



PLANNING GUIDE FOR
SHORT-TERM MISSIONS TRIPS
TO ESPERANZA VIVA YOUTH HOME



God loves the little ones to come to Him, but it first requires people like you to come to the little ones.

LIVE A WEEK OF HOPE!

Whether you're part of a work group, church group, family, or an individual, join us in Mexico for a one-week trip that will change your life. Teams visit year-round, ready to connect and reach out to the children and youth of Esperanza Viva. More than 10,000 visitors have returned home deeply impacted, taking their experience beyond a one-week trip, and making a genuine life change; extending into their friendships, communities, and beyond. Come and be a part of the change!



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I. TYPES OF SHORT-TERM MISSIONS TEAMS

When you contact Living Hope International (LHI), please let the Short-Term Missions (STM) Coordinator know what the vision and make-up of your team will be. Some of the STM teams we have hosted are:

- Youth groups
- Church groups
- Family groups
- School groups
- Medical groups such as dentists, doctors, and physical therapists, among others.
- Special skill groups such as hairstylists, audio-visual experts, IT technicians, painters, carpenters, construction teams, and more.

We offer different options for serving the Lord on the mission field at Esperanza Viva Youth Home (EV) in Puebla, Mexico, depending on the vision and composition of each team. Your team may get a chance to do everything from playing with kids, doing crafts and Sunday school-type projects, to completing needed work projects to improve the children's home, and exploring a foreign culture. We challenge individuals and teams to draw closer to the Lord throughout their missions experience.



Some groups of adults and young people use their skills and talents to help with special projects such as construction or specialized medical

attention for the children and youth. These groups often do not participate in games and crafts times with the children, but dedicate their days to their specific projects.



II. MISSIONS TEAM TIMELINE RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Decision Phase: 6 to 9 months prior to departure

1. Notify the LHI STM Coordinator of your desire to lead a team by email at STM@LoveHopeMercy.org or by phone at 1-262-381-0121 option 3.
2. Request dates for your trip from the LHI STM Coordinator or check available dates on our website at: <http://lovehopemercy.org/visit-us>
3. Make initial \$1,000 non-refundable deposit for team expenses to Living Hope International to reserve your trip dates.
4. Establish a preliminary team budget.
5. Complete an application process for all individuals who wish to be a part of your missions team.

B. Discipleship Phase: 3 to 6 months prior to departure

1. Set dates for team training meetings. Use the “Preparing for the Mission” section of this manual to help you prepare your team members.
2. Setup a payment schedule to collect trip funds from team members.
3. Ensure that each team member has obtained a passport. Passport books (not cards) are required to enter and leave Mexico by air and often take several weeks to process. Be sure to visit travel.state.gov for updated passport processing times.
4. Make travel arrangements. We recommend that STM teams travel to the Puebla airport (airport code PBC). American, United, and US Airways fly into Puebla.
 - a. Another possible route is to fly to Mexico City as airline tickets may be more affordable to this airport. Teams that

decide to fly into Mexico City to save on airfare, should plan to cover the costs of the 2-hour ride to Puebla provided by LHI. The STM Coordinator will provide more details concerning safe airport pickup based on each team’s specific needs.

5. Develop a network of people who will help you through prayer, fundraising, and collecting useful items to take to EV. Check with the LHI STM Coordinator for the Most Needed Donations List.
 - a. If you are coming from a church, you can request a church involvement pack that includes more information about all our ministries.
6. Plan your crafts, games and/or Sunday school-type activities with the children at EV. Ask for suggestions from the STM Coordinator.
 - a. For teams with a special vision and purpose as mentioned in Section I, plan what special materials/tools/clothing you may need to take with you based on the work project assigned or agreed upon with the STM Coordinator.

C. Deployment Phase: 1 to 2 months prior to departure

1. Collect any remaining funds from team members.
2. Make final deposit to Living Hope International at least 30 days before your trip dates.
3. Review with STM coordinator all your work and ministry plans and the activities you will do at EV, depending on your type of team.

D. Debriefing Phase: 2 to 4 weeks after team returns home

1. Team debriefing should be a meeting with all team members. Promote discussion of the successes and challenges of the trip. Seek the Lord’s guidance for future mission trips with LHI.
2. Discuss ways the team can stay involved with LHI. The STM coordinator can provide suggestions and resources.





III. PUTTING TOGETHER A TEAM

A. God Builds the Team

1. Teams who carefully screen their members and commit their plans to God can expect great things on the trip. We encourage you to make regular group prayer a part of your preparation.

B. Team Leader(s)

1. The team leader(s) is/are responsible for recruiting, preparing, organizing, and guiding the team.

C. Team Member Qualifications

1. Please check with the LHI STM Coordinator for a list of requirements based on the vision and make-up of your team.
2. The following are some points to consider when assessing a potential team member:
 - a. Faith. A mission team to EV should consist of believers committed to Jesus Christ.
 - b. Age. A minimum age of 16 years is recommended with some exceptions, such as the presence of a parent on the team or maturity of the participant.
 - c. Skills and experience. Evaluate gifts and skills of all team members (ex: music, drama, dance, preaching, testimony, carpentry, electrical work, hairstyling, cooking, sewing, etc.). Plan your activities and crafts using these skills and/or let us know each member's gifts as we may have a special need during your visit.
 - d. Health. Make certain there are no medical conditions that would contraindicate travel to Mexico.
 - e. Know the applicants. The more you know the people on your team, the better prepared you can be during your trip to handle situations that may arise.
 - f. Background Checks. In order to provide a safe environment for participants and for the children we serve, we require background checks for all STM team members, including leaders and youth attending the mission trip. Contact the LHI STM Coordinator for additional information.

D. Team Fundraising

1. It is the responsibility of the team and/or sending church to raise funds to cover all trip costs.
2. Ask the LHI STM Coordinator for a list of fundraising ideas.

E. Team Finances

1. Building a budget
 - a. Airfare
 1. Include all required flights
 2. Include any necessary travel expenses or accommodations to get to your departing US airport
 3. Include all taxes and fees
 4. Luggage fees (including extra, overweight or oversize bags, especially if bringing tools or supplies)
 - b. Insurance
 1. LHI requires travel and medical insurance for all team members. Ask the LHI STM Coordinator for companies that provide insurance.
 2. We recommend that you look for policies that include Covid-19 coverage and Medivac.
 - c. LHI fee
Includes lodging, food, local transportation, and all materials for your work project.
 - d. Food
 1. Meals during your stay at EV are included in the fees paid to LHI.
 2. What is not included:
 - a. Meals during your days of travel
 - b. Snacks
 - c. Water bottles (drinking water is provided), other drinks
 - d. Meals eaten outside the ministry during tourist activities
 - e. Other potential team ministry expenses
 1. Craft/activity materials to take to Mexico
 2. Prizes/candy/snacks for the children of EV
 3. Emergency or reserve funds
 4. Team t-shirts
 5. Planned gifts to the ministry for special needs or projects

The STM Coordinator can share the Most Needed Donations List and other giving opportunities with you, as your team feels led to give.

2. Making payments

- a. Your team is responsible for purchasing airfare to Mexico. We recommend checking with the group travel departments of each airline as early as possible if you plan to have 10 or more team members. It may allow for more flexibility if a team member is unable to go after reservations or tickets have been purchased.
- b. The church or team leader must send a \$1,000 deposit for expenses to LHI as soon as trip dates are confirmed to reserve your dates.
- c. The balance of funds must be sent to LHI at least 30 days before the trip start date.

3. Bringing money

- a. We recommend \$50-100 extra for each individual for personal expenses, snacks, and souvenirs.
- b. Bring cash - LHI will exchange your U.S. dollars to Mexican pesos after your arrival in Mexico. Please avoid using the exchange vendors in the airport, and try to bring clean/new bills for exchange.
 1. We do not recommend carrying large sums of cash on your person at any time.
 2. Do not bring traveler's checks; they are difficult to cash.
- c. Credit/Debit Cards
 1. Credit cards may not be accepted by local vendors. We recommend bringing one in case of emergency, but you will not likely have the opportunity to use it for regular purchases. We suggest notifying your credit card company in advance of your trip to Mexico as some cards may decline foreign charges as a security measure.

2. There are ATMS available in some areas if extra cash is needed, but there will likely be both ATM and foreign transaction fees added to your withdrawal. We recommend using a debit card, not a credit card. If you plan to use the ATM while in Mexico, please notify your bank prior to traveling.

IV. PREPARING FOR THE MISSION

Remember, preparing your team for service cross-culturally requires new ways of thinking and increased sensitivity to others. The way we think, what we value, and what we consider important is unique to our culture and not necessarily normal in other countries. Become a student and a servant; be willing to learn!

A. Cultural Considerations

1. Please remember you are a guest on the mission field and your goal is not to introduce your own cultural practices, but to shine the light and love of God.
2. The feeling of being overwhelmed in the face of culture, language and schedule challenges is very common. Many people are affected by the language barrier and the neediness they see. Keep in mind that what you are seeing is only a small part of the work that God is doing in the lives of these children. You ARE making a difference.
3. Some differences you may notice are:
 - a. The concept of time in Mexico is much more flexible than in other countries. You may find that planned events begin later than expected, and that the daily schedule is variable.
 - b. The Mexican people are generally very warm and affectionate. It is customary to greet one another with a handshake and kiss on the cheek, but not obligatory.
 - c. The plumbing system in Mexico is not designed to handle toilet paper or other paper waste. All toilet paper should be discarded in the wastebaskets next to the toilets to avoid clogged toilets and raw sewage backup.
 - d. Tap water in Mexico is not safe for drinking. LHI will provide drinking water





at all times. All food served at EV is prepared with purified drinking water. We recommend using bottled water when brushing your teeth.

B. Ministry Preparation

1. Your team will have opportunities throughout the week to minister to the children and staff of EV. The ministry your team provides may take the form of music, dramas, dance, testimonies, preaching, prayer, etc. Translators will be provided as needed.
2. To be most effective, we encourage you to prepare ministry activities several weeks ahead of time and let the LHI STM Coordinator know your plans. The STM Coordinator can provide a list of suggested activities to do with the children. We encourage you to be creative and come up with your own ideas as well. The team will need to bring all the items (including deflated balls, scissors, etc.) to carry-out the planned activities unless it is communicated that specific items are available at EV.
3. If you have a team of sufficient size (10 or more), we have found it is a good idea to break up the kids into smaller groups, perhaps by age, and have up to three different activities going on at once.
4. It's also a great idea to focus your week on a particular theme or Bible verse your team has chosen. Please prepare to fill approximately 2-3 hours each day of the activity time you have with the kids. The number of activity days may vary based on your team make-up and any special projects.

V. BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR MEXICO

A. Passport and Visa

Passports are required to enter Mexico. Obtaining a passport can take several weeks. Visit travel.state.gov to plan accordingly. We recommend you make a copy of the photo page of each person's passport to carry with them at all times during your trip, and you leave your important documents at the LHI on-site office for safekeeping during your stay. You will enter Mexico as a tourist, as you are only visiting the

country for a short time. At the airport, the immigration officials will give you a tourist visa, a small piece of paper which you must keep with your passport until you leave Mexico. Do not throw away your visa, as you will need it to leave the country; without it, you will have to pay a fine before leaving Mexico.

B. Parental Consent Form

In order for anyone under age 18 to travel outside the United States without both parents or guardians, he or she must have an original (not photocopied or faxed) Parental Consent Form signed by both parents and witnessed by a Notary Public. If the minor's parents are separated or divorced, both still need to sign. If only one parent has custody, the minor will need to carry an official copy of the court's custody agreement. Without these documents, the airlines may not permit the minor to travel, so they should be carried with his or her passport at all times traveling to and from Mexico. Forms are available on our website or from the STM Coordinator.

C. Medical Requirements

1. Mexico does not require vaccinations to enter the country, but we recommend your Tetanus vaccination be recent (within the past 10 years), as well as your Hepatitis A and B vaccinations. Covid-19 vaccines are recommended, but not required. See additional Covid Related Information in Section VI for more details.
2. LHI requires that each person, or their parents in the case of a minor, sign the medical release form and advise us of any medical conditions. The team leader should ask all participants for a list of any medications team members will be taking and any medical conditions, including allergies; this will ensure proper care will be given if necessary. EV has an on-site clinic if any minor problems should occur. There are also medical services available in Puebla.

D. Packing

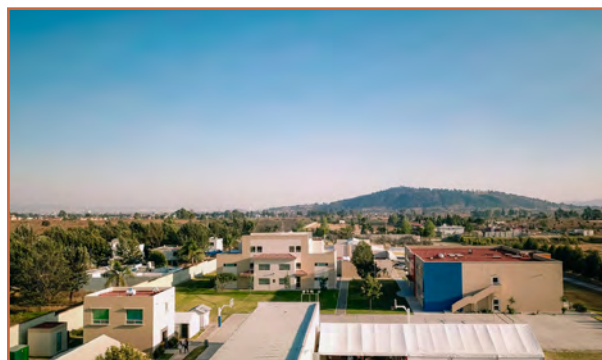
1. Pack only what you need for one week. Please bring only one hair dryer, curling iron, etc. for each dorm (mens/womens) to share. The electrical supply in the visitor housing isn't designed to handle many items at once. Keep an eye on the weather reports before traveling. This will help in planning what to pack. Check the TSA

website for items which can be carried in checked baggage and in your carry on: www.tsa.gov. Expensive jewelry or family heirlooms should be left at home. Even nice watches can be an attraction for unwanted attention.

VI. ON THE MISSIONS FIELD

A. Accommodations

1. Safety Information
 - a. LHI is constantly improving in respect to maintaining a secure environment for the children and staff, as well as for our visitors. While US news sources have given a lot of negative attention to safety in Mexico, much of this is concentrated in the areas closest to the US-Mexico border.
2. Housing
 - a. STM teams are hosted on campus at EV in the new STM visitor housing. The STM visitor housing has separate entrances for men and women to their respective dormitory-style accommodations, equipped with bunk beds and bathrooms to comfortably fit your entire team. Our visitor housing offers clean, private showers. Sheets, blankets, a pillow, and a towel will be provided for each team member. Your team will enjoy the use of a common room for group devotional times, fellowship, and meetings. Staying on campus will allow you to share in the daily activities of the children of EV and also provide added security for your team.
3. Meals
 - a. Your team will eat most meals in the EV community center. We try to give you a taste of the local cuisine—although a little milder to fit a wider variety of taste preferences—which is prepared in a safe manner. Sharing in mealtimes with all of the EV children may not be available at this time.
4. Transportation
 - a. Airport Pick-up
 1. When you arrive at the airport, whether you fly directly into Puebla or to Mexico City, an LHI staff member will meet you just outside of



the customs area to accompany your team to EV.

- b. Local Transportation

1. Team members will be transported by bus or van to all scheduled activities, including to and from EV, cultural outings, and church services.

5. Communication with the United States

- a. We offer the option of internet, email, or telephone access for STM team leaders. If your team would like, you may establish an email list or phone chain so upon arrival one team leader can send an email or call the contact person in the



United States letting everyone know you arrived safely.

- b. During your team's visit, our ministry may share photos on social media of the activities being done with the kids and staff. Team members may have the opportunity to connect to the internet a couple times during the week, but access cannot be guaranteed.



B. Schedule

1. Worship & Devotions
 - a. Your team will have time every morning for team or personal devotions. In addition, someone from our full-time ministry staff will lead your group in occasional times of ministry during your stay. Our staff will also have a prayer and worship time with your team during the week.
2. Work Projects
 - a. Each team usually spends the morning doing assigned work projects until lunchtime around 2:00 p.m. The needs at EV are always changing, so be prepared for anything. Work projects can include anything from building to painting, laying bricks, mending clothes, cleaning, landscaping, and more.
 - b. Remember, the work project is not the most important reason to be here, but groups really bless this ministry with their work.

I'm so thankful to get to see this place with my own eyes and truly soak in God's amazing power. ~anna

3. Time with the Kids

- a. After lunch, most teams spend time with the kids. We ask you to prepare age-appropriate games, crafts or Sunday school-style projects ahead of time and to bring all necessary materials. Check with the STM Coordinator to determine the number of children who will participate in these activities. Please bring enough supplies for all participants.

4. Cultural Activities

- a. We lead teams on two cultural outings to local sites. The most common options are the nearby town of Cholula, home to the pyramid with the largest base in the world, and downtown Puebla, where you can sightsee and shop at the local artisan markets. An LHI staff member will accompany you on your outings and help with translation as needed. Cultural outing options may be limited due to changing Covid preventative measures.



See Experience Directory for a list of suggested outings or contact the STM Coordinator directly.

5. Church Services

- a. On Sunday, you will attend Nations Church, one of the ministries of Living Hope International.
 1. The worship style may be different than you are used to, so remember that you are in a different culture and this too is part of your missions experience.
 2. A translator will be provided during the sermon portion of the service.
 3. Be respectful, and worship freely.
 4. Dress appropriately. We recommend casual dress clothes.
 5. Bring your Bible.

C. Dress Code

1. The dress code is as follows and is strictly enforced. We are working with children who often arrive here after having been abused verbally, physically and sexually. We want to do everything in our power to support the childrens' healing process which has begun at EV. Please ask the STM Coordinator if you have questions or would like a suggested packing list.
 - a. Shirts or tops with low necklines, low-cut arm openings, narrow or spaghetti straps and sheer or transparent material are not allowed.
 - b. Girls: For church services, please wear a dress, skirt or nice slacks. On other days, you may wear casual clothing - jeans, slacks, t-shirts, but make sure they are not too fitted. Shorts and skirts need to be knee length.
 - c. Guys: For church services, casual dress such as khaki pants or dress pants and a polo or button down shirt is recommended. On other days, pants or

jeans are recommended. Shorts need to be knee length. Shorts are not permitted at church services. No sleeveless shirts are allowed.

- d. The leaders at EV reserve right to ask you to change any clothing deemed inappropriate. If you have any questions please feel free to contact us.

D. Covid Related Information

1. The Coronavirus vaccine is recommended, but not required.
2. At this time, we ask that visitors with pre existing conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, among others, make international travel plans at their discretion.
3. Cultural outing options may be limited due to changing Covid preventative measures. See Experience Directory for a list of suggested outings or contact the STM Coordinator directly.
4. We remind you that health insurance is required for all visitors and recommend you look for policies that include Covid-19 coverage and Medivac. We recommend: [Faith Ventures](#).

E. Other Important Points

1. If your trip is between June and October, we suggest packing umbrellas and/or rain coats, as it often rains heavily in the afternoon.
2. Bring sufficient clothing to last through the trip as laundry services are not available.
3. If you are bringing portable music players, please have only Christian music on them.
4. Heat, sun and altitude: The most common causes of sickness and discomfort are the sun and dehydration. The city of Puebla, Mexico, is 7,000 feet above sea level, so the sun is more intense and the air is thinner. Therefore, it is necessary to drink more water than most individuals do daily.





- a. Bring sunscreen, a hat and sunglasses.
- b. A personal, refillable water bottle is also recommended. Often altitude sickness (headaches, dizziness, nausea, fatigue) can be an issue.
- c. Drink plenty of water. What you might think is altitude sickness might actually be dehydration, caused by the higher rate of water vapor lost from the lungs at higher altitudes. Avoid caffeine, as this increases the likelihood of dehydration. If you're losing a lot of water through perspiration, maintain an electrolyte balance with sports drinks like Gatorade.
- d. We recommend asking your doctor how your time at this elevation might affect your health and if any measures should be considered.



VII. STM COORDINATOR HELP

The LHI STM Coordinator is dedicated to helping you prepare for your missions trip.

Please do not hesitate to ask for more information on any of the points mentioned in this manual or any other questions you may have.

A. Helpful Documents:

1. Terms of Agreement for Leaders Online Form (L1)
2. Online forms for team members to complete: www.LoveHopeMercy.org/STMDocuments
 - a. LHI Short-Term Missions Participant Online Form (M1)
 - b. Medical Release Form (M2)
 - c. Background Check for all Adult Visitors (M3)
 - d. Liability Release (M4)
 - e. Parental Consent Form (M5)
3. Team Leader Considerations
 - a. Packing Lists for Men and Women (03-079)
 - b. Team Leader's "Take Along" Checklist (03-075)
 - c. Fundraising Ideas (03-094)
 - d. Sample Fundraising Letter
 - e. Basic Phrases for Language Preparation (03-095)
 - f. List of Suggested Activities with the Children (03-094)
 - g. Lists of Suggested Topics for Team Preparation Meetings (03-094)
 - h. Suggestions for Team Debriefing (03-093)
 - i. Suggestions for Reporting to Your Church After the Trip (03-093)
 - j. Sample Customs/Immigration Forms

B. Contact Information for the STM Coordinator

Phone: 1-262-381-0121 option 3
Email: STM@LoveHopeMercy.org
www.LoveHopeMercy.org





And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' Matthew 25:40 (NKJV)



LOVEHOPEMERCY.ORG
SINCE 1994 - MORE THAN 20 YEARS



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