

# Life of Hope Ministries STM Trip Packet

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We are thankful that you are considering a Short Term Mission Trip with Life of Hope Ministries in Guatemala City.

God has blessed Life of Hope with the opportunity to work in Guatemala since June of 2004.

We believe this trip can show you both the beauty of the country, and the many needs that exist simultaneously. We also hope you will engage with and remember the wonderful people of Guatemala who are working every day to share the love of Christ in difficult areas.

We look forward to this time together and getting to know you better. Our hope is that when you leave here, your heart will be filled with fond memories of the people, the church, and the country of Guatemala.

Regards,

Life of Hope Ministries

# Life of Hope Ministries STM Trip Packet

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## GUATEMALA

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### **“The Heart of the Mayan World”**

Land where men, nature, and time have coincided and where they dwell together forever. More than 3,000 years ago a people endowed with extraordinary skills formed one of the most well known and most respected civilizations in history, the Maya.

Guatemala is recognized as a tourist destination surrounded by its exuberant nature where you can have unique and enriching experiences. Its many cultures and their rich customs and traditions and its archaeological heritage are just a few the salient features that will give you the opportunity to share, discover and learn.

Guatemala is a country where the Mayan people live their traditions fully. They express their history and customs through their beautiful pottery, jade figures, and multicolor textiles, which are a true testimony of their ancient culture.

It is an unbelievably beautiful, complex, and diverse country that has preserved their most precious heritage, its people.

### **FACTS OF GUATEMALA (As of 2011):**

<b>Land Area:</b>	42,042 sq. mi
<b>Highest Mountain:</b>	Tajumulco (volcano) 4,220 m (13,845 ft.).
<b>Population:</b>	13,000,000
<b>Population Density:</b>	Approx. 309 people per sq. mi
<b>Population Growth:</b>	2.8% per year
<b>Population Distribution:</b>	60% rural / 40% urban, 55% Maya Indian / 45% Ladino
<b>Religions:</b>	70% Roman Catholic, 30% Evangelical
<b>Language:</b>	Spanish is universally spoken throughout Guatemala. Mayan languages are spoken by 40% of the population and for many, Spanish is a second language.
<b>Currency:</b>	The unit of currency is the Quetzal. The present exchange rate is approximately 8 Quetzals per U.S. dollar.
<b>Electric Power:</b>	Electricity in Guatemala is U.S. standard 110V/220V 60 Hz.

Guatemala is divided into 22 Departamentos (we would call them “States”). Each is headed by a governor. The departamentos are subdivided into municipalities.

# Life of Hope Ministries STM Trip Packet

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## Practical tips for your trip

### Keep in mind:

1. The food offered to you will be different than you're accustomed to in many cases. Be willing to try the local food and eat what is prepared for you by the locals.
2. Try to learn *at least a phrase or two* in Spanish. People will feel honored that you at least tried.
3. Bring a hand sanitizer if you like, but use it very discreetly. Using it in the presence of the locals can give the impression that you view them as "dirty".
4. We ask that you do not carry money with you each day. Only carry money on a day that will be planned or designated as a shopping day.
5. Dress modestly at all times to avoid unwanted attention; you might still get it since Americans look much different than nationals.
6. Always say ("*gracias*") after a meal. The response will be ("*buen provecho*") (may it sit well with you).
7. Latin Americans love the hand shake, but keep in mind they will probably give you a limp handshake. This is normal. Try not to squeeze them too hard, especially older people.
8. Mothers will nurse their children in public. Do not draw attention to it, it's a normal thing.
9. "*Piropos*" (cat calls, pick-up lines aimed at women). Do not respond to these.
10. **DO NOT** wander off from the group at any time.
11. Remember that different is just different, not bad, backward or wrong.
12. When you go to another culture, **you** are the strange one. It is important to remember that you are the **guests** in another person's world. Please respect these other people by not criticizing them.
13. Feel free to ask about cultural differences. People will love if you show interest in their lives.
14. Find out *when* and *where* you can take a photo. Ask people if you can photograph them and specially their children.
15. Watch what you say and remember that people understand more than you think. *Gestures, facial expressions, and the tone of your voice* are understood universally.

# Life of Hope Ministries STM Trip Packet

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## **Do Not Forget to Expect...**

1. The schedule won't really happen as planned!
2. To be stretched. Be flexible in case something needs to be changed.
3. God's name to be glorified.

**We do not want to scare you or make you feel uncomfortable with all these tips. We just want to make things easier for you and give you hints that will help you have a great meaningful experience. Enjoy it!**

## Health Information & Safety Procedures

### ***Immunizations:***

Guatemala is an underdeveloped country, and because of this health issues may be of concern for people who are visiting. While immunizations are not required for travel on a Life of Hope trip to Guatemala, we do require that your Tetanus booster be current. You may also consult your doctor before the trip to see what he or she recommends in the way of immunizations. Please remember that some immunizations require up to six weeks of incubation before they become fully effective, so schedule your appointment well in advance of your trip.

### ***Water and food:***

We will have bottled water available for your consumption throughout the day.

All of your meals will be arranged during your trip. You'll eat at places where you can feel confident that the food is prepared in sanitary conditions.

### ***Hydration:***

When you are traveling internationally, especially to places with warm climates, it is essential that you stay hydrated to reduce your chances of getting traveler's diarrhea or other sicknesses. Be sure to drink more water than you normally do in the days before you leave on your trip, and continue to do so throughout the trip.

### ***Emergencies:***

Life of Hope Ministries funds and supports a medical ministry in Guatemala City. This ministry is operated by Dr. Layla Perez, who also has a nurse on staff with her. In the case of medical emergencies or extreme illnesses, we will have access to Dr Layla Perez, along with necessary medications relevant to the circumstance.

# Life of Hope Ministries STM Trip Packet

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## General Guidelines:

- A good group size is 8-10. We know group sizes can vary, so communication with the Life of Hope group host is very important. Minimum age for team members is 15, unless accompanied by a parent and/or pre-approved by the Life of Hope STM group host.
- We strongly recommend a male and female sponsor for mixed youth groups.
- If booking your own flight arrangements, we request that you communicate your desired flight arrangements with the Life of Hope STM host **PRIOR** to purchasing your tickets.
- There may be occasions that Life of Hope will ask your group to bring items along with you. Such items will be Bibles, vitamins, child sponsorship correspondence, or something similar.
- Dress Policy:
  - We will ask you to dress CONSERVATIVELY. What seems acceptable or normal to us may not be appropriate in another culture. A more detailed packing list is provided in this packet.
  - **Men:** no tank tops. Shorts may only be worn on a scheduled tourism day. For daily activities, t-shirts and jeans are best. Tennis shoes or hiking shoes are recommended.
  - **Women:** no halter-tops, midriff-exposing blouses, or short skirts or dresses. Capri pants are acceptable. No shorts, except for scheduled tourism day, and those should be conservative in length. Sandals and open-toed shoes are not recommended.
  - **Church:** Men, please wear slacks or khaki pants, cargos, etc.... Polo or button down shirt with collar as well. No jeans or tennis shoes. Women, a dress or pants are fine. Nothing low-cut. No jeans.
  - **Around the seminary at night:** You may wear more casual clothing. Flip-flops, sweatshirts, gym shorts are acceptable. Please ensure your clothing is appropriate in this setting as well.
  - **Climate:** February – May is “summer”. Highs in the 80’s, lows in the 60’s. May – October is the rainy season. Typically highs in the 70’s, lows in the high 50’s to the 60’s. October through February is a bit cooler. You may want a light jacket or sweatshirt for cooler evenings and early mornings.

## Trip Costs / Ground Expenses:

- Life of Hope requires \$725 per person (effective 1/1/23) to cover in-country expenses for 7 days in Guatemala City. That amount covers lodging, food, transportation, as well as \$50 per person for anticipated projects during the week. Amount is non-refundable once a group member has arrived in Guatemala City.
- That amount does not cover any souvenir purchases, if time is available for shopping.
- \$725 is a calculated average, based upon past group experience. Amount is subject to change based upon changes in lodging costs or if group stays longer than the normal 7day time frame.
- Any and all expenses incurred in traveling to and from Guatemala City are NOT included in the \$725 ground expense (i.e. food in airport, overnight travel stay if necessary, etc.)

# Life of Hope Ministries STM Trip Packet

---

- Airline ticket is additional, and costs fluctuate based upon time of year and location the ST group is traveling from. Life of Hope group host can assist with purchase of airline tickets.

## **Lodging:**

- Unless otherwise notified, you will be staying at a Bible seminary called SETECA. The seminary has quiet hours and curfews, and we will need to be compliant with those regulations.
- SETECA is a guarded location. There is one entry / exit point, and it is guarded 24 hours a day. No entry or exit is allowed without approval or a dorm room key.
- You will be staying in dorm-room style quarters. In some cases, we may stay in apartments. We do not determine which situation your group will have, housing is based upon other groups being there at the same time.
- We expect rooms of the opposite sex to be off limits during your stay, unless we are using one of the rooms to meet collectively for devotionals.
- The seminary has its own well, so the water is safe for brushing your teeth and taking showers. It is also acceptable to drink, but we also provide bottled water for the group.
- We will eat as many meals as possible at SETECA. They have a cafeteria on site, and they serve good food. We will eat breakfast each day at SETECA, and dinner as often as possible. Lunch will be done at the location of daily activities, or at SETECA if feasible.
- You will have a bed, furnished with a pillow and linens. They also provide clean bath towels each day, except for Sunday. A list of items you should pack is listed on the “What to bring checklist” below.

# Life of Hope Ministries STM Trip Packet

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## What to Bring Check list

### *Necessities:*

- Passport
- Photocopy of passport to keep with you (in case original gets lost or stolen)
- Itinerary
- Toothbrush & toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Shampoo / Soap
- Sunscreen
- Bible
- Comfortable shoes for walking
- Quart-size Ziploc bag for liquids and gels in your carry-on luggage
- Small backpack or daypack (for carrying cameras, water bottles, etc. during the day)
- Light fleece, sweatshirt, or rain jacket
- Personal medicines you are taking
- Mosquito/Insect Repellent

### *Optional:*

- Anti-bacterial soap / wet wipes
- Camera
- Travel alarm clock
- Sunglasses
- Hat or baseball cap (the sun is intense)
- Small Spanish/English dictionary or translator
- Journal
- Earplugs (to facilitate sleeping)

### *Packing Tips:*

There are some things that you should keep in mind while you're packing for your Life of Hope trip. Requirements at airports are still very strict and if you plan to travel with any liquids or gels in your carryon luggage, you will need to pack them correctly. The Transportation Security Administration ([www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)) requires that all liquids or gels that you have in your carry-on luggage must be 3 ounces or less and they must be stored in a clear quart-size Ziploc bag. Containers of more than 3 ounces can be stored in your checked luggage with no problem.

We recommend that you bring whatever type of luggage (e.g. backpack or suitcase) is most convenient for you. Also bring a backpack that can be used to carry water and necessities to our designated daily locations.

# Life of Hope Ministries STM Trip Packet

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## Immigration Procedure for Guatemala

You should be provided with an immigration form on the airplane as you travel to Guatemala City. If not, you can obtain one in the immigration area of the airport after you land. Enter the name of the place where you'll be staying in the blank where it asks for an address for where the group will be staying. Unless otherwise informed by the group leader prior to the trip, you will use the name and address below.

### **SETECA Avenida Bolivar 30-42 Zona 3 Guatemala City**

Upon landing in Guatemala City, simply exit the plane and follow the hallway. The hallway leads you directly to the immigration counters. If you want to avoid getting a dirty look from the immigration officials, be sure not to approach the counter until they give you a wave indicating that it's your turn. Give them your immigration form and passport. They'll stamp your passport and give it back to you.

After passing through immigration, collect your bags from the baggage carousel. Security is usually controlled, and **you'll need to show your baggage claim check** or the baggage sticker that the airline put on your ticket envelope when you checked in. After they verify that you have the correct claim check for your suitcases you pass through customs, where they might open your bags or run them through an x-ray machine. After passing through customs, you'll exit directly to the outside of the airport, where a representative of Life of Hope will be there to meet you.

## Cultural Sensitivity & Giving to People in Need

### Flexibility:

Things in Guatemala tend to happen at a much more relaxed pace than in the US. By and large, people tend to be less task-oriented and more relationship-oriented. In their culture, what is important is getting to know people and creating relationships. This tends to be a much more important value to them than simply accomplishing objectives. Americans are taught to be very project-oriented. We see a need, come up with a solution or develop a logical way to accomplish something, and then we implement. We're all about business, and not much about relationship. It is important that when we visit another culture we have the flexibility to adapt to the circumstances and not be too rigid about our own itinerary or objectives.

### Taking pictures:

Some people in Guatemala, especially if they're from traditional Mayan backgrounds, have the superstition that having their pictures taken will steal their souls. For this reason, please always ask for permission before taking someone's photo. The word for "photo" in Spanish is "foto" so even if you don't speak Spanish, you can at least ask "Photo?" and wait for them to nod their heads before snapping away.



# Life of Hope Ministries STM Trip Packet

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## **Giving gifts:**

Giving gifts can be a wonderful way to connect with people. Giving a personal gift is always much more impactful than giving money, especially in a culture like Guatemala where relationship is so important. The most important thing to remember when giving gifts is that it is only meaningful in the context of relationship. If you just give a toy to a kid because he's poor and you feel sorry for him, it's just a thing to him. If you develop a relationship – however brief it may be – and then give him a toy to show him how much you value and appreciate him as a person, then the gift means everything in the world to him.

One of the most valuable gifts you can give is a photo of yourself or yourself with your family. For a poor family to have a photo of a family in the US that is thinking about them and praying for them is of more worth to them than you could ever imagine. But keep in mind that if you do give someone a gift or a photo, it may create some expectation that you will follow through and maintain some level of communication with them.

## **Giving money:**

The poverty you will see may break your heart and cause you to want to throw money at the problem. We urge you to resist the temptation to give someone money for their needs, no matter how pressing the needs may be. There is already a stereotype that Americans have more money than they know what to do with, so we can be easy targets for people who can make up a good story in order to get some money out of us. Also, even if the need is real and legitimate and you feel prompted to do something to help, we would ask you to work through the Life of Hope group leader to determine the best strategy for helping the person.

## **General Information:**

### **In-country transportation:**

When you are on a Life of Hope trip you will most likely be riding around in a van or car that is driven by a hired driver or by one of the LOH staff. Our desire is to have the group traveling together at all times. The only time we deviate from this policy is if with approval of the Life of Hope group leader in advance.

### **Communication with home / Usage of electronic devices:**

We understand that when you are traveling internationally, it is more difficult to communicate with loved ones at home. Skype is the most efficient manner of communicating back to the US, and Wi-Fi is generally available at the seminary where you will be staying. Therefore, our desire is to let the STM group's designated leader decide who brings electronics and how frequently they may be used. (see Group Coordinator form). Life of Hope claims no responsibility if electronic devices are stolen or damaged while in Guatemala City. We also recommend that you check with your cell phone provider prior to arrival in Guatemala to discuss any potential roaming charges that may apply.

# Life of Hope Ministries STM Trip Packet

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## **Travel Risks for Guatemala**

### **Risks of travel in Guatemala:**

The crime rate in Guatemala is very high. Theft, assault, and gang activity are common in Guatemala City. Typically the perpetrators are looking for money, cell phones, or other goods.

### **Precautions that Life of Hope takes:**

- Life of Hope will always travel in groups with a local staff member. There is security in numbers.
- Groups will be housed in a secure and guarded location.
- When walking the streets, the group will travel together with a member of the community.

### **Precautions that travelers should take:**

- Do not show any form of wealth. Please leave expensive jewelry at home. Do not wear anything flashy. Do not carry valuables. Dress conservatively to avoid making yourself a target for theft.
- Be cautious when exposing cameras, cell phones, and electronics in public.
- **DO NOT** wander away from the group at any time, even for the perfect photo.
- When getting money out of your pocket, try not to show all the bills that you have. If possible, divide your money and carry it in different pockets or bags.
- If confronted by a thief, give the person whatever they are asking for immediately.

We do not want to alarm you; we simply want to make you aware of the risks involved. To date we have never had any type of incident during a group visit. We anticipate that you will have a very positive experience and will leave with wonderful memories of this very beautiful country.

# Life of Hope Ministries STM Trip Packet

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## **Group Coordinator:**

- We ask all group coordinators to review this entire packet with ALL members of the group prior to arrival in Guatemala.
- We ask the group coordinator to be responsible for distributing the “Waiver Release Form” to group members. If necessary, also distribute the “Minor Consent Form”. Group coordinator will be responsible for getting these documents signed, collected, and mailed to Life of Hope office prior to arrival in Guatemala.
- Provide date of birth and Passport name to the Life of Hope staff member who will be hosting your team. That information will be used to purchase short-term trip insurance for the group. This information needs to be provided 3 weeks before departure of your group.
- We ask the group coordinator to supervise conduct of the group members. The ST group host will work closely with the group leader to provide any assistance in this area. The group coordinator is ultimately responsible for the group’s conduct during the trip.
- Inform us of any dietary restrictions or medical conditions of your group members prior to sending in ground expense money. If we are unable to accommodate any existing restriction or condition, Life of Hope will review the matter with the group leader. We reserve the right to decide that an applicant is unable to participate in a STM group.
- We have a time each evening for the group to meet for devotions. The Life of Hope host will also participate in the devotion. You may, if you choose, have a planned devotion prepared for the group in advance.
- We wish to have the designated Life of Hope group host visit with your team members prior to departure for Guatemala. Please contact your host and schedule this meeting.
- Emergency contact info can be provided to the Group Coordinator prior to departure for Guatemala.
- Internet is typically available at the complex where we are staying. As group coordinator, you may determine if you want the team to have access or not. Some groups choose to keep external contact to a minimum so the team can fully connect and avoid excessive distractions. The group coordinator should determine what electronic devices are brought on the trip, and who is responsible for them. Life of Hope takes no responsibility for electronics brought by group members.
- All ST group members are under the authority of the Life of Hope staff person hosting the team. Therefore, if a group member’s conduct is deemed detrimental to the partners in Guatemala or to the ST team, the Life of Hope staff host will reserve the right to send that group member back to the United States. The decision to send a group member home is final, and any incurred expenses are the responsibility of the group member.

# Life of Hope Ministries STM Trip Packet

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## **Waiver and Release of Liability**

**Disclaimer:** Life of Hope Ministries is not responsible for any injury (or loss of property) to any person suffered while participating in a service project involving Life of Hope Ministries, or in any other way involved with the field ministry for any reason whatsoever. This release includes any ordinary negligence on the part of Life of Hope Ministries, its agents, or its employees.

In consideration of my participation, **I hereby release and covenant not-to-sue** Life of Hope Ministries, its Board, employees, or agents, from any and all present and future claims resulting from ordinary negligence on the part of Life of Hope Ministries or others listed for property damage, personal injury, or wrongful death, arising as a result of my participating in the short-term service activities or any activities incidental thereto, wherever, whenever, or however the same may occur. I hereby voluntarily waive any and all claims resulting from ordinary negligence, both present and future, that may be made by me, my family, estate, heirs, or assigns.

Further, I am aware that mission travel involves certain risks, including, but not limited to, death, personal injury, and property damage resulting from travel accidents, sickness, the uncontrollable nature of the encounters with other persons that may occur, and situations in the country(s) being visited, such as civil unrest, epidemics, and unstable governments. In addition, I understand that participation in mission travel may involve sites that may be remote from available medical assistance. I agree that the program sponsors cannot guarantee my total safety since some risks are beyond their control. I agree to follow all instructions and guidelines given by them, and to act in a safe and responsible manner toward all participants and the others with whom I come in contact. I am voluntarily participating in this activity with knowledge of the danger involved and hereby agree to accept any and all inherent risks of property damage, personal injury, or death.

I further agree to indemnify and hold harmless Life of Hope Ministries and others listed for any and all claims arising as a result of my participation in the service project or any activities incidental thereto, wherever, whenever, or however the same may occur.

I understand that this waiver is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the state of Missouri and agree that if any portion is held invalid, the remainder of the waiver will continue in full legal force and effect. I further agree that the venue for any legal proceedings shall be in the state of Missouri.

I affirm that I am of legal age and am freely signing this agreement. **I have read this form and fully understand that by signing this form, I am giving up legal rights** and/or remedies which may be available to me for the ordinary negligence of Life of Hope Ministries or any of the parties listed above. Furthermore, I have read the **LIFE OF HOPE MINISTRIES STM TRIP PACKET** and agree to abide by them at all times in respect for the mission and its programs and philosophies.

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Signature of Participant

Date

# Life of Hope Ministries STM Trip Packet

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## Parental Permission Form

**\*This form is to be used when a natural/or legal parent travels outside the US with a minor child and the second natural/legal parent does not accompany them.**

To: Life of Hope Staff

I, \_\_\_\_\_, being a natural/legal parent of \_\_\_\_\_, authorize and give my permission for (name of son/daughter) \_\_\_\_\_, to travel outside of the USA for purposes of participating in a short-term mission trip to Guatemala with Life of Hope Ministries.

I, the undersigned parent, grant this travel authorization and permission for the trip involving the dates of \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. At the conclusion of travel back to the USA on the above return date this authorization will become void.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

(Permission Granting Parent)

State of \_\_\_\_\_

County of \_\_\_\_\_

Subscribed and sworn before me this \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, 2\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_

Notary Signature

My Commission Expires: \_\_\_\_\_

# Life of Hope Ministries STM Trip Packet

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## **MEDIA WAIVER** **RELEASE & CONSENT**

In consideration of Life of Hope Ministries consent is hereby given to use (my) (my family/child's) name, picture, portrait, likeness, writing or biographical information, and audiotape and/or videotape recording and sound or silent motion, pictures of (me) (my family/child) in any media for editorial, educational, promotional and advertising purposes, and for any other purpose in furtherance of the ministry purposes and objectives of Life of Hope Ministries.

By signing this document, I certify that I have read this document and fully understand it, and that I am not relying on any statements or representations of any Released Party. This document shall be binding upon me, (my) (my family/child's) heirs, executors, administrators, assigns and all (legal guardians of my child).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I affirm that I am parent/legal guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ and that I have full authority to authorize his/her participation in the above-referenced Sponsored event.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian  
if Participant is under 18)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_ After reading the above Media Waiver Release and Consent, I hereby decline and do not agree to the content found within said document.

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