



HOPE OF LIFE  
**PREPARATION**  
**KIT**

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

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 should help you to prepare for your trip and what to expect when you arrive in Guatemala.

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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 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.

## FOOD

- All meals are served buffet style, and each person can serve themselves as desired.
- There are always peanut butter and jelly sandwiches available throughout the day.
- Sodas, Gatorades, snacks, and ice creams are available for purchase at all times.
- All meals are currently served in the main dining hall at specific times set by Hope of Life, and as needed for team needs.
- Examples of meals are as follows, depending on the daily menu:
  - Breakfast: fresh fruit, eggs (various styles), black beans, salsa, meats, omelettes, pancakes, French toast.
  - Lunch: tacos, chicken salad sandwiches, rice and meat, hamburgers, fried chicken, potatoes.
  - Dinner: Chile rellenos, tostadas, hamburgers, vegetables, rice and meats, pasta dishes.

## IMMUNIZATIONS

- Immunizations that Hope of Life recommends follow the recommendations of the CDC: Refer to the CDC Website:  
<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/guatemala>
- *All routine vaccines, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Hepatitis B, Malaria, Rabies, and Yellow Fever.*
- Please be aware that any or all of these vaccines can make you feel ill and should be administered in the recommended time frames.
- Should you choose to take Malaria medication while visiting Hope of Life, be sure to check with your physician regarding which medication would be best. It is our experience that any of the Malaria medications that cause sensitivity to sunlight should be avoided.
- For additional information please visit the CDC website :
- Should you or anyone in your group have a medical emergency, experience a reaction to a medicine, or have a reaction to a food or allergies – **there are medical professionals available at all times and we are within driving distance of a private hospital.**

## **LODGING - GENERAL**

- There are bunk rooms for large groups. Each room can house between 4 and 12 people, depending on the size of the group.
- Approximately 90% of the rooms for missions teams have air conditioning.
- There may be smaller private rooms available if you are traveling with your spouse; however please assume that you will be housed separately.
- All housing areas have separate bathrooms for males and females; most of the housing will require you to use a large bathroom with multiple stalls and showers. Be aware that you will likely share a bathroom with members on your team, and possibly members of other teams of the same sex.

## **INTERNET & CONNECTIVITY**

- WiFi is available in eating areas and in the housing areas on campus, at an additional cost of \$10 per device- due upon request of connection information.
- WiFi and cellular service is not available in the villages, and the use of your phone and hotspots is discouraged while you are ministering to the people. We recommend being as present as you can during your time with us and limiting your internet usage.

## **AIRPORT PICK-UP**

- When you arrive, you will first go through immigration; this will require a form given to you by your flight staff and your passport. It is a very simple process and will just take time, depending on the length of the line.
- When you reach baggage claim you will find your bags, locate your saved tags and line up to go through security and customs.
- Once you pass through security you will enter a final foyer before stepping outside the airport. We suggest you wait in this area for your entire group to gather together before leaving – once you leave the airport, you cannot go back inside.
- Outside the airport you will navigate to the right. Our staff is next to the barrier that you'll have stepped into; there will be a translator and usually one or two guards waiting. They will be looking for you and will assist you with your luggage.

- Once you leave Guatemala City, the bus ride to Hope of Life is approximately 3.5 hours. There is a bathroom stop halfway, so you can plan accordingly.

## **DAILY SCHEDULE**

- Projects and agendas are set up and confirmed through your Mission Trip Coordinator at Hope of Life, you should have a general agenda for day to day activities before you travel.
- There are multiple ministry areas on campus to be involved in – please speak with your mission trip coordinator about specific preferences for areas of service.
- Some examples of other ministry opportunities that you can be a part of are:
  - Serving food at a local feeding center
  - Food bag distributions
  - Construction projects
  - Medical assistance
  - VBS's and other spiritual programs

## **PACKING ESSENTIALS**

- Good Rule of Thumb: If in doubt, don't bring it.
- Active wear (appropriate for hot weather and outdoor activity that may be ruined during work)
- Necessary Rx Meds.
- Undergarments
- Sleepwear
- Sunglasses, Hat
- Work gloves
- Tennis shoes (may be ruined during work)
- Flip-flops or sandals (for shower or evenings)
- Sunscreen (min spf 30) and aloe vera

- Reading materials (Bible, journal, Spanish dictionary, reading book)
- Toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, conditioner, shaving cream, contact solution, brush, etc.) Lip Balm
- Bug spray with DEET ( **Off! Deep Woods - Max 25% DEET** ) Be careful of Allergy to DEET
- Medicines (Rx, antidiarrheal (Imodium AD), headache meds., Pepto Bismol, Tums, Dramamine (For bus and boat trips), etc.)
- Towel and washcloth
- Flashlight with batteries
- Hand sanitizer
- Refillable water bottle
- Camera
- Ear plugs/Eye mask
- Modest bathing suit
- Candy Bars, snacks, Power bars,
- Cards, small games,
- Photos of your family, home, city to share with people you meet.
- Small toys, candy, and gifts for the local children.

## **PERSONAL APPEARANCE**

In general you will feel more comfortable if you dress more conservatively than you do at home.

Mens Attire –

- Work/Casual – modest shorts, pants, jeans, and t-shirts.
- Church – khakis, jeans, button up shirts or polos.

Womens Attire –

- Work/Casual – modest shorts (Mid-leg or longer) , capris, pants, jeans, and t-shirts. 4 to 5 T-shirts, 4 to 5 shorts.
- Church – skirts or dresses (knee length) with a sleeved shirt, light sweater/shrug.



**Modesty** – We must respect the local culture, we are guests in their Country.

- **No short shorts, exercise shorts, short skirts, bare shouldered dresses or halter tops.**
- **No string bikinis or revealing swimsuits.**
- **No male racing swimsuits or speedos.**
- **Cover excessive Tattoos. In their culture tattoos are associated with gangs.**

### **CURRENCY AND SPENDING MONEY**

- \$1 = 7.5 Quetzales.
- Exchanging of new bills that are \$20 or higher is available on campus.
- Amount of spending money is determined upon your discretion.
  - If you participate in an optional “Excursion Event” bring extra money
- There is a gift shop on campus and refreshments available for purchase.

### **WEATHER & CLIMATE**

Hope of Life International is located in Zacapa, Guatemala – it is quite warm year round.

- May to October is the rainy season: temperatures are typically in the 90’s and 100’s and there is a mix of sunshine, clouds, and short tropical downpours throughout the evening and night.
- November to April is the dry season: it is coolest during this time where it ranges from low 70’s to high 80’s.
- December – January has the coolest night time temperature