

San Lucas Mission

Visiting Group Orientation Packet

Welcome to the San Lucas Mission!

Thank you for your interest in visiting our Mission. In this document you will find important information for your stay here. Please feel free to visit www.sanlucasmision.org or contact Terri Wong if you have any additional questions after reading this packet.

The San Lucas Mission

San Lucas Tolimán is located on Lake Atitlán, which is about 3 hours by car (but only 68 miles west) from Guatemala City. In 1963, the Bishop of the New Ulm, MN diocese sent Fr. Greg Schaffer to serve as a priest in San Lucas. Upon arriving, Fr. Greg found people living in corn stalk homes with thatched roofs and the town lacked paved roads, electricity, and plumbing; there was no healthcare and only one small school with about 100 students enrolled. Mayan children did not attend school, and one out of every two children died from malnutrition. With the recognition and appreciation for the rich Maya culture and the heartfelt understanding that God's love is for all, Fr. Greg began efforts at the San Lucas Mission responding, as Jesus did, to the expressed felt need of the people, using the Preferential Option for the Poor as its foundation, and drawing on Christian Social Teaching to guide efforts in the integral human development of our people and community. Since then, the Mission has grown tremendously and is now overseen by the Friends of San Lucas, a non-profit organization, created to carry on Fr. Greg's legacy after his death in 2012. The Friends of San Lucas is a bridge connecting the people of San Lucas with the friends and supporters from the United States. This avenue of solidarity provides funding to keep the Mission projects going. The Mission continues to respond to the expressed felt needs of the people of San Lucas Tolimán while upholding the Christian Social Doctrine that Fr. Greg weaved through all his decisions and practices.

The Mission's Role

Beginning with recognition and appreciation for the Mayan culture, the San Lucas Mission attempts to respond to the expressed felt needs of the people. The Mission uses the Preferential Option for the Poor as its foundation and draws on Christian Social Teaching to promote a healthy community that can be achieved only if its members give attention to those who are poor and on the margins of society.

The 4 Pillars of Christian Social Teaching:

- 1. Dignity of the Human Person:* Human life is sacred, and the dignity of the human person is the starting point for a moral vision for society. This principle is grounded in the idea that each person is made in the image of God.
- 2. The Common Good:* How we organize our society directly affects human dignity and the capacity to grow in community. The obligation to "love our neighbor" has an individual dimension, but it also requires a broader social commitment to the common good.
- 3. Solidarity:* We must work alongside the people to learn and respect the moral, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of all cultures.
- 4. Subsidiarity:* The principle of subsidiarity holds that in our efforts to work with another culture, we must begin from where the people are, at all times safeguarding their efforts to address the situation of poverty in which they live.

Our purpose is to deal with both the immediate effects of poverty and their root causes. We promote the dignity, self-respect, and development of the people through a variety of projects including reforestation, coffee production, education, stove construction, clinical care, and health promotion.

Your Role as a Short Term Volunteer

The Mission's way of service is focused primarily on learning and solidarity. Our goals are not simply to help or do but rather to accompany and inquire with respectful curiosity. We recognize that our physical labor is helpful in

advancing projects, buildings, etc., but in the end, all of our efforts are part of a greater educational experience. The empowerment of the local community and the sustainability of the projects are possible only through a relationship of equality between Guatemalan and North American counterparts.

At the San Lucas Mission, volunteers try to foster this spirit of service. After leaving we encourage continual awareness. Once visitors have left San Lucas, they should be able to communicate the Mission philosophy as well as what they have personally learned to their family and friends, serving as ambassadors for the principles of Christian Social Teaching and, more broadly, social justice.

Here are some examples of projects that you may get a chance to work on during your stay:

REFORESTATION: The reforestation project started in 1975 in recognition of the need to reverse the rapid rate of deforestation taking place in Guatemala. The program focuses on growing and distributing trees and educating the community on the importance of reforestation and erosion control. The trees grown through the program are either sold or given to private individuals, schools, and other organizations to be planted for erosion control, ornamentals, firewood and to produce lumber for building and construction purposes.

COFFEE: In 1992, Fr. Greg began a new project of exporting quality coffee under the brand name “Juan-Ana”, with the hope to help more Guatemalans obtain a just market price at the time of harvest. The Juan Ana Coffee program produces an average of 40,000 pounds of coffee a year and pays 25% more than what the market price offers, which delivers money immediately into the hands of the workers rather than the hands of the producer.

STOVE PROJECT: Most families in San Lucas do not own a stove and have to improvise by making an open fire on the dirt floor. This method is hazardous not only for accidental burns, but also for smoke inhalation. The mission developed a more advanced stove project in 1994, which provides fuel-efficient and safer stoves to the families in San Lucas and to the surrounding communities. These new stoves decrease smoke inhalation and respiratory illness. They also require less firewood so that a family spends less time looking for wood and less money for its purchase.

WOMEN’S CENTER: The women’s center was finished in February of 2011, and is equipped with a full kitchen, a common room to hold meetings, sewing machines, a medicinal herb garden, and a large communal “pila” for washing laundry. Here the women can come together for cooking, washing clothes, and using the common rooms so as to pass on their skills and support one another in their way of life. There is a playground nearby so that children can play while the mothers work.

You can expect to work on several different projects in San Lucas or the surrounding communities. In general, the Long Term Volunteers will tell your group leader what the work assignment will be for the next day during dinner, the night before. All groups will get a variety of assignments, but we ask you to remain flexible because the demand for work at different projects always changes.

Here is a rough schedule of volunteer life at the Mission:

	Monday-Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8:00am	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast (8:30)
9:00am-12:00pm	Working at projects	Morning activity: Hike or Soccer	Boat Tour
12:30pm	Lunch	Lunch	(no lunch at the Mission)
2:00pm-4:00pm	Light work at projects	Free time	Return from tour at approx. 3pm
6:00pm	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner

In addition to these activities, you will participate in a tour of all of the Mission's projects, see a documentary about Fr. Greg and the San Lucas Mission, and your group will take a "Living Class" where you'll learn about local history and get a taste for daily life in San Lucas. There also may be other opportunities to listen to short presentations from members of the community.

As volunteers you should also be aware of your role as representatives of the Mission here in San Lucas. All of our work is built on a foundation of solidarity and mutual respect. Out of respect for the community, we ask that you follow some guidelines for dress and behavior:

- Dress Code: People generally dress more conservatively than in the U.S. This means for men wearing long pants or shorts that cover knees and shirts with sleeves (no tank tops). For women, pants, skirts or shorts that cover knees. Shoulders should be covered. Avoid tight fitting clothing. San Lucas is cool in the mornings and evenings, so bringing a fleece or a sweatshirt is a good idea.
- Curfew: The Mission asks groups to be back in their hotels by 9pm for safety purposes.
- Drinking: We ask that visitors drink responsibly and be a good example to other visitors and to the San Lucas community.

Preparing for Your Visit

Before coming to San Lucas, visit a travel doctor and make sure you are up-to-date on your vaccinations. Tetanus and Hepatitis A are especially important. While we are not in a malaria risk area, some groups choose to bring anti-malarials if they will be visiting Tikal or other tropical areas after their time in San Lucas. Ciprofloxacin, (an antibiotic to treat travelers' diarrhea), is also useful to bring.

To help with the packing process, we have compiled a packing list that can be found here:
<http://www.sanlucasmision.org/pages/volunteer/individual/what-to-bring>

Please read the following two articles before arriving in San Lucas:

- "The Cost of Short Term Missions" by JoAnn Van Engen

<http://www.catapultmagazine.com/global-eyes/article/cost-of-short-term-missions>

- "Rethinking Volunteerism in America" by Gavin Leonard

http://www.alternet.org/story/31958/rethinking_volunteerism_in_america

Frequently Asked Questions

When and where can I change money? How much money should I change?

You can bring personal checks and exchange them for Quetzals at the mission, however personal checks are otherwise very hard to use within Guatemala, so just be aware.

The amount of money you need depends on how much you want to buy and how often you plan on eating out. Most visitors will want some money to buy souvenirs. Around \$100 should be enough to cover some souvenirs (bags, weavings, jewelry, coffee, etc.), and eating a meal or so outside the mission. But it will vary on what you want to buy.

What do I do if a member of my group falls ill?

Please notify the long-term volunteer coordinator or a long-term volunteer if you have any illness that lasts longer than one day. A lot of people experience a gastrointestinal "adjustment" period during their visit. If you experience travelers' diarrhea, we recommend **NOT** taking Immodium or Pepto Bismol until you have been assured that you do not have amoebas. If the gastrointestinal illness lasts longer than 24 hours or becomes more severe (intense cramping, nausea, or vomiting), please notify the long-term volunteer coordinator or the long-term volunteers. Our clinic is well equipped to diagnose and treat these issues quickly and effectively.

Is San Lucas safe?

San Lucas is a relatively safe and welcoming community, but use common sense. Acts of violence, particularly directed towards foreigners, are extremely rare. We ask that visitors walk in pairs and that you do not wander around alone, especially at night. Don't leave your purse or backpack unattended. Please be back at your hotel by 9:00 p.m.

Where can I store my valuables? Can I get into the safe to retrieve valuables throughout the week?

We have a safe where we securely store passports. The hotels where we lodge our groups are trusted business partners, so your belongings should be safe in your locked room.

Is there a telephone and internet at the Mission?

There is a phone at the Mission that you can use to make international calls. Office hours are from 9 am until 7 pm, unless in the case of an emergency. The cost is 2Q/ minute for calls to the US.

The Mission has internet access but it is very slow. We ask groups to limit use to before and after meals. Saving mealtimes to converse with other visitors. There are several internet cafes in town, and some of the hotels have internet.

Can I bring donations?

There has been a substantial change with how the Mission receives donations. Please contact Terri Wong before making any plans to bring donations, for the Mission has limited space for storage of items.

Can a member of my group work in the school or clinic during our stay?

Work at the clinic and school is very limited. We have been asked by the community to keep the frequency of visitors passing through to a minimal basis, so that confidentiality and quality of services can be ensured. For closer interaction or collaboration with the clinic and surrounding communities, please contact the Friends of San Lucas.

Where can I purchase souvenirs?

The Mission sells coffee, honey, books, CDs, and DVDs in the Mission office through the volunteer coordinator. Souvenirs, like Guatemala's famous textiles, can be found around town and in the market. We ask that you avoid purchasing from people selling souvenirs in front of the church or on Mission property and that you also spread your business around town. If you have any problems with local vendors, please let the volunteer coordinator know.

Can I go for a run or walk in the morning or evening?

We recommend that people avoid running and going for walks alone during their stay, especially at dawn and at dusk/night. There have been problems with dogs in the past. If you choose to exercise, please do not go alone. There are also two gyms in town where you can pay a small fee to use the exercise equipment.

Who are the long-term volunteers and is it possible for me to become a long-term volunteer?

Long-term volunteers are selected in a competitive three-part application process. For more information on the volunteer program or to apply, visit <http://sanlucas.gm7site.com>.

How can I donate to the Mission, and which projects can I support?

100% of our funding comes from donations. The greatest need is to cover the costs of salaries, maintenance and operating costs for the mission projects, etc., which is vital to keeping the mission running smoothly. We also have specific needs that come up each month.

You can support the Mission and our projects by donating to the "Friends of San Lucas" (you will be given an envelope at the end of your visit to mail your donation when you return home) or you can donate online at <http://sanlucas.gm7site.com>. See the Fundraising list attached for more specific needs.

How can I stay involved and up-to-date on the Mission's efforts?

Toward the end of your stay the volunteer coordinator will debrief you on how to stay involved. We encourage you to keep in touch and remain involved once your trip is over. Our hope is that your first visit won't be your last, and that this is just the beginning of a journey of learning and solidarity with the people of San Lucas. To stay up-to-

date on what's happening in San Lucas, you can subscribe to our seasonal newsletter by signing up at www.sanlucasmision.org. We also are on Facebook (Friends of San Lucas), twitter and the volunteer blog.

I don't know anything about Guatemala! Do you have any suggestions on what to read before I visit?

Guatemala has a rich cultural heritage, but also a violent past. The following resources about Guatemala's recent history are some possible books you can investigate if you choose to know more:

This American Life (podcast or streaming online) "What Happened at Dos Erres"

<http://thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/465/what-happened-at-dos-erres>

Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala, by Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer.

Silence on the Mountain: Stories of Terror, Betrayal, and Forgetting in Guatemala, by Daniel Wilkinson