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SOS Ministries

Central America Short Term Team Handbook

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What 2 Know B-4 U Go

Application Process: Once you have submitted your application and have been approved for the trip, **you will receive a commitment letter by email.** You will need to sign and send it back to us via regular mail or email. Upon receiving your letter, **SOS will then be able to purchase your airline ticket.**

Airline Tickets: It will be made out in your name and you are responsible for its payment and any subsequent changes. We will send you a copy in your e-mail; please verify that all the information is correct as soon as you receive it. The ticket is non-refundable and non-transferable. If for some reason you have to cancel your trip the ticket can be used within one year of the date which it was issued. If you cannot go on the trip, you must contact us and the airline 24 or more hours prior to your scheduled departure. Lastly, if you want to earn ***frequent flyer miles***, you need to register with the airline you will be flying. You can do this by going to the airline's web site listed on your ticket and entering in your confirmation number and frequent flier number.

Bags: Unless otherwise noted by your team leader, you are allowed to bring 1 carry on suitcase (check with the airline for dimensions), 1 carry-on bag (backpack, purse, satchel, saddle bag, etc.), 1 pillow (packed with your sleeping gear), and 1 or 2 pieces of checked baggage (see below). This will maximize the amount that you are able to bring down with you.

Checked Baggage: Once you receive your ticket please verify your luggage restrictions and allowances. In some cases your second bag is free or it could cost \$40 to \$50, so check with the airline's web site for updated information concerning luggage restrictions. We have found that using Duffel bags rather than hard shelled suitcases can give you up to 8 extra pounds per bag, and will also enable you to put the duffel inside your first piece of luggage to bring it back home, which can save on baggage fees. (Please see "What to bring" under "Short Term Team Information" section for more info on how to fill your bags.)

Twelve Tips to Trashing the Trip

1. Don't follow pre-trip instructions! (Don't even read them)
 2. Develop your own agenda and schedule for your trip. (Don't be flexible)
 3. Don't pray for team members, leaders, missionaries (or anybody else!)
 4. Carry your Bible—but don't read it. (Makes a good impression.)
 5. Find one or two team members that you happen to like—stay with them—avoid getting to know others.
 6. Talk about the leaders, other team members, missionaries (or anybody else), but don't talk with them.
 7. Think and talk about the good old USA and all the great things you're giving up by being here.
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8. Complain! It doesn't really matter what you complain about or to whom you complain—Just Do It!
9. Allow your personal fears to keep you from participating in planned activities.
10. Dream about “Big Macs” and don't eat what you are served.
11. Don't spend time with local people. After all, what do they know?
12. Point out what your host could do to improve—to do things more like you would do them.

If you faithfully practice these Twelve Tips, (or even just a few of them) you will be sure to trash your trip as well as your teammates' trip.

Twelve Tips for a Powerful Trip

1. Follow and read the pre-trip instructions – like you're doing right now. Nice work.
2. Be flexible. Plans often change, and the Lord uses this for His glory.
3. Pray for your team members, the local missionaries, and your leaders. Start today!
4. Bring your Bible and pour yourself into the Word. This is a powerful time to seek Christ.
5. Get to know as many people on the team as possible. The Lord uses these trips to forge lifelong friendships.
6. If there is an issue, first go to the person you have an issue with, then go to a leader. Above all else, be patient and understanding with one another, remembering the kindness of our Savior.
7. Don't dwell on the good old USA or the things you're “giving up” to be on the field. Christ made Himself nothing to be our servant, we should follow in His example.
8. Do everything without arguing or complaining, that you might shine like stars in the universe.
9. Don't allow any fear to stop you from participating in the ministry; this is a chance for growth!
10. Don't dwell on Big Macs and Pizza; be thankful for the food we are served.
11. Spend as much time with the local people as possible. You will gain wisdom and appreciate the trip even more than you could have ever imagined.
12. Thank the hosts for all of their hard work for the team, and most of all, be thankful to God.

Short Term Team Information Overview

DATES: Every year, S.O.S. sends teams to Central America three times yearly: March / April, July, and December (dates can be flexible and special arrangements can be made for other months of the year depending on the time of year and the number of people going, contact us for further information on a special trip.)

LOCATION: Teams are sent to El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala.

PURPOSE: Teams are sent **with** the purpose of evangelism, house to house ministry, church planting, conferences and seminars for pastors, teaching English, medical care, relief work, orphanage ministry, youth retreats, and women's conferences, as well as whatever the local needs are at the time.

COST: \$650, PLUS AIRFARE per team member

- **Cost for Expenses: \$650 for the first week – addition weeks are \$300** (This cost is inclusive, it covers your: food, ground transportation, Bibles and literature, etc.) Every dollar will be used either on your airfare or for ministry in country. Please feel free to bring extra funds as many needs come up while on the field.
- **Cost for Airfare:** This expense will vary depending on where you are flying to/from, and depending on the time of the year.

HOW LONG: 1 week to 3 months (depending on the purpose)

IMMUNIZATIONS NEEDED: Tetanus; Hepatitis A (See "Vaccines and Medications" section for more detailed info)

AGE LIMIT: Minimum 10 years old (10-14 yrs old must be accompanied by one or both parents)

PASSPORTS: Make to apply for your passport 3 months before departure. Passports must have more than 6 months before expiring in relation to the date of the trip.

WHAT TO BRING: Depending on the airline, you are allotted 1-2 suitcases at 50 lbs. each (be sure to utilize every pound). Your personal belongings should take up at most 1/2 of one suitcase; fill the rest of the suitcase(s) space with ministry supplies such as: medical/hygiene supplies, Bibles/tracts/literature, giveaway clothes (summer time clothes—no XL), shoes of all sizes, toys/stuffed animals for children, etc.

FUNDS DUE BY: \$650 is due 8 weeks prior to trip; airfare due 6 weeks prior to trip. **There will be a \$50 late fee imposed if funds are not received on or before the due dates.**

MINISTRY PREPARATION: S.O.S. is committed to using teams (see "Purpose" above) in assisting our indigenous missionaries in continuing the church plant work. Based on this, discern in the Spirit what spiritual gifts, talents and abilities you have and begin preparing how they can be used on the team for the glory of God.

KEY WORD FOR MISSIONS: **FLEXIBILITY!!** By committing to the mission, deny yourself the rights and privileges you have at home (i.e.—to 3 square meals a day, to A/C, to a comfortable mattress, etc). In the words of our Lord, if we truly want to be His disciples, we must understand His definition of

flexibility: “Deny yourself, take up your own cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23) May God give you the grace and strength necessary to fulfill being His disciple.

May the joy of the Lord be your strength as you consider and commit to serve with us!

General Packing List – What to Bring

- Bible
- Small gift for host family (something useful around the home, not over \$20)
- Towel/washcloth/soap
- Toothbrush/paste
- Shampoo
- Antibacterial wipes & gel
- Shaving items
- Deodorant (Helps with team unity, believe us!)
- Feminine hygiene items
- Sunscreen/sunglasses/hat
- Insect repellent
- Small packs of Kleenex tissues
- Roll of toilet paper
(for emergencies)
- Small travel alarm clock
- Small flashlight/batteries
- Camera
- Notebook/journal/pen
- One good book to read
- Inexpensive watch
- Reusable water bottle with your name on it
- Light jacket/sweater (for those traveling to Honduras)
- Spending money for personal souvenirs/ snacks
- A love offering will be taken up for the national cooks/helpers. (bring extra cash if you would like to participate in giving to them.)
- Snacks: Granola bars, pop tarts, energy bars, etc.
- Passport and copy of passport (carry copy separate from original)
- Label your clothes
- Unmentionables (Can't mention them all, just bring them!)
- Dress modestly (DUE TO CULTURAL SENSITIVITY, & THE KEY WORD-MODESTLY please contact us for questions)
 - **Short's length must be knee length (no more mid-thigh length shorts)**
 - Females of ALL ages – no midriff shirts, no spaghetti strap shirts & no tank tops (bra straps must be fully covered)
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Avoid extravagant clothes (leave valuable jewelry at home)
- Semi-nice outfit for a church service (business casual)

- **No Swim Suits** are permitted. In keeping with modesty and not to be a stumbling block, If you are part of a team that goes to the beach each person may wear shorts and t-shirt.
- Photos of your family to share with others
- A FLEXIBLE and GOOD ATTITUDE
- A SUBMISSIVE HEART

WHAT TO BRING HOME WITH YOU:

~ A committed and broken heart that is more passionate and dedicated to know Christ and make Him known in your own "Jerusalem" !

~ Resolve like the apostle Paul: *"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death."* (Phil. 3:10)

Health and Hygiene

Travel can be physically draining, and ministering cross-culturally even for a few days, can be very demanding and tiring. It would be wise to consult your physician and have a physical exam before the trip, and be sure to get all the required immunizations to avoid getting a preventable illness. Following the following steps will help keep you out on the field ministering.



1. Wash your hands (with soap) before eating.
2. Wash your hands after being out with people and shaking hands. Don't touch your mouth or eyes with dirty hands.
3. Carry a pack of tissues with you to help keep dirty hands off face.
4. Go to bed at assigned times and sleep. You need your rest.
5. Pace yourself. You need to last the whole trip, not just the first day!
6. Be sure to know water is safe before you drink. Ask your host.
7. If ministering in a tropical climate, be sure to wear protective clothing (hat, sunglasses) and sunscreen. The heat and direct sun can be very intense.
8. Do not eat raw vegetables, fruit, or berries unless your host assures you that they are safe.
9. Be careful not to play with stray dogs or cats (they can carry diseases). Insects, bugs, and other creatures might be dangerous. Do not handle any without instructions from your host.
10. Be sure to notify your team leader of any aches, pains, or changes in your health.
11. If you do get sick, rest and follow your leader's instructions.
12. Diarrhea is a common occurrence of short-term cross-cultural trips (plan to get it). Inform your leader if it persists longer than 24 hours.

Notify your leaders, before the trip, of any medication that you are taking, any allergies that you may have, and any other medical or health-related needs that you may have. Be sure to send us your medical information form if you haven't done so already.

Vaccines and Medications

Injections:

These are the immunizations that we highly recommended.

Start 4-6 weeks before leaving....can get from your County Health Department

- Hepatitis A.....given in 2 doses (2nd dose 6-12 months after the 1st) – this can be contracted by exposure to food and water
- Tetanus
- Malaria pills are only recommended if there has been a recent outbreak. In the recent years, there has been no problem. If a malaria outbreak happens while team is in country, SOS's medical staff will provide Malaria pills.

No special medication needed. Please bring bug spray, diarrhea medication, and any pills that you regularly take.

Communication

- Communication with everyone back home will be limited. The mission has an international phone for emergencies, but feel free to bring a phone with an international calling plan. Please double check your international plan, and be sure to turn off any data you might be receiving – international cellphone use can be extremely expensive. Note that in Honduras cell communication is very spotty, regardless of your carrier.
- The mission has an international phone for emergencies, AND CAN BE USED IF YOU NEED TO COMMUNICATE WITH FAMILY BACK HOME.....
- Even without an international plan, you may want to bring a phone for use when leaving and returning to the United States, just be sure to have it in airplane mode while in country.

Travel Day

You must have the following things ready and at the airport on the day of travel.

- Passport and a photo copy you can keep in a safe place
- A copy of your airline ticket with the confirmation number
- \$10 cash for your entry visa when you arrive in El Salvador
- A print out of travel day contact numbers. (will be emailed to you the week before your departure)
- Extra cash if you would like to buy any souvenirs, or help give love offerings for unexpected needs, etc.
- Luggage