

GROUP TRIP GUIDE

CASAS

P O R C R I S T O

Juárez

For questions, please contact our team coordinators at questions@casasporcristo.org or 915.778.0046.

QUICK GUIDE

3-6 Months Prior

- Apply for passports.
- Read this Juárez Group Trip Guide.

30 Days Prior

- Check with your team leader to find out your missionary, lodging, and family information.
- Pray for the recipient family.
- Submit your digital Disclosure of Risk & Medical Release forms.
- Make sure to indicate any food allergies when completing your Disclosure & Medical forms.
- Submit any necessary information to your team leader so he/she can purchase your travel insurance.

PACKING LIST

- Travel documents (passports, etc.)
 - Toolbelt or nail apron
 - Work gloves
 - Protective eyewear
 - Long work pants (No capri pants or shorts on work site)
 - Work shirts (t-shirts)
 - Sturdy closed-toed shoes or boots & flip flops
 - Hat or bandana
 - Insulated water container
 - Sunblock
 - Chapstick
 - Bible
 - Soap, shampoo, & other toiletries
 - Feminine hygiene products (tampons are difficult to find)
 - Towel
 - Bedding (cot, air mattress, sleeping bag, pillow, etc.)
 - Sleeping arrangements vary by facility. Ask your team leader what is needed.
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REQUIRED TOOLS

- **Hammer (no smaller than 16 oz.)**
 - **Carpenter's pencil**
 - **25 ft. tape measure**
 - **Utility knife**
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These items aren't mandatory but can be helpful

**Earplugs (for sleeping)*

**Flashlight*

**Wet wipes*

**Knee pads*

DO NOT PACK

- Tank tops or sleeveless shirts
- Torn pants
- Hairdryers, curling irons, and hair straighteners
- Shorts shorter than knee length (no cheerleading/running shorts)
- Tight-fitting clothing (yoga/spandex pants)
- You are allowed to bring food into Mexico. However, when crossing back into the United States, you are not allowed to bring back any fruit, vegetables, animal products, or raw nuts, even if these foods are originally from the US.

30 DAYS PRIOR

Disclosure of Risk & Medical Release Form

You must fill out a digital Disclosure of Risk & Medical Release Form before you enter México. You will receive an email with instructions on how to fill out this form. Your form is due 30 days prior to your trip.

Food Allergies

Make sure to indicate your food allergies when completing your Disclosure of Risk and Medical Release forms online.

Missionary, Lodging, & Family Information

Check with your team leader to find out the information about your assigned missionary, México lodging, and family. Begin praying for the recipient family.

Travel Insurance

Your team leader will purchase travel insurance (see **EMERGENCIES** section for details) on your behalf and print the ID cards to keep with you while traveling. Submit any necessary information to the team leader from your church/organization.

TRIP DETAILS

Additional Ministry Opportunities

Although our main goal is to serve God by building homes for families, we welcome you to participate in additional evangelistic projects. See our [Spiritual Outreach Guide](#) or contact [Scott DeWitt](#), México Field Director, for assistance at 915.778.0046.

Animals

It is important that you do not feed or touch the animals in México. Many of them carry diseases and have the potential to bite or scratch.

Attire

Please bring clothing that is modest and appropriate. The following clothing items are prohibited: tank tops, cutoff shirts, torn pants, shorts shorter than knee-length (no cheerleading/running shorts), and tight-fitting clothing (no leggings or yoga/spandex pants). On the worksite, everyone must wear long pants and closed-toed shoes for protection. You may wear modest, knee-length shorts whenever you are not on the worksite.

Cell Phones

Talk with your carrier to see if you will have service in México and what charges you may incur through Mexican towers. Your Casas missionary will have a cell phone with service in México in case of emergencies.

Cultural Sensitivity

Casas por Cristo exists to open the door for local pastors and churches to share the love of Jesus Christ by serving. The Mexican church culture is generally more conservative than yours. Please be sensitive to the desires of the pastors you are here to serve. Our pastors have asked that our teams refrain from purchasing or consuming alcohol and tobacco, dress modestly, and respect the church facilities. Ask your Casas missionary for more specific information about your assigned pastor/church. Please refer to our [Mexico Culture Guide](#) for additional information.

Dedication

Plan with your team how you would like to dedicate this home. We will provide a Spanish Bible, keys, and a plaque. This will be a great time for your team, the sponsoring pastor, and the recipient family to speak with one another, present gifts, and pray together. Check out our [dedication sample outline](#) for more details.

Devotions

Reflecting on each day is an important part of your experience. We have a [devotional guide](#) available online to print for your trip. Plan a time each day for a group devotional and reflection.

Documentation

Passports or passport cards are REQUIRED for all team members! Enhanced driver's licenses from the following states are also acceptable: MI, MN, NY, VT, and WA. Exception: children under the age of 19 can cross with a birth certificate (see the [WHTI page](#) at [cbp.gov](#)). Because you will not be traveling into México beyond the city of Juárez, you do not need to purchase a travel visa upon entering the country.

Excursions

Check out our [El Paso Excursions](#) for a list of fun activities we recommend in the area.

Gifts for the Recipient Family

If you want to bring gifts for the family, we have several suggestions. While toys for children are very nice (crayons, bubbles, books, etc.), most families also have more pressing practical needs. We offer large family gifts (such as a mini-split/full bed/bunk beds) that your team can add to their invoice.

Additional gift options you can bring include:

- Box/Floor fan (#1 suggested gift)
- Rugs/carpet pieces (#2 suggested gift)
- Curtains (windows measure 36" x 36")
- Curtain rods
- Mini blinds (windows measure 36" x 36")
- Paint (interior/exterior)
- Painting supplies
- Garden hose
- Cooking Utensils
- Broom/Dustpan
- Towels
- Toiletries
- Sheets/Pillows
- Mud/Tape/Trowels for drywall finishing (you may not have time to do this, but you can leave it for the family)

If you have questions about other items that may be appropriate gifts, please call us. We would be happy to advise you. We have found that the best time to give gifts to the family is during the dedication.

Immunizations

We do not require any immunizations; however, we do recommend a current tetanus immunization and checking the CDC website to see what they recommend for travel to México.

Meals

We offer a [meal plan](#) option that includes three meals per day with a 15-person minimum. The cost can be found on our website. If you are interested in having Casas provide your meals, please discuss that with your Team Leader. If you choose to provide your own meals, then you will be responsible for all of your food and cooking utensils. See the [food guide](#) for additional tips and information.

Merchandise

You may purchase Casas souvenirs (t-shirts, hats, mugs, etc.) from the Casas store located at our main office in El Paso. You can also shop online on our [website](#). US dollars and credit cards are accepted.

Money

On the border, most vendors will accept American dollars. However, it is important to bring small bills, as most vendors will give you change back in Mexican pesos. You do not need to exchange American dollars for pesos for your stay in México.

Personal Belongings

Don't bring anything to México that you would be heartbroken to leave without. We recommend keeping anything of value with you at all times (money, passports, jewelry, etc.).

Project Time Frame

You should allow **four full days** for the project. Every worksite has unique challenges, so it is important that you allow yourself enough time to finish the project.

Recipient Family

We do not require that the recipient families participate in the building process beyond having the site prepared. However, many families are eager to help but are shy and feel like they would be in the way. Make every effort to include your family in the building process. Some families will prepare meals for teams to show their gratitude. These families make extra efforts to ensure that the food is safely prepared.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program

We recommend enrolling your group for free at [STEP.state.gov](https://step.state.gov) to receive travel and security updates about your destination, and to help the US government reach you in an emergency.

Spanish

The primary language spoken in Juárez is Spanish. We encourage you to learn some phrases beforehand to be able to speak with your family. Check out our list of [Common Spanish Phrases](#).

Support Your Missionary

In order to keep the cost of our mission trips low, our missionaries raise their own salaries to serve in the ministry. Each missionary depends on gifts from churches and individuals to cover their salaries. Changing a family's life this week could not happen without your effort and sacrifice. It also could not happen without your financial support for our missionaries. After your trip, encourage your missionary by giving a donation and/or joining their monthly support team.

Team Members

For the best building experience, we recommend 15 to 20 people. Visit our website for the [team composition guide](#) to determine the optimal number of people for your trip. The work will include pouring concrete, building walls, roofing, electrical, drywall, and stucco. Each of these tasks has at least one element that everyone can perform. Skilled laborers are not needed.

Time Zone

El Paso and Juárez both operate in the Mountain Time Zone. When establishing meeting times, we will refer to this time zone.

Transportation & Luggage

We suggest that your team be transported in 15-passenger vans. Please keep this in mind as you pack. Space may be limited.

Water

Tap water in México is not purified to American standards. To avoid getting sick, please drink only purified water, which can be purchased at local convenience stores.

Weather

The high desert has intensely hot summers (70°-100°) and fairly cold winters (30°-60°). Fall and spring have more mild temperatures (40°-90°). Strong winds and dust storms are typical in the spring. Chances for rain typically occur during the monsoon season from mid-June through October. Be prepared for the potential of rain as we will continue working through most weather conditions.

Weapons

It is illegal to carry most weapons in México. Please leave your firearms, knives, and other weapons at home.

EMERGENCIES

Casas por Cristo Office Number: 915.778.0046

Please leave our office number 915.778.0046 with your families and friends at home in case of an emergency where they would need to contact you while you're out of the country. Even if it is after business hours, they will reach one of our missionaries who will assist in relaying their message and provide any necessary follow-up.

Emergency Number In México: 911

If an ambulance is needed in Mexico, dial 911. This will only reach Mexican 911 if your cell phone is using Mexican towers.

First Aid Kit

Your Casas missionary will have a basic first aid kit. We recommend that your team also brings a kit to treat minor medical incidents throughout your trip.

Medical Treatment

Minor medical issues will be treated with the Casas missionary's first aid kit. If you need to see a doctor or go to an Emergency Room, your Casas missionary will assist you in contacting your travel insurance and taking you for treatment. If you choose to seek treatment in the US first instead of in México, your travel insurance coverage will be forfeited. It will not cover any medical costs for treatment that begins in the US. During this process, the Casas missionary will coordinate with the main office, and a Casas representative will be with the remaining team members. Here is the contact information for two large medical facilities in the area. Please note that depending on your insurance coverage, you might be taken to a different facility.

- In Juárez, México: Hospital Angeles Ciudad Juárez (hospitalesangeles.com/ciudadjuarez, 01.656.227.1400, GPS: 31.7140924,-106.3922807)
- In El Paso, Texas: University Medical Center (4815 Alameda Ave, El Paso, TX 79905, epchd.org, 915.521-2255, GPS: 31.771997, -106.435357)

Travel Insurance

Your team leader must purchase travel insurance for you and your teammates. We require the [Outreach Group Plan](#) through [International Medical Group](#). On our website we offer an [Explanation of Travel Insurance Coverage](#). Prior to your departure, your team leader will print your travel insurance ID cards to keep with you while you travel in case of an emergency. If you need assistance from the insurance company, please contact [Adam Bates](#) at 800.647.4589.

Safety

Your team's safety is of the utmost importance to us. We have been working diligently since our inception in 1993 to ensure that we have a number of fail-safes in place regarding personal safety and emergency situations. Read our [Risk Plan](#) for more details.

US Consulate General in Ciudad Juárez, México

Sometimes, in spite of careful planning, things still go wrong during a trip abroad. Contact the US Consulate in Ciudad Juárez for help with emergencies 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

US Consulate General in Ciudad Juárez, México

Paseo de la Victoria #3650

Fracc. Partido Senecú

Ciudad Juárez, México C.P. 32543

MX Phone: (656) 227-3000 (If calling from the US, dial 011-52 first)

ENTRY & EXIT

Driving in México

You must have a valid US driver's license to legally drive in México. For everyone's safety, we do not drive after dark. Follow your Casas missionary's vehicle closely. Do not attempt to make your own way and try to avoid letting other cars into your caravan. Mexican police drive with their red and blue lights flashing at all times. Do not pull over unless they also sound their siren. Mexican traffic lights change from green to flashing green before quickly changing from yellow to red.

Entry into México

Your Casas missionary will review the border crossing procedure with your team before you cross. Many ports of entry require a toll ranging from \$2.00 to \$3.00 per vehicle. You will be responsible for paying for your vehicles to enter and exit México. On the other side of the bridge, you will receive either a green or red light. If you receive a red light, please pull over into secondary for a routine inspection of your vehicle and belongings. Do your best to politely answer the Mexican border agents' questions. They are searching to make sure you are not illegally importing goods or weapons. Unless the agent specifically asks, you do not need to show your passports.

Exit from México

Each vehicle driver should collect all the documentation (passports) for the individuals in their vehicle to show to the US border patrol agents. The driver should politely answer the agent's questions about where they've been, where they're going, and what they've been doing.

US Customs & Border Protection

Each person is allowed to bring \$400 worth of purchases and up to \$10,000 cash through U.S. Customs without having to declare anything.

Items not allowed:

- Merchandise made from endangered species
- Fruits, vegetables, & meats
- Narcotics or illicit drugs
- Fireworks
- Cuban Cigars
- Live Birds
- Switchblade Knives

Please do not buy anything that would tarnish the reputation of Casas por Cristo, your group, or Jesus Christ.

Meeting up with your Casas Missionary

Your Casas missionary will contact your team leader before your trip to decide upon a meeting place (usually our office located at 7201 North Loop Dr. El Paso, TX 79915). All team members must be present at the time the team is scheduled to meet its missionary. Your team will stay together from that point until you cross back into the United States.

Your Casas Missionary

One of our trained missionaries will be with you 100% of the time you are in México to lead and live with your team for the week. He or she will teach, supervise, and ensure safety and quality. We take care of the details so that you can focus on serving and building. Most of our missionaries have a basic understanding but are not fluent in Spanish. Our missionaries are here for you and your group and will work to accommodate your requests. Read a brief bio about your missionary on the [missionaries page](#) of our website.

MÉXICO LODGING

We will arrange for you to stay at one of our facilities or a Mexican church while in México. We will email your team leader the details about your lodging no later than 30 days prior to your arrival.

Bathrooms

All toilet paper should be thrown away in the trash can. Do not place it in the toilet. We recommend bringing an air freshener and extra trash bags.

Cleaning

It is your team's responsibility to bring disinfectant wipes and disinfectant spray and clean the facility before you leave. Please see our [Post Trip Cleaning Guide](#) for more details.

Showers

All of our accommodations have showers. However, many of them do not have hot water. We ask you to take military showers: get wet, turn the water off, soap up, and then turn the water back on to rinse off your body.

Sleeping

Sleeping arrangements vary by facility. You will need to bring your own bedding (cot, air mattress, sleeping bag, pillow, etc.).

WORKSITE

Building Schedule

Your Casas missionary will discuss with your team leader which plan will work best for your team.

Summer Building Schedules:

- Siesta: Work from approximately 7 am until noon and from 3:30 pm until 8 pm. You will go back to your lodging in the afternoon for “siesta” and have your big meal of the day at that time.
- Six to Two: Work from 6 am to 2 pm. You will eat snacks and a light lunch at the worksite and will eat your big meal of the day at your lodging in the evening.

Fall, Winter, and Spring Building Schedule:

During non-summer months, you should expect to work from 8 am to 5 pm and eat lunch at the worksite. You will eat breakfast and dinner at your lodging.

Concrete Trucks

We have ordered your team a concrete truck, so ready-mix concrete will be delivered to your worksite. However, depending on the site, your team may have to use a wheelbarrow to move it from the truck into the foundation forms.

Construction Process

The house you will be building will have a concrete foundation and 2” x 4” framed walls. The outside of the house will be covered with blackboard, chicken wire, and then stucco. The inside of the house will have insulation, electricity, and sheetrock. The roof is framed with 2” x 6”s, decked with plywood, and covered with galvalume tin.

Preparedness

Be sure to arrive at the worksite with all of the equipment that you will need. You will need to take a positive attitude, toilet paper, trash bags, wet wipes, sunscreen, lunches, water, snacks, and tools.

Stay in a Group

Your team leader and your Casas missionaries should know where you are at all times. Your team should stay together as a group at all times.

Tools

Casas por Cristo provides the majority of the tools you will need, **but you do need to bring the required tools on the packing list.** You and your team are responsible for our tools. If tools break due to normal wear and tear, we will replace them. However, if they are lost or neglected, your team will be responsible for the replacement costs. The Casas toolkit is equipped with the following power tools: cement mixer, drywall cutout tool, screw guns, drill, power saw, and generator (if necessary). You are welcome to bring additional tools or nail guns. We have found that extra battery-powered tools are more helpful than corded tools. Tools are stored inside the church or in your missionary's trailer. Your team may have to load and unload all of the tools multiple times every day.

Work Site Bathroom

There is a bathroom facility of some sort at each work site. However, some may be more primitive than others.

Work Site Safety

The two most frequent worksite injuries are debris in the eye and dehydration. If your Casas missionary asks you to do something that you are unable to perform, please ask him or her for another task.

Please take the following precautions:

- Wear eye protection at the worksite
- Drink 1 gallon of water per day
- Wear sunscreen or protective clothing to protect from sunburn.

C A S A S *Por* C R I S T O

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