

ARKLA Conference Youth Mission Trip

La Cascada, Mexico: March 11 – 21, 2010

Preliminary Orientation Notes

I. Introduction

Are you ready for some...MISSION, HARDWORK, & ADVENTURE! Praise the Lord I am ready, and I hope you are too. This is going to be a fantastic trip, one that may change your life, and certainly one you will never forget. As you know our team of about 35 - 40 persons will be going to Mexico on a short-term mission trip to build a church in a small village named La Cascada near the city of Palenque in the state of Chiapas, which is about a two hour drive west of Villahermosa (the town we will be flying into).

II. Background

For most of you this will be your first mission experience (but hopefully not your last!). Thankfully we have plenty of experienced leadership going along with us. We will be working under the coordination of **MARANTHA VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL (MVI)**, which is a non-profit organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church whose motto is “**The Gospel in Working Clothes.**” They will be assisting us through the entire building process. They have many years of experience building churches, schools, and various other church related buildings throughout the world. But it is individuals like you that make it all possible by your giving, your time, and your work skills.

III. Dates of Mission

Our group will be **leaving Little Rock on Thursday, March 11, 2010 @ 3:20 p.m. and will return on Sunday, March 21, 2010 @ 2:55 p.m.** Included in these dates will be one to two days of excursion activities depending on the progress of the construction of the church building.

IV. Airline

30 seats are reserved on Continental Airlines

V. Lodging

Pastor Westgate and Pastor Walker went to Mexico in December to evaluate housing, local transportation, the construction site, and excursion options. They met with MVI field representative Darrel who was extremely helpful and guided them to reserve much of the lodging and transportation needed for this trip.

On the night that we arrive in Villahermosa we will be taken by bus straight to our cabañas on the outskirts of Palenque. **We will be lodging at Cabañas “San Catarino” for the next 10 nights.** The cabañas are about 30 kilometers from our building site in La Cascada. The campus there is beautifully kept and we will have the whole place for ourselves. There is a wonderful kitchen and a large open dining hall, as well as two good-sized swimming pools! Each cabaña will have either 2 or 3

double beds with its own private bathroom and shower with hot water. Rooms will also have air-conditioning, bedding, and pillows. Rooms will be divided up by gender with the exception of families, who will have their own private rooms. You can checkout www.sancararino.com.mx to see more.

VI. Local Transportation

Once we arrive in Villahermosa, we will be picked up and taken directly to Cabañas “San Catarino”. That same bus will pick us up again early Sunday morning around 2:00 a.m. to take us back to the airport in Villahermosa. During our stay we will have a different bus to take us back and forth from the worksite and various other excursions we may take during the week. We will also have a rental van available to run errands for shopping, marketing, food, supplies, and to bring lunch daily to the worksite.

VII. Location

We will be working in a rural village with a nice view of the rolling hills in the lowlands of eastern Chiapas. The climate is very tropical, so be prepared for hot days under the sun (**BRING A RIMMED HAT, A WATER BOTTLE, AND LOTS OF SUNSCREEN**). We will be there during dry season, so we probably will not have to worry about rain, and mosquitoes should not be much of a problem during the day (but make sure you have protection in the evenings and early mornings). The area we will be building in is very rural, but we will have electricity and a bathroom (actually it is really a latrine so bring your own toilet paper).

VIII. Trip Cost

Base:	\$1400.00
- Airfare	
- Local transportation	
- Insurance	
- Housing	
- Food/Water	
- T-shirts	
- Excursion:	

IX. Applications

Applications are so important because we need information for the team for contact, airlines listing and ticketing, Maranatha for team list, insurance, housing, your skills, and your signed agreement to this commitment. There is also a **medical review form** required by MVI for our medical personnel and your safety. Further, you also need to have your parents fill out a required **Parental Consent Form**, which must be filled out and signed, and return to us, if you are under 18 years of age. Time is short, and **we have a limit of 30 who can go from our conference** because a group of 10 or 12 from Nova Scotia will also be joining us. So if you want to go, “please” complete and return the application and other forms ASAP, but in any event before the **DEADLINE OF FRIDAY, January 22, 2010**. This is the deadline to be on the team. Please do not put this off...Just do it today.

X. Finances and Payment Schedule

The cost per volunteer is around \$1400.00 and can be paid in three installments (or all at once ☺). We require, and need **(1) the initial \$100.00 deposit with the application no later than Friday, January 22th; (2) Initial Partial Payment of \$650.00 by Friday, February 5th; and (3) Final Complete Payment of APPROX \$650.00 by Friday, March 5th.** We have required payments to the Airline Company and Maranatha throughout the next few months, so we must have our payments on a timely basis. Once we ticket you, there is no cancellation opportunity. That cost is your responsibility. Bottom Line: MAKE YOUR COMMITMENT AND PAYMENTS, SURE AND TIMELY.

XI. Personal Monies Needed

Mexico uses Pesos', so there will be need of exchange (currently the exchange rate is about 12.5 pesos' per 1 dollar. You will need 'cash' for shopping and food on occasion. **DO NOT BRING TRAVELERS CHECKS or AMERICAN EXPRESS CREDIT CARDS.** Some places will accept MasterCard and Visa, but cash is preferred and best. You will have opportunity to exchange your dollars into pesos' soon after we arrive in Palenque.

XII. Laundry

Laundry services will be available on our campsite and in town! That is great news. Therefore there will be no need to pack your whole closet. Just pack what you need. When packing for a trip, two old sayings hold true. First, lay out what you want to bring, then take half that and twice as much money. The second, an adage of international journalists and inveterate business travelers, warns to take only as much as you could carry on a dead run for a ¼ mile.

In other words, pack light. It's amazing how much you think you might need, only to return home and find out that, not only did you not use the questionable items, but you also didn't unpack half of what you considered indispensable. Leave room for souvenirs!

XIII. Sun and Mosquitoes

Just like back home there will be plenty of hot sun and mosquitoes where we will be. Thankfully they do not come together. During the day you will need to wear a brimmed hat and lots of sun block! The sun at the Mexico is much more intense than in Arkansas or Louisiana. But when the sun goes down the mosquitoes come out, so don't forget your bug spray.

XIV. Airport Exit Fee

Thankfully your exit fee is included in your airplane ticket so you won't have to worry about it.

XV. Passports

You cannot go without it. If you do not have a passport, please go to your local post office and get the process started. It may take 3 to 5 weeks. **PLEASE DO NOT PUT THIS OFF!**

XVI. Team Meetings/Worship

Each evening after supper, the entire team meets for notices, instructions, announcements, and worship. These meetings are not “optional!” These are interesting and important. We will miss the spiritual aspect of the trip if we slack off here. This is a time of sharing and of bonding with God and each other.

XVII. Vacation Bible School (VBS)

We plan to conduct a VBS for area children on certain afternoons for about a two-hour period (approx 3-5pm: Mon – Fri). We ask for those who are willing to assist with this program to let us know. We will have translation (we are not sure how many Spanish speakers we have at this point though). Of course we cannot let everyone break away from the building while this is going on, so we may rotate if we have many people who are interested in doing this. We will have to supply our own VBS materials.

XVIII. Medical Missionary Work

We are hoping to organize a medical outreach to the community. Most people cannot afford to see a doctor and if they could they wouldn't be able to afford the medicine anyway, so this has potential to make a major impact on the village and paint a very positive picture of the Seventh-day Adventist Church there. However we still need to recruit doctors and nurses to accompany us.

XIX. Solicitation of Funds from Others

If any of you will be asking family, relatives, or friends if they are willing to assist you financially, this is fine (and recommended ☺). However, if they give their money directly to you, there is no tax deduction available. If they would like to receive a tax deduction for their donation, please ask them to write checks payable to the Arkansas Louisiana Conference Youth Dept: putting your name and Ecuador Mission Trip on a memo or in a tithe envelope. Please have them mailed directly to the Conference office:

Arkansas Louisiana Conference Youth Department
P.O. Box 31000
Shreveport, LA 71130-1000

XX. Conclusion

We believe that you will greatly enjoy this trip, our team and the work...as unto the LORD! We have a wonderful location, and we expect the weather to be wonderful (no rain in the forecast)! There will be wonderful sightseeing and relaxing along the way. This will definitely be a once in a lifetime experience! **We thank each of you for your willingness to volunteer your time, skills, hard work and financial resources. We**

know that you will be blessed with a sense of service and accomplishment, excitement, fun, friendship, and a knowledge that you really did make a difference!