



## **WELCOME AND PREPAREDNESS PACKET FOR MISSION TEAM MEMBERS**

Bienvenidos!

We are so glad that you have decided to serve at Hope of Life International in Guatemala. You will bring hope and ultimately change to the lives of many, including your own. This packet 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'S MISSION

Hope of Life International has been working for more than 25 years in Guatemala to carry out its mission of watching over the well-being of the less fortunate and reaching “the least of these” before it is too late. Every day, life-changing hope is offered through the child rescue center, orphanage, elderly home, feeding centers, education, construction projects, and numerous other ways.

Hope of Life International is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization with headquarters in Providence, Rhode Island.

## OUR MISSION

At Hope of Life International, every life is precious to God and precious to us. For more than 25 years, Hope of Life International has been the helping hands, loving arms, and busy feet of Jesus Christ in the heart of Guatemala. Through humanitarian aid efforts, rescue missions, feeding programs, and more, Hope of Life International has carried out its mission to hear the cry of the hungry and needy and respond with hope and care.

## 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 outreaches. As a fully functioning humanitarian organization, our vision is to provide “hope of life” to the people of Guatemala. By meeting the physical and economical needs of the less fortunate, we are able to share the love of Christ in a more tangible way, thus giving them the greatest gift of all.

## OUR HISTORY

After falling sick, Carlos returned to Guatemala. During his time there he was approached by an elderly blind man and a child begging for any help they could find. At that time, Carlos called out to the Lord and promised that if God chose to heal him, that he would dedicate his life to the poor of his country. He started with a home for the elderly and was soon rescuing babies on the verge of death, and thus Hope of Life International was born.

## OUR WORK

**3,000:** The number of orphans we have cared for from infancy to adulthood. Our goal is to give these children a bright future.

**2000:** The number of children rescued by Hope of Life last year; nearly 70 percent in the high country suffer from malnutrition.

**7,000:** The total number of children we have been able to rescue over the past six years.

**500:** The number of homes we will build this year. Over the last few years, we have constructed 4,300 homes.

**Millions:** The number of meals we have been able to provide since we began.

**78:** The number of feeding centers. Our food program directly benefits 20,000 families yearly who depend on our help to survive.

**70:** The number of cleft palate surgeries completed each year to improve speech, feeding, and socialization.

**300:** The number of children currently, residing at Paradise Children's Home, rescue center, Kelly's house and HOL village where they are loved, educated, and protected.

**1,250:** The number of children who have graduated from our academy. Students receive a sound education combined with Christian values.

# 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. [HopeofLifeintl.org](http://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 sandwiched 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 as a result of adverse weather, poor soil, and the global economic turndown. In this corridor, it is estimated that 54,000 people go hungry on a daily basis. 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 percent 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 percent of its residents communicating in this language, we encourage you to have fun practicing and using it while visiting.

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

## 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

**National Independence Day:** September 15, 1821 (from Spain)

**Origin of the Name of Guatemala:** The name Guatemala means “land of the trees” in the Maya-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-Naranja National Park.

## 3. AIRPORT TRAVEL and TRANSPORTATION

### AIRPORT 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 to the Hope of Life International campus. The drive will be approximately three hours.

## 4. DOCUMENTATION and CUSTOMS FORMS

### DOCUMENTS

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.

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.

## **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](http://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](http://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 “ranchon” near the pools. Our chef and kitchen staff prepares 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 the Hope of Life International campus. Each room is supplied with beds, pillows, linens, blankets, and fans. Housing is located near the top of the mountain and the 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 or older to participate in a trip, unless accompanied by a parent, guardian or stated otherwise. Please see the liability release form on page three (3) in the application.

### **PHONE AND INTERNET**

Internet is available with a small fee of \$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.

### **RELIGIONS**

Hope of Life International is a non-denominational organization that works with people of all religious denominations. We ask that during your time with us you are accepting of others' differences and that you do not impose your religious beliefs 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 caught with an illegal substance they will be immediately asked to leave and will be responsible for all costs associated with the transportation back to the United States. At Hope of Life International 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

- Active wear (appropriate for hot weather and outdoor activity that may be ruined during work)
- Undergarments
- Sleepwear
- Sunglasses
- Hat
- Work gloves
- Tennis shoes (may be ruined during work)
- Flip-flops or sandals (for shower or evenings)
- Sunscreen and aloe vera
- Reading materials (Bible, journal, Spanish dictionary, reading book)
- Toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, conditioner, shaving cream, contact solution, brush, etc.)
- Bug spray with DEET
- Medicines (Rx, antidiarrheal, headache, etc.)
- Towel and washcloth
- Flashlight with batteries
- Hand sanitizer
- 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 polos. 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 (knee length) with a sleeved shirt, light sweater/shrug.

***During the trip we are trying to create an environment that is free of distractions in order to allow God to work in our lives. Therefore, we are challenging your team to focus on three areas:***

**1. “Media fast.”**

- Please do not bring iPods, CD/DVD players, headphones or any video games.
- It’s fine to bring your cell phone but please turn it off after you arrive – only use it during travel. Trust me, you and your friends will survive without constant connection. 😊

**2. Modesty**

- No short shorts or short skirts, halter tops.
- No tiny bikinis or revealing swimsuits.
- No male racing swimsuits or “Speedos.”

**3. “Others Focus”**

- Please avoid any attire or accessories that tend to draw attention to yourself.
- No t-shirts displaying cigarettes, alcohol products or suggestive language,
- Please do not bring or expect to use any form of tobacco, alcohol or drugs.
- We recommend no jewelry other than a watch and wedding ring. You may want to avoid wearing engagement rings with large or multiple diamonds.
- Excessive “primping” is not necessary so limit the use of electric dryers or curling/flatting irons.
- No “coupling.” The goal is to serve the people of Guatemala, not you. 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 and 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 Hope of Life International 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: email: [Katie@hopeoflifeintl.org](mailto:Katie@hopeoflifeintl.org) or [Cheryl@hopeoflifeintl.org](mailto:Cheryl@hopeoflifeintl.org) All change notifications made during the week between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. should be made known to the United States 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 and we ask that it is 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.

## **EXTRA 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](http://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!