.
- 2. Maintain Modesty**
- a. No short shorts, short skirts, revealing yoga pants, or halter tops.
 - b. No tiny bikinis or revealing swimsuits (re recommend one pieces or tankinis).
 - c. No male racing swimsuits or “Speedos.”
- 3. Remain Others-Focused**
- a. Please avoid any attire or accessories that draw attention to yourself.
 - b. No t-shirts displaying cigarettes, alcohol products or suggestive language,
 - c. Please do not bring or expect to use any form of tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs.
 - d. We recommend no jewelry other than a watch and wedding ring. You may want to avoid wearing engagement rings with large or multiple diamonds.
 - e. Please limit the use of electric hair dryers or curling/flat irons.
 - f. No “coupling.” The goal is to serve the people of Guatemala, not yourself. Pulling away from the group to spend time with one “special” individual can be alienating.

WEATHER

The year-round weather in Zacapa, Guatemala is normally quite warm. There is a slight difference in temperatures between the seasons. May to October is rainy season in Guatemala. During this time temperatures will typically be in the 90’s and 100’s. The skies are a mix of sunshine and clouds; periodic short tropical downpours can be expected in the late afternoon and throughout the night with a bit of humidity to follow. The dry season is between November and April and is the time of coolest temperatures. The daily temperature can range between the low 70’s to high 80’s throughout the day. Due to the clear skies, the coolest nighttime temperatures occur in December and January.

10. CONTACT INFORMATION

In case of emergencies and/or flight time changes (of more than an hour difference) made in advance of your flight, we ask that you **notify the United States HOL contact, Katie Arriaza, at (401) 486-6885**. As this is a personal number, we ask that you only use it for emergencies or flight changes on the day of your trip. You can also contact us by email:

Katie@hopeoflifeintl.org or Cheryl@hopeoflifeintl.org

All change notifications made during the week between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. should be made known to the US Hope of Life International office at (401) 421- 9078.

Upon arrival at the airport in Guatemala, Hope of Life International staff members will be in person to greet you at the time indicated in your flight itinerary (sent in advance by you). If, for unseen reasons, a staff member is not present upon your arrival, we ask that you exit the airport to YOUR right and wait inside the café until met or advised by a Hope of Life International staff member. This is for your safety. While in Guatemala, if there is a change, emergency, or problem, we ask that you **contact Lourdes Milian at 001-502-5978-3456**. This is a personal number, so we ask that it be used only when necessary. Office in Guatemala 011502-7961-4800.

Physical Address for Hope of Life International in Guatemala:

**Esperanza de Vida
KM. 146.5 Carretera Atlantico
Aldea Llano Verde, Río Hondo, Zacapa, Guatemala, C.A.**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

We know that your time in Guatemala will have a great impact on the lives of others. It will also have a great impact on your own life. The experiences that you will have and the things that you will see will change you forever.

We would like to say thank you in advance. Your desire to better the world around you keeps our organization working in Guatemala. Our organization would not be what it is without you. Thank you!

We want the preparation for trip to be a clear and easy. If you have any questions during the application process, please contact your mission trip coordinator at (401) 421-9078. Or by visiting www.HopeOfLifeIntl.org, you will be able to see even more information on the work we are currently doing and the new projects to come.

Thank you for your desire to help the people of Guatemala. Let your adventure begin!

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