



Pura Vida Ministries
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Pura Vida Work Trips: Guide for Trip Sponsors

Thanks for sponsoring a work trip with Pura Vida. "Travel with a purpose" is a good way to describe what our international work trips are all about. The emphasis of these trips is on developing relationships with local communities and respectfully sharing our time and resources with those in need.

Our policy is for local indigenous communities to identify the needs -- we simply come and share. And once projects are started, we see them through to the end. You can be sure that the project you work on will not become a "ruin," but will be finished and maintained by other teams and the local workforce. Pura Vida is deeply involved in the local community as well, and always hires local labor to teach and work alongside our teams.

Teams typically work on church- and community-related construction projects. Our teams interact with the local population in ways that tourists cannot, taking advantage of relationships with local leadership built over many years. Meaningful contact between our culture and that of the developing world is beneficial to both sides, and is usually a highlight of these trips.

The people of the developing world have much to share with us. Time spent on a work trip has a way of clearing your mind and ordering your priorities. You may return home a changed person! In any case, a work trip to Guatemala is an experience you will never forget. Come share your time and resources in a place where they can really make a difference. Step out of your comfort zone for a week -- you will be amazed what can happen

1. Work Trip Roles & Responsibilities

1.2 – Leadership Roles

Role	Description & Responsibilities
Trip Organizer [Pura Vida Ministries]	Organizer of all trip logistics; duties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the needs of the Trip Sponsor are addressed • Arrange travel details: airfare, ground transportation, lodging • Select work projects and coordinate site preparation and delivery of materials onsite • Collect and track trip applications and payments
Trip Sponsor	Church or organization sponsoring the group that will be travelling to Guatemala; duties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trip promotion • Fundraising
Team Leader	Representative of the Trip Sponsor who will be traveling with the team to Guatemala; duties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicize the trip and pull team together • Schedule and lead team meetings • Coordinate fundraising <p><i>During the trip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as team representative for group decisions made in-country • Communicate team needs to Trip Leader • Work to resolve any conflicts within the group • Help Trip Leader remind team members to respect cultural boundaries if needed (alcohol use, modesty) • Arrange evening debrief sessions
Trip Leader	Experienced Pura Vida Ministries staff member or volunteer responsible for leading the trip to Guatemala; duties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with team leader to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ lodging preferences ○ trip schedule ○ schedule for student/sponsor visits • Attend and provide input for team meetings <p><i>During the trip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accompany the team from the United States to Guatemala and back • Act as liaison between the team and Pura Vida projects in Guatemala • Provide cultural context as needed • Act as safety officer • Remind team members to respect cultural boundaries if needed (alcohol use, modesty) • Address the details of the trip so that team members can concentrate on the experience.
Construction Foreman	Experienced Pura Vida Ministries staff in Guatemala; responsible for:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing work site • Ordering materials • Instructing the team in construction techniques • Involving team members in the construction process
Interpreter	<p>Experienced Pura Vida Ministries staff in Guatemala; responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting for team members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Construction ○ Meetings with locals ○ Special events (church, school visits) ○ Sponsor/Student meetings

1.2 – Team Roles

Role	Description & Responsibilities
Spiritual Lead	Team member responsible for nightly devotions; usually a church staff member.
Construction Lead	<p><i>For construction teams:</i> team member responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Construction Foreman to get the entire team involved in the project. • Encouraging team safety
Baggage Coordinator	<p>Team member responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printing, laminating, and distributing tags for checked bags • Tracking checked bags from the departure airport through arrival in Guatemala
Trip Photographer	<p>Experienced team member responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking photos of the team in action • Collecting photos from other team members after the trip and distributing them to the team
Childrens' Activity Coordinator	Team member responsible for planning activities with local children (See Pura Vida document "Guidelines for Childrens Programs").
First Aid Coordinator	<p>Team member (preferably with medical experience) responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting together a first aid kit • Keeping the first aid kit with the team at all times
Lunch Coordinators	<p><i>For trips staying at a hotel;</i> team members responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buying lunch materials in the U.S. prior to departure • Buying fresh items as needed in Guatemala • Preparing lunch materials on site for the team
Meal Choosers	<p><i>For trips staying at a hotel;</i> team members that work with providers of breakfast and lunch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide count of team members that will be eating at each meal • Keep team members happy with meal selection
Journal Coordinator	<i>For teams keeping a group journal;</i> team member responsible for buying the journal and circulating it among team members during the trip.

2. Important Considerations

2.1 – Health

These trips are very physical, and usually involve a good amount of walking, lifting, and exertion. The areas we serve are at about 7,000 feet elevation (a little higher than Denver, Colorado), which can also make a difference. Team members may be exposed to new bacteria and possibly malaria. Please consult your physician if you are concerned about the possible health problems travelers confront in the Third World. If a potential team member has health issues that might impair their ability to serve on a work team, they should talk with the trip coordinator before signing up.

2.2 – Safety

The areas of the Western Highlands where our teams work are fairly safe. Most of the crime and violence in Guatemala happens in Guatemala City and the far northern regions. We keep an eye on the Guatemalan news almost daily to keep abreast of the situation. The U.S. Department of State hasn't issued a travel warning for Guatemala in a long time, which is also a good sign. The most pressing safety issue in our area is the notoriously fast Guatemalan traffic.

2.3 – Drugs and Alcohol

The communities and organizations we work with in Guatemala have strong prohibitions against the use of drugs, alcohol and cigarettes. As representatives of the church in the United States it is important that our actions are in keeping with the practices of the local communities. If a potential team member has personal problems with this policy they should speak to the trip coordinator before they agree to be a member of the team.

2.4 – Youth Participation

Youth can bring great enthusiasm and a fresh perspective to a work trip. Due to health and safety issues and the distances involved, there are some specific criteria for youth involvement in a Pura Vida work trip:

- On a normal work trip, youth ages 15 and older can participate as long as one of their parents is also on the team.
- Youth currently in (or leaving) the 11th and 12th grades can attend without parents as long as there is one dedicated responsible adult along for every three to four youth. That adult would be someone willing to take responsibility for looking out for the youths' health & safety. That might also entail staying back at the hotel with any youth that are sick, for example. Please bear in mind that the adult's focus would have to be more on the youths' mission experience than on his or her own.
- College students would be able to attend with a recommendation from their pastor.

Please note that Pura Vida can arrange a youth-specific work trips for 11th and 12th graders upon request.

3. Trip Details

3.1 – Team Meetings

We recommend holding at least 2 team meetings prior to departure; at the very least, one meeting is required. We can provide Pura Vida staff or volunteers for your meetings.

- Meeting 1: Introduction to Guatemala (hold 6 months prior to departure)
 - What to expect
 - Selection of work project
 - Preparation needed (immunizations, passports, etc.)
 - Distribute applications
- Meeting 2: Guatemala Orientation (hold 1 month prior to departure)
 - Collect final trip payments
 - Review itinerary
 - Culture and Safety orientation
 - Assign team roles
- Other meetings will be necessary for team members involved in the following:
 - Fundraising
 - Childrens' activities
 - Purchase and packing of lunch materials

3.2 – Deductibility of Trip Payments

Participants on a short-term mission trip can claim their unreimbursed travel expenses as a charitable contribution according to U.S. income tax regulations:

Unreimbursed expenditures made incident to the rendition of services to an organization contributions to which are deductible may constitute a deductible contribution. For example, the cost of a uniform without general utility which is required to be worn in performing donated services is deductible. Similarly, out-of-pocket transportation expenses necessarily incurred in performing donated services are deductible. Reasonable expenditures for meals and lodging necessarily incurred while away from home in the course of performing donated services are also deductible. Treas. Reg. 1.170A-1(g).

3.3 – Refundability of Trip Payments

- Trip payments are non-refundable and non-transferable. Upon trip member cancellation, trip payments will be considered a tax-deductible donation to Pura Vida projects. If airfare has already been purchased, the cancelling trip member will be able to re-book the ticket within one calendar year from the original departure date for a fee.

3.4 – Flights

- We typically book group flights since they offer increased flexibility in ticketing. All group members must arrive on the same flight into Guatemala in order to avoid group delays.
- Exact team size must be supplied by a specific date in order to avoid penalties.
- If team members want to see more of Guatemala on their own, we can modify their return flight so they can stay later. Changes to airfare may incur additional cost.

3.5 – Checked bags

Checked bags are not included in the trip price. Please contact your airline for the cost of checking a bag.

3.6 – Arrival in Guatemala

- Paperwork for Guatemalan Customs and Immigration will be distributed on the flight to Guatemala City. Be sure the group completes the forms before arrival.
- Once past Immigration, team members should pick up their own baggage. Since it's easier for team members to find their bags on the carousel rather than in a huge pile of group bags, discourage folks from simply pulling off all bags with a team tag.
- Once the entire group has their bags, the team will then clear customs as a group.
- Each team member should have their baggage claim tickets in hand, as airport officials will verify them.
- Once past Customs, the team should regroup somewhere out of the way in the foyer just before the doors to the outside.
- Once the entire team is reassembled, they should head outside and form a group in an open area. They should wait there until the Trip Leader has located the bus.

3.7 – Ground Transportation

- For groups larger than 10 people we book a private “Chicken Bus” for maximum safety and comfort. Depending on team needs and work sites, we may change to 15-passenger vans during the work week.
- The vehicles we use are well-maintained and driven safely by professional drivers we’ve known for a long time.
- We avoid traveling at night as much as possible.

3.8 – Interpreters

We usually hire interpreters to work with the group. The number needed varies according to the amount of Spanish spoken by the team.

3.9 – Materials

Teams must fund their own work projects. In the case of construction projects, that means having sufficient funds available a few months beforehand in order to have materials bought in Guatemala. Materials costs vary depending on team size and project type.

3.10 – Meals

- We recommend having breakfast at 7:00 AM & dinner at 7:00 PM. That allows time for a full work day and some rest and relaxation afterwards.
- Lunch will vary by trip; teams staying close to their worksite can eat lunch where they lodge.
- Teams working away from their lodging need to bring lunch with them. We recommend that these teams buy some of their lunch materials in the US; fresh items like bread can be purchased in Guatemala.