



PLANNING GUIDE FOR
SHORT-TERM MISSIONS TRIPS TO
LIVING HOPE INTERNATIONAL





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I. DECIDE YOUR VISION AND GET STARTED

No matter your talent there is a use for it on the mission field. Teams vary from youth groups, and family groups to health care teams, and construction teams.

Living Hope offers various ways for Short-Term Mission (STM) teams to serve at Esperanza Viva Youth Home (EV) in Puebla, Mexico. Depending on the vision and composition of each team, your team may participate in activities ranging from playing with kids, engaging in crafts and Sunday school activities, to completing work projects that improve the children's home. Teams will also have the opportunity to explore a foreign culture.

To get started we have 3 simple steps:

- 1. Submit your initial interest by emailing us at STM@LivingHope.org or call us at 1-262-381-0121 (Option 3)**
- 2. Initial Deposit:** Make a non-refundable deposit of \$1,000 for team expenses to secure your trip dates.
- 3. Planning Portal:** Once you have reserved your dates our coordinator will provide you with your teams planning portal with all the information you need.

We recommend following this general timeline to ensure your team has enough time to organize and prepare for their mission.

TIMELINE	ACTION ITEM	DETAILS
Decision Phase 9 Months Prior to Departure	Follow the 3 simple steps above to reserve your dates	Reach out to our STM Coordinator to begin and get your initial questions answered.
Discipleship Phase 6 Months Prior to Departure	Team Training Meetings	Set dates for team training sessions. Use this manual as your guide.
	Payment Schedule	Set up a schedule to collect funds from team members.
	Passport Requirements	Ensure all team members have passports (books, not cards). Take into consideration that passport processing can take several weeks.
	Travel Arrangements	Book flights to fly to Puebla (PBC) via United or AeroMexico (Delta). Alternatively, teams can fly to Mexico City airports (AICM or NLU) and plan for a 2-3-hour bus ride to Puebla (provided by Living Hope, additional costs apply). Note: Since NLU is a military airport, all bags will be checked.
Discipleship Phase 3 Months Prior to Departure	Networking for Support	Build a network for prayer, fundraising, and donations. Contact the STM Coordinator for a list of needed donations.
	Plan Activities	Plan games, crafts, and Sunday school activities. For specialized teams (e.g., construction or medical), prepare materials and tools.
Deployment Phase 1 Month Prior to Departure	Collect Remaining Funds	Collect any outstanding funds from team members.
	Final Payment	Make a final deposit to Living Hope International at least 30 days before departure date.
	Review Ministry Plans	Meet with STM Coordinator to finalize work and ministry plans based on team needs and goals.
Debriefing Phase 2 to 4 Weeks After Returning	Team Debriefing	Hold a meeting to discuss trip successes and challenges. Reflect on the impact and plan for future missions.
	Ongoing Involvement	Explore ways to stay involved with Living Hope. The STM Coordinator will provide suggestions and resources.

II. PUTTING TOGETHER A TEAM

A. Team Leader(s)

1. Responsibilities:
 - The team leader(s) is/are responsible for the overall recruitment, preparation, organization, and guidance of the team.
 - It is important for the leader(s) to ensure clear communication and direction for the team throughout the preparation and during the mission trip.

B. Team Member Qualifications

1. Considerations for Team Members

When assessing potential team members, keep the following factors in mind:

- **Age.** A minimum age of 16 years is recommended, with exceptions possible for younger participants who are accompanied by a parent or guardian or family teams.
- **Skills and Experience:** Plan your activities and crafts using the skills of team members, or inform the Living Hope STM Coordinator if your team members have unique talents that may fulfill specific needs at Esperanza Viva Youth Home.
- **Health:** Ensure that all team members are in good health and do not have any medical conditions that may prevent them from traveling to or serving in Mexico.
- **Team Familiarity:** The more you know your team members, the better prepared you will be to handle any situations that may arise during the trip. Building strong relationships beforehand helps ensure smooth coordination. We recommend monthly meetings 6 months before your trip.
- **Background Checks:** All team members (including leaders and youth participants) must undergo background checks to ensure a safe environment for both the participants and the children served by Living Hope. Scan the QR code to complete the process.



III. TEAM FUNDRAISING & FINANCES

A. Fundraising

1. The responsibility for raising the necessary funds to cover all trip costs lies with the team and/or the sending church.
2. The STM Coordinator can share a Fundraising Toolkit with sample fundraising letters and ideas.

- 3. Raise \$2,000 for the Sustaining Hope Fund with your team for your projects here.** On your final day, your team will take part in a special farewell ceremony where a plaque with your team's name will be installed on campus. Ask the STM Coordinator for more details.



B. Building a Budget

1. Airfare

- Your team is responsible for purchasing airfare to Mexico. If you have 10 or more team members, it is recommended to check with the group travel departments of airlines early. Exploring this option might offer flexibility if a team member is unable to attend after reservations are made.
- Account for any necessary travel expenses to reach the departing U.S. airport (e.g., local transport, overnight stays).
- Include taxes, fees, and luggage fees (especially for extra, oversized, or overweight bags if carrying tools or supplies).



2. Insurance

- Living Hope requires travel and medical insurance for all team members.
- Recommended insurance providers and plans for purchase will be available in your planning portal.



3. Living Hope Fee

- A \$1,000 deposit is required from the church or team leader to reserve your trip dates with Living Hope once the dates are confirmed.
- \$800 per person: This fee covers lodging, meals, local transportation, and all materials for your assigned work project at Esperanza Viva.
- Remaining Funds: The balance of the trip costs must be paid to Living Hope at least 30 days before the trip start date.

4. Food

- Meals at Esperanza Viva are included in the fees paid to Living Hope.
- Meals during travel days or meals during tourist activities are not included.

5. Other potential team ministry expenses

- Materials for crafts or activities to bring to Mexico
- Prizes, candy, and snacks for the children at Esperanza Viva
- Emergency or reserve funds
- Sustaining Hope Fund allows the organization to have the funds needed for general maintenance of our campus. This allows us to put every dollar given to the general fund to care for the children.

C. Personal Expenses

1. It is recommended to bring \$50-100 per person for personal expenses, snacks, and souvenirs.
2. Currency Exchange: Bring cash; Living Hope will exchange U.S. dollars for Mexican pesos after you arrive in Mexico.
 - Avoid using airport exchange vendors.
 - We recommend bringing clean/new bills for exchange.
 - Do not carry large sums of cash on your person. Avoid traveler's checks as they are difficult to cash.
 - Credit/Debit Cards: Credit cards may not be accepted by local vendors. It's a good idea to bring one in case of an emergency but do not expect to use it for regular purchases.
 - ATM Access: Some ATMs may be available if extra cash is needed, but be aware of ATM fees and foreign transaction fees.

IV. IMPORTANT DOCUMENTATION AND FORMS

A. Passport and Visa

1. Passports are required to enter Mexico.
2. Upon arrival in Mexico, immigration officials will issue a tourist visa, a small paper that you must keep with your passport until departure.

B. Parental Consent Form

Without these documents, airlines may not allow the minor to travel. These forms should be carried with the minor's passport at all times.

1. Required for minors (under 18) traveling outside the U.S. without both parents or guardians.
2. The form must be original, signed by both parents, and witnessed by a Notary Public.
3. In cases of divorced or separated parents, both must sign, or the minor needs to carry an official custody agreement.

C. Medical Requirements

1. Vaccinations
 - Mexico does not require vaccinations to enter the country, but it's recommended that your Tetanus vaccination is recent (within the past 5 years).
 - Hepatitis A and B vaccinations are also recommended by the World Health Organization.
2. Medical Release:
 - All participants (or parents, if a minor) must sign a medical release form and disclose any existing medical conditions.
 - Team leaders should gather a list of any medications team members will be taking, as well as any allergies or medical conditions. This ensures proper care can be provided if needed.
 - On-Site Medical Care: Esperanza Viva has an on-site clinic for minor health issues, and additional medical services are available in Puebla hospitals.

D. Required forms

Through your planning portal, the STM Coordinator will provide you with all the required forms that each team member must complete and submit before your trip. These forms cover important areas such as participation agreements, medical information, background checks, and necessary permissions to ensure a safe and well-prepared experience for everyone involved.



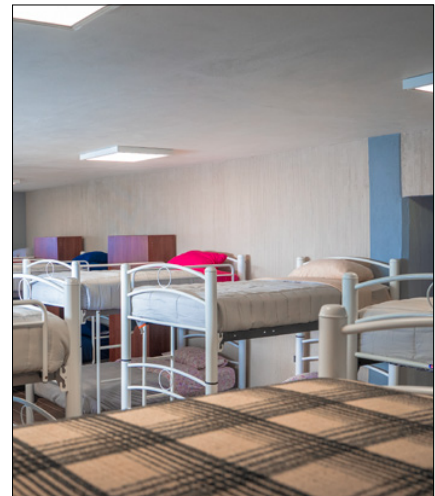
IMPORTANT:

Do not throw away your tourist visa, as you will need it to leave the country. Without it, you will have to pay a fine.

V. ON THE MISSION FIELD

A. Accommodations

1. Safety Information
 - Living Hope continually works to maintain a safe environment for both the children and staff, as well as visitors.
 - While some U.S. news sources focus on safety concerns in Mexico, most of these are centered around the areas near the U.S.-Mexico border, which does not affect our location.
2. Housing
 - STM teams are hosted on campus in the new Visitor Building.
 - The housing includes separate entrances for men and women to dormitory-style accommodations, with bunk beds and bathrooms to comfortably fit your entire team.
 - Each team member will be provided with sheets, blankets, pillows, and towels.
 - The common room is available for group devotionals, fellowship, and meetings. Staying on campus allows for shared activities with the children of Esperanza Viva and offers added security for your team.
3. Meals
 - Meals will primarily be served at the Community Center.
 - The food is a mild version of local cuisine prepared in a safe manner.
4. Transportation
 - \$70 per person. This include airport pick up and drop off from the Mexico City airport .
 - Pick up and drop off has no extra fee to and from the Puebla airport.
 - Whether arriving in Puebla or Mexico City, a Living Hope staff member will meet your team just outside the customs area and accompany you to our campus located in Puebla.
 - Local Transportation - Team members will be transported by bus or van to all scheduled activities, including travel to/from our main campus, cultural outings, and church services.
5. Communication with the United States
 - Internet, email, and telephone access are available for STM team leaders.
 - Teams may set up an email list or phone chain so one leader can notify a contact person in the U.S. upon arrival.
 - During the visit, Living Hope may share photos on social media of the activities with the children and staff.
 - Limited internet access may be available, but this cannot be guaranteed.



- Please be respectful when taking photos. Group shots with 3+ people are preferred. For safety, don't post pictures of ID-protected children online.



- Please keep in mind that if a child shares their story with you, it is shared in confidence. It is not meant to be used in social media posts or any media.

B. Schedule

This is a sample of what your weekly schedule will look like. The Living Hope STM Coordinator will work with you on customizing.

WELCOME					
SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
8:00 A.M. Breakfast Group Lounge	8:00 A.M. Breakfast	7:00 A.M. Breakfast	7:00 A.M. Breakfast	7:00 A.M. Breakfast	7:00 A.M. Breakfast
8:30 A.M. Orientation	9:00 A.M. Devotional	8:00 A.M. Devotional	8:00 A.M. Devotional	8:00 A.M. Devotional	8:00 A.M. Devotional
9:00 A.M. Leave to San Martin	10:00 A.M. Leave for Church Service	8:30 A.M. Esperanza Viva Youth Home Tour	9:00 A.M. Work Project Break at noon	8:30 A.M. Leave for Community Evangelism	8:30 A.M. Share your story
11:00 A.M. Outreach Estimated return to EV 5pm	11:00 A.M. Church Service	9:30 A.M. Work Project Break at noon	12:30 P.M. Activity with the Supervisors	10:30 A.M. Visiting Church Land	
	1:00 P.M. Tourism in Puebla Lunch downtown	1:30 P.M. Free Time		11:30 A.M. Arrive to EV	9:00 A.M. Work Project Break at noon
		2:15 P.M. Lunch	2:15 P.M. Lunch	12:00 P.M. Time with the Founders	1:30 P.M. Free Time
	2:00 P.M. Return to EV	4:30 P.M. Return to EV	3:30 P.M. Activities with Kids	1:00 P.M. From Vision to Action How to Partner	2:15 P.M. Lunch
5:00P.M. Free time	5:00P.M. Free time	3:30 P.M. Activities with Kids	2:30 P.M. Leave for Tourism in Cholula Dinner out in town	2:15 P.M. Lunch	3:00P.M. Free Time
6:00 P.M. Dinner	6:00 P.M. Dinner	6:00 P.M. Dinner	5:00 P.M. Worship Time	6:00 P.M. Dinner	4:00 P.M. HR Debrief
7:00 P.M. Donation Inventory	7:00 P.M. Prep for Week	7:00 P.M. Time with Teen Girls	7:00 P.M. Time with Teen Boys	7:00 P.M. Return to EV	5:00 P.M. Farewell Ice Cream Social/ Pizza / Tacos
<p>This is a tentative schedule. All activities are subject to change.</p> <p>The number of kids in each activity time is an estimate and is subject to change due to the current number of kids we have on campus as well as other daily activities.</p>					<p>Friday Departure: TBD</p>
SCHEDULE GUIDELINES		6:00 A.M. Alarm Off	8:00 P.M. Curfew	10:00 P.M. Lights Out/alarm on	

During your week we will involve you in the mission to **rescue, raise, and reach** through various activities such as time with the kids, evangelism, service projects, and more.

1. Community Outreach Activities

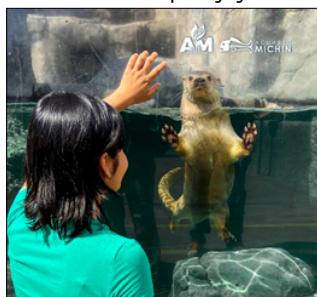
- **San Martín Esperillas** is a community where we serve children through weekly outreach—offering food, clothing, medical aid, and the love of Jesus. Come ready to get messy and have fun; you'll spend Saturday morning participating in outdoor activities with the children from the nearby towns.
- **Community Evangelism** - Teams participate in community evangelism by connecting with local residents, sharing the message of Jesus, and offering prayer. The hospital is a great option for outreach, where you can engage with patients and staff. Living Hope staff will guide and support you throughout the evangelism efforts. We will hand out meals to families who wait outside for days to hear news of their loved ones and Bibles to share the true lasting hope of Jesus to the community and those most in need.
- Your STM Coordinator will let you know what activities or items you can bring to bless the communities we serve.

2. Cultural Off Campus Activities

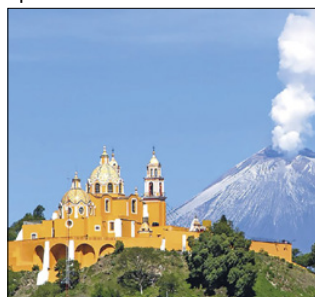
Your team can choose two activities from the list below to enjoy during your week in Mexico. In some seasons, you can even invite a group of kids from the orphanage to join you! It's a great way to experience the beautiful Mexican culture during your missions week. Transportation will be provided, and a Living Hope staff member will accompany you to help with translation.



Africam Safari








Acuario Michin



Cholula



Soccer Game

Acuario Michin** 	\$20 / person	Acuario Michin, the largest aquarium in Latin America, offers a 2-hour tour through six distinct ecosystems, showcasing over 300 species, with interactive exhibits and activities like climbing walls, trampolines, and laser tag, making for an unforgettable adventure.
Africam Safari** 	\$15 / person	Africam Safari is a zoo with over 2,500 animals in natural habitats, offering up-close interactions via bus or jeep tours, with the option to include some of the kids from Esperanza Viva.
Soccer Game 	Ticket / person	Experience the passion of Mexican culture by attending a thrilling soccer match at a historic stadium in Puebla, where you can join the excitement and cheer for your team.
Hike and Picnic 	\$7 / person	Hike the Zapotecas mountain in Cholula, ideal for beginners, and enjoy a scenic picnic at the top with breathtaking views of Cholula, Puebla, and the Popocatepetl volcano, making it a great activity to include kids of all ages.
Cholula 	Meal / person	Cholula, known as the “City of Churches” and a “Magical Town,” offers a visit to the Great Pyramid of Cholula, where you can explore its ruins, walk through an underground tunnel, climb to the church at the top for stunning views, and browse local vendor booths for souvenirs.

Only offered in summer months. Check availability with the STM Coordinator.

3. On Campus Activities with the Esperanza Viva Children

During your week here, you will have plenty of meaningful time building relationships with the children we serve. In addition to the activities and playtime your team will enjoy with the children on campus, you may choose to add a special activity from the options listed below to create special lasting memories and fun moments. Your investment in the children's lives is a vital part of their healing process, and we are honored to help facilitate these moments.

Taco Night	\$600	Enjoy a fun and delicious evening filled with authentic tacos, freshly made on campus by our trusted local vendors. This event brings everyone together to share a meal, enjoy vibrant conversation, and experience the warmth of community. It's a great way to create lasting memories while enjoying one of the best-loved Mexican dishes.
Pizza Night	\$300	Gather around for a relaxed and enjoyable Pizza Night where you and the children can indulge in a variety of delicious pizzas. Whether you prefer classic cheese, pepperoni, or specialty toppings, this is the perfect opportunity to unwind, build friendships, and bond over a comforting meal. It's a laid-back evening filled with laughter and shared experiences.
Ice Cream Social	\$150	Cool off and satisfy your sweet tooth with an Ice Cream Social! This fun-filled activity lets everyone choose their favorite ice cream flavors, toppings, and create the ultimate sundae. It's the perfect way to bring joy and sweetness into the evening while creating meaningful moments with the children.

4. Sustaining Hope Work Project

- Each team spends time working on assigned service projects, which can vary based on current needs. Tasks may include construction, repairs, cleaning, or other hands-on work. While the work is valuable, it's important to remember that the primary focus is the impact we have through serving.
- Create a Peer to Peer Fundraiser with your team to raise the essential funds that help us carry out these projects. As our campus grows and more rescued children come to live full-time at Esperanza Viva Youth Home, we have a need to sustain the ongoing maintenance of our primary campus, which provides hope to countless children. By saying yes and participating in the Sustaining Hope project through raising funds, you become a foundational element of sustainability and lasting hope for reaching, rescuing, and raising generations to come.



C. Dress Code/Packing

Remember you are coming to serve children who have experienced various forms of abuse. The dress code supports the children's healing process.

1. General Dress Guidelines:

Inappropriate Clothing: Living Hope reserves the right to ask anyone to change their clothing if it is deemed inappropriate.

- Shirts/tops: Avoid low necklines, low-cut arm openings, spaghetti straps, or sheer material.
- Shorts and skirts should be knee-length.
- Avoid tight clothing such as leggings, biker shorts, etc.

2. Heat, Sun, and Altitude:

Puebla is located at 7,000 feet above sea level, which means stronger sun and thinner air. Consult your doctor about the effects of high altitude before your trip.

- Stay hydrated: Dehydration is common due to the higher rate of water vapor loss in the air. Avoid caffeine, which worsens dehydration.
 - i. Sunscreen, a hat, and sunglasses are essential.
 - ii. Personal refillable water bottles are recommended.
- Altitude Sickness: Symptoms like headaches, dizziness, and nausea can occur. Drink plenty of water and maintain an electrolyte balance with drinks like Gatorade.

D. Packing Guidelines

1. Bring enough clothing to last the entire trip, as laundry services are not available.
2. Bring only one hair dryer or curling iron per dorm to share, as the electrical system is not designed to handle many items simultaneously.
3. Weather: Check weather reports to help with packing decisions.
4. TSA Guidelines: Refer to the TSA website for the latest carry-on and checked baggage policies: www.tsa.gov.
5. Valuables: Leave expensive jewelry or heirlooms at home. Even nice watches can attract unwanted attention.
6. Scan the QR code for important information about bringing donations to Mexico.



VI. STM COORDINATOR HELP

The Living Hope STM Coordinator is here to assist with all aspects of your preparation for the mission trip.

Once you have scheduled your initial call and made the reservation deposit to hold your teams date, you will receive your own planning portal link to facilitate your entire trip planning.

Don't hesitate to ask for more details on any points mentioned in this manual or other questions you may have.

STM@LivingHope.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)



MISSION

Rescue children. Raise leaders. Reach the unreached.

VISION

Our vision is to ensure that no child or vulnerable life is forgotten. As long as there are children in need of rescue and lives yearning for hope, we are committed to reaching the underserved, abandoned, and hurting. We strive to create opportunities for a future where they can rise to fulfill their God-given potential. In doing so, we empower and educate them to make a positive impact on the world around them.

PROMISE

Our organization is committed to spending every dollar to rescue, raise, and reach.

FINANCIAL INTEGRITY

At Living Hope, we are committed to stewarding every resource entrusted to us with integrity and accountability. Our promise is to honor the trust of our supporters by maximizing the impact of every gift, knowing that together, we are making a lasting difference in the lives of the vulnerable.



LIVINGHOPE.ORG
SINCE 1994 - MORE THAN 30 YEARS

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