



**SURGICAL TRIP - MARCH 8 - 18, 2012**  
**CENTRO DE SALUD BÁRBARA - SAN JUAN SACATAPÉQUEZ, GUATEMALA**  
**PRELIMINARY TRIP INFORMATION**

**TEAM:** The team will consist of 1 team leader, 1 medical director, 1 general surgeons, 1 gynecologist, 2 surgical assistants, 2 anesthesiologists, 4-5 OR nurses, 6 PAR/post op ward nurses, 1 sterilizing technician, 1 sterilizing assistant, 2 administration, 1 dispensing/gopher, 3 English/Spanish translators.

**PRELIMINARY ITINERARY:**

- Thu.: Fly to Guatemala City and drive to Antigua.
- Fri.: Free day in Antigua, a colourful, colonial city with plenty of character. There are lots of ruins of churches and convents, shops and restaurants, a local market and craft stalls. The team will stay in the charming Hotel Aurora, which has double and triple rooms, en suite bathrooms and hot water.
- Sat.: Drive to clinic, unload supplies, unpack, set up and triage patients.
- Sun.: Surgery
- Mon.: Surgery
- Tue.: Surgery
- Wed.: Surgery
- Thu.: Surgery
- Fri.: ½ day surgery, pack, prepare inventory of packed items, clean up
- Sat.: Drive to Antigua, rest of day free
- Sun.: Morning flight from Guatemala City

**SURGERY DAY SCHEDULE:**

- 6.30 /7:00 a.m. Breakfast at Casa Damasco, drive to clinic.
- 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Surgery. We aim to finish by 4:00 p.m., to enable the last team members to return to Casa Damasco by 6:00 - 6.30 p.m.
- 7:00 p.m. dinner at Casa Damasco, followed by a free evening at the retreat.

**CENTRO DE SALUD BÁRBARA:** We work at Centro de Salud Bárbara (CSB) in San Juan Sacatapéquez. The clinic was built about 6 years ago by a Guatemalan doctor and his family, and is unique in Guatemala. It is bright, airy and spacious, and functions mainly as a primary healthcare facility and birthing centre staffed by local Guatemalan nurses and medical students from the Francisco Marroquín Medical School in Guatemala City. The clinic has two ORs, but they had no equipment until the fall of 2008, when they were upgraded and equipped, and HANDS became the inaugural team to use them. At the moment the clinic has neither the staff nor expertise to provide surgery, and is largely reliant on foreign volunteer surgical teams to provide this service.

The front of the clinic is taken up by the primary care centre, lab, pharmacy and X ray room (not functioning). The OR suite, wards and all parts of the clinic are linked by a wide, central passageway & courtyard. The OR suite consists of two large operating rooms, sterilizing room, 4-bed recovery room and a change room for staff. On the other side of the passage there are two wards with 8 beds each. One of the wards is dedicated to post op and the other is used by the clinic for maternity.

The new Albergue San Gabriel, built in 2008, is connected to the clinic by a walkway. It provides accommodation for patients and an accompanying family member. It is a very valuable facility, as patients live far away and are not able to return home as soon as would be expected in North America. Post op patients move to the Albergue once they no longer need nursing care, and stay until they are able to go home. While they are in the Albergue, our doctors and nurses check on them daily.

**PATIENTS:** Our target demographic is the poorest segment of Guatemalan society. Many of our patients are Mayan, live well below the poverty line, and have no access to medical care. They will be brought to the clinic from outlying rural areas by our affiliate, Partner for Surgery (PfS). Others may come from the San Juan area and surrounding communities.

**SAN JUAN SACATAPÉQUEZ:** CSB is just outside the small town of San Juan Sacatapéquez. It is located in the western highlands, about an hour and a half northeast of Antigua, and an hour north of Guatemala City. It is inhabited by Kaqchikel speaking Maya. The area is known for its flower production, and most mornings on the way to the clinic we'll see huge mounds of blooms in the bustling markets that grace the town's central square.

**CASA DAMASCO:** There is no suitable hotel in the vicinity, so the team stays at Casa Damasco, about 15 minutes away from the clinic. Casa offers basic accommodations in a retreat-style setting, in peaceful gardens overlooking the town. It's a bit like being in camp. There are several shared dorms with bunk beds and temperamental, electrically operated showers. Sometimes there is hot water; sometimes not. Sheets, blankets, pillows, towels, breakfast and dinner are provided. There are pleasant dining facilities, a veranda, a lounge with fireplace, a meeting room and chapel. There is a TV and WiFi internet access. We usually take over the whole place, which is nice for the team.

#### **PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS:**

- All volunteers must complete a volunteer application, sign an agreement and waiver of liability, and purchase international medical and evacuation insurance. In addition, medical personnel must provide a copy of current professional registration and a short CV (CV not required for those who have been on a previous HANDS team).
- All volunteers must pay their own airfare and a participation fee.
- Volunteers from the Vancouver area are required to travel on the outbound flight with the team, pick up a supply bin(s) from the designated location and transport it to Guatemala.

- You must be in good physical health, as the days are often long and demanding.
- It is crucial for participants to work together as a cohesive team, so you must be comfortable collaborating with others. Please understand that our systems and procedures have been laid down based on experience from past trips. Although the reasons for some of them may not be immediately obvious, changing them mid trip unbalances the team. Team members must work under different conditions to those at home, and need to be flexible, willing to take on any task, and to always be caring, respectful, polite, and sensitive to cultural differences. Flexibility, team spirit and sense of humor are also essential qualities.

### **COSTS:**

- Ground package: \$550 CAD/US. Covers all accommodation, breakfast in Antigua, all meals while in San Juan and local transport. Not covered: meals in Antigua (other than breakfast), spending money, travel insurance with medical evacuation coverage.
- Flight: Approximately \$1100 (budget figure for a flight from Vancouver)
- HANDS is a registered Canadian charity and can issue tax receipts to Canadian participants for the cost of the trip. If you are American we can process your payment through our U.S. affiliate, so that you may obtain a deduction.

### **TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS**

- HANDS books flights for those traveling to and from Vancouver on the trip dates. If you are flying on the outbound flight with the team but are returning separately you will need to book your own flights. If you are flying from the U.S. you will also need to book your own flights. If you fly from the U.S. and your flights coordinate with the main team it will be possible to include you in the group airport pickup/drop off; otherwise, you will need to arrange the pickup/drop off yourself, and meet the group at the hotel in Antigua. We will provide you with the details of our local travel agent and she can book a taxi for you – about \$30US one way).
- All participants traveling from Vancouver will need to transfer 1-2 bins of supplies.
- If you are extending your stay in Guatemala and would like local assistance, our local travel agent can make arrangements by email or once you arrive in Antigua.

**REGISTRATION:** The registration form is available online at [www.projecthands.org](http://www.projecthands.org). Click on Upcoming Trips, then your trip date. Please note that a place is not secure until we receive your completed registration form, deposit, and all paperwork requirements.

**PRE TRIP FAMILIARIZATION:** It is our aim to familiarize team members about the trip prior to departure. With that in mind, we provide an Information Packet by email at the time of registration, and our Team Handbook is available on at [www.projecthands.org](http://www.projecthands.org) under the trip date. In addition, we organize one Pre-Trip Team Meeting. It is mandatory for all team members to attend this meeting unless they do not live in the Vancouver area. This session

provides an opportunity to meet team mates, receive information and ask questions. The meeting is usually 2-3 weeks prior to departure. The dates are posted in the post-registration information that will be sent to successful applicants.

Working in Guatemala is a wonderful experience, and we hope that you will find it as interesting and rewarding as we do. The Guatemalans are gentle, modest people who have been dealt a very hard hand by history. Half of the population is Mayan. They continue to be marginalized, living below the poverty line in rural communities, where they rarely have running water or electricity. They often have little or no access to healthcare, have little education (especially women) and are extremely naïve about health and hygiene. Although we are helping them, they have no idea how much they give to us.

Should you wish to see photographs from some of our past trips, there are some on our website at [www.projecthands.org](http://www.projecthands.org).

If you still have questions, please do not hesitate to email or call. It is important to us that participants are informed and comfortable with all aspects of the trip, so if we have missed anything, please let us know. If you would like to be considered for a spot on this trip, please let us know as soon as possible. The team fills up quickly, and we would hate for you to be disappointed. If you are interested in volunteering but these trip dates do not work for you, please look for announcements about future trips.

Best regards,

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