



# **COSTA RICA MISSION PROJECTS**

**2019 MISSION TRIP PACKET**

## Packing list

- Work Clothes - T-shirts and shorts are fine. Some may prefer long pants as a way to prevent bumps, scrapes and bug bites in spite of heat.
  - Closed toed shoes. Work boots, hiking boots, tennis shoes.
  - Work gloves, hat, sunglasses
- Sunscreen. We're only 5 degrees from the equator.
- Bug spray. You probably won't need it, but just in case.
- Light blanket, pillow
- Water bottle
- Church clothes - Long pants and collared shirt for guys. Dresses or long pants and blouse for women
- A lot of people bring cameras, tablets and cell phones. Although we have never had a problem with theft, PLEASE be very careful with anything of value that you bring with you.
- Photocopy of passport
- Bible!
- We have a guitar at the MMC that you are welcome to use so no need to bring one.
- ELECTRONICS – One of the most rewarding aspects of going on a foreign missions trip can be the opportunity to “disconnect”. We strongly encourage (but do not require) teams to consider leaving phones, tablets, computers, etc. at home. We witness the benefits of the teams that do make that commitment (more time spent face to face with one another and the people around them). We also understand that for some, being totally disconnected from their families or work is not an option. Ultimately we leave it up to each church/team to create their own policy regarding electronics but we urge you to STRONGLY consider the benefits of disconnecting.

## Customs and Immigration

During the flight to Costa Rica, each person will be handed two forms to fill out: one for **immigration (each person)**, and one for **customs (each person or family)**. Include the address and phone number of the Costa Rica Missions and Ministry Center:

CRMP Missions Center  
San Isidro, P.Z.  
506-8853-4965

### **Immigration/Inmigración**

After disembarking and entering the airport terminal, you will enter immigration. Each team member should have their passport and customs forms ready for inspection. If yours is the last flight in, you can easily wait in the customs line for an hour or more. *After passing through immigration, you will enter the luggage claim area.*

### **Customs/Aduanas:**

After clearing immigration, follow the signs to baggage claim. It is a very short walk. Pick up your luggage and walk to the customs line AS A GROUP (Do not exit the airport one at a time as this makes the job of the person waiting for you at the airport much more difficult.) This is typically a short wait. When an agent is available, hand him/her your customs form for your family, and answer all questions. You might be selected for a hand inspection of your luggage, but that also is fairly quick.

### **Leaving the Airport**

Wil, your team leader(s) or a representative from CRMP (Costa Rica Mission Projects) will be waiting for your team upon your departure from the airport. They will have a sign with your church's name and your team leader's name on it. You will either stay at Hotel 1915 (10 minutes away) the first night you arrive, or head directly to San Isidro where CRMP is located. The drive is over the mountains approximately 4 hours away.

### **U.S. Dollars**

- **Do NOT exchange money at the airport. It is too expensive and most places take US Dollars and/or credit cards.**

- The dollars that team members bring should be on the newer side, but if they are too crisp, they look counterfeit. If they are crisp, just bend them and rough them up a bit. . Bring \$20 bills or smaller.

## Weekly Schedule

The following is the schedule that most of our teams follow while in Costa Rica. It is not set in stone and we are able to make adjustments when necessary...

Saturday – Arrival at SJO and travel to Missions and Ministry Center in San Isidro (3.5 hour bus ride). Teams that arrive at SJO in the evening will most often spend the first night in Alajuela and travel to San Isidro after church on Sunday morning. CRMP can make lodging arrangements for teams staying in Alajuela.

Sunday – Worship, lunch and travel to work site (unless staying in San Isidro for the entire week).

Monday thru Thursday – Work days. Tuesday night worship with local church at most project locations. Thursday afternoon travel back to Missions and Ministry Center in San Isidro. Dinner, worship and bon fire (weather permitting).

Friday – Day off excursion.

Saturday – Departure from SJO.

## Missions Overview

Costa Rica Mission Projects is a support ministry for the Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica. Since 2003 we have been coordinating building projects and Vacation Bible School activities primarily in southern Costa Rica. In 2016 we completed the construction of the CRMP Missions and Ministry Center where we also have a day care center for no/low income families, and we have a home for students from rural southern Costa Rica who want to come to San Isidro to pursue higher education but don't have the financial means to pay for housing.

**Construction** – One of our goals is to make sure that the churches here have the infrastructure *they* need to develop the ministries that *they* have been called to in *their* communities. We are not here to tell the congregations here how to “be” or “do” church. They **don't** need our help identifying the needs around them. They see them on a daily basis. Most of the churches we work with are Methodist “community” churches. The majority of their members live within walking distance. What they **do** need from time to time are partners to walk alongside them. By being committed to a long term relationship with the church here, it is much easier for us as an organization to identify when the time is right for those kinds of partnerships.

The volunteer teams that come the Costa Rica to work with us are **NOT** hired labor for the week. The physical work that we do is one of the many fruits of our being church together. We expect our teams to be as mindful of building relationships

with the people around them, as they are of building whatever “structure” we may be working on at the time.

**Relationships** – Through the body and blood of Jesus Christ (holy communion) we are bound to Him. Costa Rica Mission Projects believes that that “connectedness” also binds each of us, through Jesus, to one another. That’s what makes us a Universal Church. That means that even though you may be seeing most of the people you encounter here for the very first time, they are not “strangers” to you... they’re family. We may speak different languages, be from different countries and have different stories, but when we worship, pray, fellowship, serve and witness **together**, we realize that we are one church, one family bound to one another by the one Christ who abides in each one of us (John 6:56). This is precisely why it’s not better to just “send the money”. The Universal church is not a church if the members of its body are not experiencing those things together. It is vital to the health of this body for the different body parts to know one another.

**Who is serving Who?!?! –** This ministry is **NOT** about North Americans coming to Costa Rica to fix the problems of the Costa Rican’s. Our hope is that through committing to real relationships with one another, to being church together, that everyone’s needs will be met. Over the years we’ve seen as many lives of missionaries be changed through this experience as we have Costa Rican’s. We’re *not* keeping score, because this is *not* a game. As long as people’s lives are being changed... on both sides, then we see that as evidence that this ministry is being faithful to what and who we are called to be.

Some people just love mixing concrete... on the ground... with a shovel. And that’s just fine! But we believe that what keeps people coming back to Costa Rica year after year is experiencing church in a new way. Time spent with their new and old friends worshipping and praying and fellowshiping and witnessing and yes, mixing concrete! Once we experience physically that connectedness that has already existed between us on a spiritual level and a sacramental level, the word “church” means something different.

## **Expectations**

We get asked every week what our goals are for that week. The answer is always the same... “that we move forwards instead of backwards and that nobody gets hurt”. The work will get done. It always does. What we “expect” from each team is that they come here with open minds, prepared to experience some things that they’ve never experienced before, and experience some things they may have already experienced but in different ways. Being immersed in a new culture is exciting and sometimes intimidating, but doing so allows us to see things from a different perspective and to ask important questions. “What does it mean for worship and prayer to look and sound like that?” “What do the words rich and poor really mean?” “How is what Jesus did on the cross 2,000 years ago reflected in my

life today?" ...and many more. Our expectations are for each missionary to come willing to stand face to face with Jesus and have their world turned upside down.

#### - CR Culture

Costa Ricans are incredibly patient people (except when driving!). This benefits us in a couple of different ways. On the one hand it means that they give us the time we need to complete the different projects we've committed to, without ever asking "what's taking so long?" It also means that they are willing to take the time to get to know YOU, regardless of language and cultural barriers... through gestures, "Spanglish", or whatever it takes, however long it takes, they consider it time well spent.

Costa Ricans are consistently at the top of the "happiest people on earth" lists (whoever makes those up...). Everywhere you go in Costa Rica you will be greeted by polite smiling people who will often speak at least some level of English (and will be happy to try it out on you!) Making the effort to learn a few Spanish words and phrases before your trip goes a long way. We encourage you to learn some Spanish words and be prepared to smile and greet those you pass on the street as well as those you serve with. "Buenas" is a safe and easy greeting, but learn more Spanish – you won't regret one minute spent preparing for your interaction with Costa Ricans.

Costa Ricans are proud of the stability and level of development in their little country of 4.5 million people (half of whom live in the San Jose/central valley area). They've had no military since 1946, which means that the levels of education and health care are higher there than in the surrounding Central American countries. Costa Ricans consider the multitude of tropical birds to be their "air force"; turtles, sloths and monkeys their "army"; and migrating whales and dolphins their "navy".

Average income for a family in Costa Rica is around \$12,000 annually. Due to massive agrarian reforms in the 1970's, Costa Rica is the only country in Central America with a land owning middle class (although it is shrinking). 75 percent of Costa Rica's economy is tied to tourism, however there is a clear disparity between Industrial/Urban areas, Tourist destinations... and the rest of the country. Highways between large cities and the coastal areas may be great, while in rural areas there are still miles and miles of bumpy dirt roads which are at times impassable during the rainy season.

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Costa Ricans will almost always greet people with at least a handshake and often with a hug and a kiss on the right cheek. They are quick to pick up on body language cues and will not force physical contact upon others.

Tipping is not a part of Costa Rican culture. A 10% service charge is included in every restaurant bill (on top of the 13% sales tax). However with such a high

number of Northamerican tourists coming to Costa Rica who are accustomed to tipping their servers, those waters have become “muddied”. We would prefer not to create the expectation that everyone who interacts with a volunteer team while they are here will receive a “tip”. If a team feels strongly that someone has earned a little extra recognition for the work they’ve done with the team, we encourage them to allow CRMP to pass it along as a “bonus” rather than having volunteers handing people cash directly.

## **Handouts/Donations**

We ask teams members not do give handouts to people in Costa Rica. In many cases such actions lead to misunderstanding and very uncomfortable (or even dangerous) situations. Please trust that your team leaders together with Costa Rica Mission Projects will let you know what the appropriate ways are to channel that kind of “help”.

- Tips – If your team wants to leave a tip/bonus for our CRMP staff members, that is to be channeled through CRMP. We will disperse those funds in a way that avoids creating expectations and favoritism between our staff (whom teams are already supporting through their trip cost) and our mission partners. **DO NOT** give cash gifts to our staff.

- Clothing/shoes – Many teams will leave clothes (new and used) behind when their trip mission trip ends. Those clothes will be donated to a local church who will in turn have a couple of “yard sales” during the year. The funds raised from such an activity will then go into the local church’s mission and outreach budget. So we recycle your clothes into mission opportunity for Costa Ricans.

## **Misc. Information**

- You can drink the water right out of the tap in most places. CRMP will make sure you have safe drinking water wherever you are.

- Anywhere in Costa Rica that there is a waste basket next to the toilet, that’s where the toilet paper goes! This includes the Missions and Ministry Center and the churches where our teams work and stay.

- You may or may not have **HOT** showers during your mission trip.

- CRMP is happy to accommodate missionaries who have food allergies. Advance notice from the team leader is greatly appreciated. We are less enthusiastic about accommodating picky eaters who decide to be vegetarians for the week of their mission trip or are unwilling to try new foods while they are here. Everything that our kitchen helpers prepare for our mission teams is prepared with great care.

## Reading Recommendations

Costa Rica – Culture Smart!: The Essential Guide To Customs & Culture

### **2019 COSTA RICA MISSIONS TRIP TRAVEL INFO**

**AIRFARE:** \$353

**Best Rate:** \$353 per person, direct flight on JetBlue (Delta has a flight for \$300 but with an Atlanta connection)

**Travel Dates:** Saturday, September 7-Saturday, September 14, 2019

**Departure:** 8:40 am from Orlando Airport

**Arrival:** 9:55 am in San Jose, Costa Rica (Airport Code: SJO)

#### **Return Flight:**

**Departure:** 10:55 am from San Jose\*

**Arrival:** 4:15 pm Orlando Airport

\*Since you must be at the San Jose airport by 8:00 am to fly out at 11:00 am, you will need to spend one night at a hotel near the airport. Please be prepared to pay for your hotel room (est. cost: \$50).

#### **COST PER PERSON: \$550**

Cost includes building materials, food, in-country transportation, local labor, and lodging.

Bring an additional \$50 per person for meals to eat out

#### **IMMUNIZATIONS/MEDICATIONS:**

Per Wil, you will need to the following immunizations:

Tetanus, Hepatitis A (see information packet for detailed list). The CDC may have a more complete list of immunizations, however, Wil advised some of their recommendations are not necessary.

The Zika virus and Malaria are not issues.

Please do not start taking newly prescribed meds just prior to taking the mission trip, as you may experience an adverse reaction. If you are on prescription medicine, please bring a full week's supply. Hospitals and clinics are nearby, but may not have your prescribed meds. OTC drugs may be available (i.e. cold medicine, Ibuprofen, aspirin, etc.)

**TEAMS:** Minimum number of persons per team: 5; maximum: 15



**TOTAL ESTIMATED COST PER PERSON: \$1,000** (including air fare, mission expense, and miscellaneous). Price may vary based on number of team members.

**DEPOSIT/DUE DATE:**

\$250 Deposit is due by June 1, 2019