

GROUP TRIP GUIDE

CASAS
POR CRISTO

Guatemala

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For questions, please contact our team coordinators at questions@casasporcristo.org or 915.778.0046.

QUICK GUIDE

3-6 Months Prior

- Apply for passports.
- Read this Guatemala Group Trip Guide.

30 Days Prior

- Check with your team leader to find out your missionary, lodging, and family information.
- Pray for the recipient family.
- Submit your digital Disclosure of Risk & Medical Release forms.
- Make sure to indicate any food allergies when completing your Disclosure of Risk & Medical Release forms.
- Submit any necessary information to your team leader so he/she can purchase your travel insurance.

PACKING LIST

Please feel free to view and share our [What to Pack Video](#).

- Travel documents (passports, etc.)
 - Toolbelt or nail apron
 - Work gloves
 - Protective eyewear
 - Long work pants (No capri pants or shorts on the work site)
 - Work shirts (t-shirts)
 - Sturdy closed-toed shoes or boots & flip flops
 - Hat or bandana
 - Insulated water container
 - Sunblock
 - Chapstick
 - Bible
 - Soap, shampoo, & other toiletries
 - Feminine hygiene products (tampons are difficult to find)
-

REQUIRED TOOLS

***If your team is trying to pack carry-on only, please plan to check one bag to accommodate your team's hammers and knives**

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ➤ Hammer-16 oz or more | ➤ 25 ft. tape measure |
| ➤ Carpenter's pencil | ➤ Utility knife |
| | ➤ Nail Belt |
-

DO NOT PACK

- Tank tops or sleeveless shirts
 - Torn pants
 - Shorts shorter than knee length, such as running shorts. (Shorts are NOT allowed on the work site, but can be worn otherwise.)
 - Tight-fitting clothing (yoga/spandex pants)
-

OPTIONAL

- | | |
|---|---|
| ➤ <i>Earplugs (for sleeping)</i> | ➤ <i>Rubber boots</i> |
| ➤ <i>Hydration packets/salt tablets/electrolytes for heat</i> | ➤ <i>Shower shoes</i> |
| ➤ <i>Knee pads</i> | ➤ <i>Under clothing travel belt (for documents/passports)</i> |
| ➤ <i>Face Mask (specifically helpful when mixing cement)</i> | ➤ <i>Wet wipes</i> |
-

Helpful Carry-On Items When Flying

- 1 day's worth of clothes (in case your luggage is lost)
- Medications ➤ Money

- Passports/travel documentation
- Insulated water container

30 DAYS PRIOR

Disclosure of Risk & Medical Release Form

You must fill out a digital Disclosure of Risk & Medical Release Form before you enter Guatemala. You will receive an email with instructions on how to fill out this form. Your form is due 30 days prior to your trip.

Food Allergies

Make sure to indicate your food allergies when completing your Disclosure of Risk and Medical Release forms online. **If you have any dietary needs to share with our cooking team after you arrive, please communicate those to your missionary, who can let our cooking team know.** Please do not overwhelm the cooking team with special requests.

Missionary, Lodging, & Family Information

Check with your team leader to access a trip profile page link containing information about your assigned missionary, Guatemala lodging, and family. We will send it to your team leader no later than 30 days prior to your trip.

Travel Insurance

Your team leader will purchase travel insurance (see **EMERGENCIES** section for details) on your behalf and print the ID cards to keep with you while traveling. Submit any necessary information to the team leader from your church/organization.

TRIP DETAILS

Arrival & Departure

Your Casas missionary will contact your team leader before your trip to introduce themselves, go over expectations for the week, and talk about your airport pickup. All team members must be present at the time the team is scheduled to be picked up from the airport. We will pick you up from the airport at your scheduled arrival time and drop you off in time for your departing flight.

Additional Ministry Opportunities

Although our main goal is to serve God by building homes for families, we welcome you to participate in additional evangelistic projects. See our [Spiritual Outreach Guide](#) or contact [Joshua Crabbs](#), Foreign Field Director at 915.778.0046 ext.12 for assistance.

Animals

It is important that you do not feed or touch the animals in Guatemala. Many of them carry diseases and have the potential to bite or scratch.

Attire

Please bring clothing that is modest and appropriate. The following clothing items are prohibited: tank tops, cutoff shirts, torn pants, shorts shorter than knee-length (no cheerleading/running shorts), and tight-fitting clothing (no leggings or yoga/spandex pants). On the worksite, everyone must wear long pants and closed-toed shoes for protection. You may wear modest, knee-length shorts whenever you are not on the worksite.

Cell Phones

Talk with your carrier to see if you will have service in Guatemala and what charges you may incur. Your Casas missionary will have a cell phone with service in Guatemala in case of emergencies.

Cultural Sensitivity

Casas por Cristo exists to open the door for local pastors and churches to share the love of Jesus Christ by serving. The Guatemalan church culture is generally more conservative than yours. Please be sensitive to the desires of the pastors you are here to serve. Our pastors have asked that our teams refrain from purchasing or consuming alcohol and tobacco, dress modestly, and respect the facilities. Ask your Casas missionary for more specific information about your assigned pastor/church. Please refer to our [Guatemala Culture Guide](#) for additional information.

Dedication

Plan with your team how you would like to dedicate this home. We will provide a Spanish Bible, keys, and a plaque. This will be a great time for your team, the sponsoring pastor, and the recipient family to speak with one another, present gifts, and pray together. Check out our [dedication sample outline](#) for more details.

Devotions

Reflecting on each day is an important part of your experience. We have a [devotional guide](#) available online to print for your trip. Plan a time each day for a group devotional and reflection.

Documentation

Passports are REQUIRED for all team members! See the [US Department of State website](#) for more information.

Excursions

Check out our [Guatemala Excursions](#) to view a list of excursion options. Please let us know what you'd like to do.

Flights

Your team is responsible for purchasing your own airfare. Secure your flights to and from La Aurora International Airport in Guatemala City.

It is mandatory that you arrive and depart as a team, as we will only make one trip to the airport to pick you up and drop you off. You should arrive any time on Sunday and depart the following Friday for six-day builds or Saturday for seven-day builds. We will do our best to be flexible with alternate schedules.

Gifts for the Recipient Family

To create uniformity and adhere to the desires of our pastors, we ask that you limit your gifts to one of each of the following per family.

Check out our [Family Gift Options](#) to see a list of all of the family gifts that we offer. **We have been asked by our Pastors'**

Committee in Guatemala to NOT give monetary donations to the families. Please respect this request.

Immigration & Entry Form

Guatemala is now requiring all passengers to fill out a "[Declaration Form](#)". Each participant will need to fill out one for arrival in Guatemala and a separate one for departure from Guatemala. Both forms must be completed no earlier than 1 week before arrival. Upon completion of the form, you will receive a code that you can either print out or save on your phone.

-When filling out the form, you will need to enter a Foreseen Address:

- **7 Calle 3-34, Zona 1, San Raymundo, Guatemala**

Use this [Declaration Form Guide](#) for more help completing your Declaration Form.

Immunizations

We do not require any immunizations; however, we do recommend current Tetanus and Hepatitis A & B immunizations. You may check the CDC website to see what they recommend for travel to Guatemala.

Internet

Most accommodations offer basic internet for free, which will allow you to text and call (video streaming unavailable).

Laundry

We do have laundry at each lodging facility; however, this is only for our cleaners to use for bedding and is not available for team use. Please be sure to pack enough clothing for the entire trip.

Lost Baggage

If your baggage does not arrive, please see the airline and give them the following information.

- Address: 7 Calle 3-34, Zona 1, San Raymundo, Guatemala.
- Contact Guatemala staff by WhatsApp:
 - Bryor Grotts: 309.221.9491
 - Luke Stavely: +502 4561 8486

Meals, Transportation, & Lodging

Casas por Cristo will arrange your **meals**, transportation, and lodging in Guatemala. The only meal not included is lunch while sightseeing in Antigua. The cost will be reflected on your team's invoice to be paid with the rest of your final trip fees 30 days prior to your arrival (15-person minimum). The cost can also be found in our **Guatemala Pricing Guide**. There is an additional fee if you stay longer than a 6 or 7-day trip.

Please read our **Food Handling Guide** prior to your trip. Traveler's diarrhea is a common problem for visitors to Guatemala. To stay healthy while you travel, we recommend asking your doctor for a prescription for Ciprofloxacin or a similar medication, which can be brought with you just in case or taken preemptively to prevent stomach issues caused by bacteria.

Merchandise

You may purchase Casas souvenirs (t-shirts, hats, mugs, etc.) from the Casas store located at our office in San Raymundo. You can also shop online on our **website**. US dollars, Guatemalan quetzales, and credit cards are accepted.

Money

In Guatemala, the currency is called the Quetzal. The US dollar is **not** accepted in San Raymundo. There are 4 ways to exchange your money:

1. Exchange your money stateside at your bank for the best exchange rate. You will need to have your passport and know where you are staying in San Raymundo to exchange money. The address you can give is **7 Calle 3-34, Zona 1, San Raymundo, Guatemala.**
2. You can exchange your money at the Guatemala City Airport. This option has the highest exchange rate.
3. You can withdraw money from the local ATMs in San Raymundo using your personal debit card. Please check with your bank to see what fees may apply. Banks in San Raymundo may not exchange \$20 bills, so if you need to exchange money there, we recommend bringing crisp \$50 or \$100 bills.
4. Your Team leader may exchange money with Casas before your trip. Please speak with him/her to see if this is an option for your group.

Credit cards are accepted at the Casas store.

Photo-Sharing

The day prior to your arrival, we will send you an email with the link to a photo-sharing app called PhotoCircle. Upload all your mission trip photos and videos to share with other trip participants and with Casas por Cristo.

Personal Belongings

Don't bring anything to Guatemala that you would be heartbroken to leave without. We recommend keeping anything of value with you at all times (money, passports, jewelry, etc.), locked in the safe in our office, or secured in the room at your lodging facility.

Project Time Frame

You should allow **three to four full days** for the project. Every worksite has unique challenges, so it is important that you allow yourself enough time to finish the project.

Recipient Family

We do not require that the recipient families participate in the building process beyond having the site prepared. However, many families are eager to help but are shy and feel like they would be in the way. Make every effort to include your family in the building process. Families have been asked not to provide food for our teams to prevent foodborne illness.

Safes

There are no safes available at any lodging facilities. Because of this, please keep all valuables on your person at all times and make sure not to bring anything you can't live without.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program

We recommend each team member enroll at mytravel.state.gov to receive travel and security updates about your destination, and to help the US government reach you in an emergency. Enrollment is free.

Spanish

The primary language spoken in Guatemala is Spanish. However, some families speak a Mayan dialect called Kaqchikel. We encourage you to learn some Spanish phrases beforehand to be able to speak with your family. Check out our list of [Common Spanish Phrases](#)

Team Composition

For the best building experience, we recommend 15 to 25 people. Visit our website for the [team composition guide](#) to determine the optimal number of people for your trip. The work will include pouring concrete, building walls, and installing metal roofing, electrical, siding, windows, and a door. Each of these tasks has at least one element that everyone can perform. Skilled laborers are not needed.

**All children under age 18 must be accompanied by a parent/guardian. Adult youth leaders may serve as guardians for youth groups.*

Time Zone

Guatemala is in the Central time zone but does not observe daylight saving. When establishing meeting times, we will refer to this time zone.

Water

Tap water in Guatemala is not purified to American standards. To avoid getting sick, please drink only the purified water that Casas will provide for you at your worksite and lodging.

Weather

The temperatures in San Raymundo range from 55 to 80 degrees year-round. Rain is a common occurrence, and a light rain jacket is recommended.

YOUR CASAS MISSIONARY

One of our trained missionaries will be with you during all waking hours in Guatemala. During the night, they will be available by cell phone or other messaging services (WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, iMessage), which can be utilized by the free WiFi offered in all of our housing locations.

Your missionary will teach, supervise, and ensure safety and quality. We take care of the details so that you can focus on building and serving. Most of our missionaries have a basic understanding but are not fluent in Spanish. Our missionaries are here for you and your group and will work to accommodate your requests. Read a brief bio about your missionary on the [missionaries page](#) of our website.

Support Your Missionary

In order to keep the cost of our mission trips low, our missionaries raise their own salaries to serve in the ministry. Each missionary depends on gifts from churches and dedicated individuals to cover their salaries. Changing a family's life this week could not happen without your effort and sacrifice. It also could not happen without your financial support for our missionaries.

At the end of your trip, encourage your missionary by giving a donation (\$100-\$200/day) and consider joining their monthly support team. At some point during your trip, your missionary will give a Casas por Cristo presentation, testimony, and ask for financial support.

Foreign National Missionaries

Casas por Cristo employs foreign national missionaries in each of our locations. These missionaries are not fundraised like our missionaries from the US, but instead are paid a salary from the ministry. If you would like to tip one of our foreign national missionaries, you can deliver cash directly to them on your trip. Due to national labor laws, you cannot donate to them through Casas por Cristo.

EMERGENCIES

Casas por Cristo Office Number: 915.778.0046

Please leave our office number 915.778.0046 with your family and friends at home in case of an emergency where they would need to contact you while you're out of the country. Even if it is after business hours, they will reach one of our missionaries who will assist in relaying their message and provide any necessary follow-up.

Emergency Numbers in Guatemala

If an ambulance is needed, the Guatemala emergency numbers are 6630-8755 and 4548-8786.

First Aid Kit

Your Casas missionary will have a basic first aid kit. We recommend that you also bring a first aid kit to treat minor medical incidents throughout your trip.

Medical Treatment

In case of a medical emergency, your Casas missionary will evaluate the severity of the injury. For minor medical issues (dehydration, minor scrapes, cuts, food-related sickness, etc.), the team member will see the local doctor in San Raymundo, Dr. Ramiro Cojon (GPS: 14.766925, -90.593245). For more serious injuries, the Casas missionary will call the international insurance your team has purchased and take the injured person to Guatemala City to receive treatment at a larger medical facility, Centro Medico (Zona 10, GPS: 14.610198, -90.509935). The team member will be accompanied by a Guatemala field missionary while another Casas missionary attends to the needs of your team. The injured team member will be sent back to the US as early as possible.

Travel Insurance

Your team leader must purchase travel insurance (including the sports rider) for you and your teammates. We require the [**Outreach Group Plan**](#) through [**International Medical Group**](#). On our website, we offer an [**Explanation of Travel Insurance Coverage**](#). Prior to your departure, your team leader will print your travel insurance ID cards to keep with you while you travel in case of an emergency. If you need assistance from the insurance company, please contact [**Adam Bates**](#) at 800.647.4589.

Safety

Your team's safety is of the utmost importance to us. We have been working diligently since our inception in 1993 to ensure that we have a number of fail-safes in place regarding personal safety and emergency situations. Read our [**Risk Plan**](#) for more details.

US Embassy Guatemala City

Sometimes, in spite of careful planning, things still go wrong during a trip abroad. Contact the US Embassy for help with emergencies.

US Embassy Guatemala City

Avenida Reforma 7-10, Zona 10

Guatemala City, Guatemala

Email: AmCitsGuatemala@state.gov

Phone: (502) 2326-4000 (If calling from the US, dial 011 first.)

GUATEMALA LODGING

You will stay at one of our facilities for the duration of your trip. We will email you the link to your trip profile page containing details about your lodging no later than 30 days prior to your arrival.

Bathrooms

All toilet paper should be thrown away in the trash can. Do not place it in the toilet.

Cleaning

Our Guatemala cleaning team will service your accommodations daily to remove trash in the restrooms and common areas. They will not enter the dorm rooms where your team will stay. However, we recommend not leaving any valuables in the rooms. If your restroom trash should fill up before the next day's cleaning, please dispose of the trash in the larger trash containers.

Showers

All of our accommodations have showers with hot water. A towel will be provided, but you will need to supply your own washcloth and personal toiletries.

Sleeping

Sleeping arrangements vary by facility. A bed, pillow, sheets, blanket, and towels will be provided.

TYPICAL SCHEDULE

Day 1

Arrive at the airport, exit customs, and walk outside to meet your Casas representative and get on the bus. Arrive at your accommodations in San Raymundo and enjoy a simple sack lunch/dinner in case you haven't eaten prior. A short orientation will be given.

Days 2 - 4

- 6:30 a.m. — Breakfast
- 7:30 a.m. — Head to work sites
- 3:00-5:00 p.m. — Return from work
- 6:00 p.m. — Dinner
- 10:00 p.m. — Lights out

Day 5

Choose one excursion option for your team (or two Antigua excursions). You might be responsible for purchasing your lunch. Leave after breakfast, return late afternoon, and have dinner at your accommodations.

Day 6

Early morning: head to the airport. Time will be determined by your flight back to the U.S.

**If doing the alternate 7-day schedule, you will arrive on day 1, work days 2-5, have your excursion on day 6, and depart on day 7. We will do our best to be flexible with alternate schedules.*

WORKSITE

Construction Process

You will build a home from the ground up in 3-4 days.

- **Day 1:** Level the terrain, build forms, pour the concrete foundation with stand mixers, cut lumber, frame 2"x4" walls.
- **Day 2-3:** Strip forms, finish framing walls, stand walls, install 2"x6" rafters, and begin installing wood lap siding.
- **Day 3-4:** Finish siding, cover roof with corrugated metal roofing, finish interior walls with ¼" plywood wall paneling, install windows and door, install trim around windows and door, run electrical wire, install electrical fixtures, and clean up.

Preparedness

Be sure to arrive at the worksite with all of the equipment that you will need. You will need to take a positive attitude, sunscreen, a water bottle, and tools.

Stay in a Group

Your team leader and your Casas missionaries should know where you are at all times. Your team should stay together as a group at all times.

Tools

Casas por Cristo provides the majority of the tools you will need, **but you do need to bring the required tools on the packing list.** You and your team are responsible for the tools we provide. If tools break due to normal wear and tear, we will replace them. However, if they are lost or neglected, your team will be responsible for the replacement costs. The Casas toolkit is equipped with the following power tools: cement mixer, drill, power saw, and generator, if necessary. You are welcome to bring any additional tools or nail guns. We have found that extra battery-powered tools are more helpful than corded tools. Your team may have to load and unload all of the tools multiple times every day.

Work Site Bathroom

There is a bathroom facility of some sort at each work site. However, some may be more primitive than others.

Work Site Safety

The two most frequent worksite injuries are debris in the eye and dehydration. If your Casas missionary asks you to do something that you are unable to perform, please ask him or her to reassign you to another task. Please take the following precautions.

- Wear eye protection at the worksite.
- Drink one gallon of water per day.
- Wear sunscreen or protective clothing to prevent sunburn.

C A S A S *Por* C R I S T O

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Casas por Cristo
PO Box 971070
El Paso, TX 79997
915.778.0046
casasporcristo.org
questions@casasporcristo.org

Revised 04/02/2026