



**TRIAGE TRIP TO RURAL GUATEMALA
FEBRUARY 17 - 26, 2012
PRELIMINARY TRIP INFORMATION**

PRELIMINARY ITINERARY:

- Fri.: early morning depart Vancouver (Canadians only). Late evening arrival in Guatemala City. Transfer to hotel in Antigua.
- Sat.: 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.
- Sun.: drive to the Verapaz region, where the team will be working (usually 4-6 hours drive)
- Mon.: clinic day
- Tue.: clinic day
- Wed.: cultural day (This is organized by Partner for Surgery and may be a different day.)
- Thu.: clinic day
- Fri.: clinic day
- Sat.: drive back to Antigua, free afternoon and update of supplies/meds inventory (if necessary). Farewell dinner, courtesy of Partner for Surgery.
- Sun.: early morning transfer to Guatemala City for flights home.

TEAM: 3 physicians, 1 nurse or non-medical volunteer to dispense medications and administer lab tests (some Spanish necessary for this position).

TRIP DESCRIPTION:

We work closely with our affiliate, Partner for Surgery (PfS). PfS does all the local ground logistics and HANDS provides a small group of 5 people to run the clinics. PfS uses local "promotores" (advocates) to advertise, promote and run the clinics. The entire PfS staff are a most important link between the local people and our team.

The clinics are set up in outlying rural areas, where the focus is to find patients who need surgery, then schedule them for the next HANDS surgical team or other volunteer surgical teams. On some trips we may see a total of 300 patients during the four one-day clinics, and on other occasions 800 patients may turn up. Local Guatemalan nurses do preliminary screening of all patients and assess who needs to be seen by the doctors.

Occasionally we perform minor surgical procedures such as removal of cysts or lipomas under local anesthetic.

We bring a small pharmacy with us and try to help patients who come to us with bladder infections, wound dressings, vitamin deficiencies, skin rashes, etc. We purchase most of our

meds from a central depot in Montreal, but we may require medical staff to help in obtaining some items if they can.

We work at a different clinic each day, and the days can be long. Transport to the rural locations is in the PfS minibus, and the team size will vary depending on how much room is available and the requirements of the particular area. On some trips we are based in one location and travel ½ hour to 2 hours to the clinics. On other trips we move from place to place for our lodging. Clinics can be in health centres, where facilities may be quite comfortable, or they may be in church halls or schools, where we provide cubicles for doctors by hanging up sheets. Sometimes there is electricity and running water in these locations; sometimes there is not.

Accommodation is organized by PfS. In Antigua it's comfortable, with en suite bathrooms and hot showers. PfS does their best to find suitable lodgings in outlying rural areas, but often there is little choice. The hotels are basic, though the rooms usually have their own bathrooms, albeit with simple showers that may or may not be hot. Rooms are usually singles, but in some instances it may be necessary to share accommodations.

Meals are also organized by PfS. Breakfast and dinners are likely to be in the hotel or a suitable local restaurant, and lunches are usually sandwiches. Lunch and dinner on the first Saturday in Antigua are not covered in the participation fee, although PfS often hosts a welcome dinner. On the last Saturday, PfS also hosts a farewell dinner.

ABOUT OUR PATIENTS:

The Guatemalans are gentle, modest people, and history has dealt them a very bad hand. Many of our patients are Mayans, who make up half of the population, and continue to be marginalized. Most live below the poverty line in rural communities, where they rarely have running water or electricity, and live in what can only be described as shacks. They often have little education (especially women), no access to healthcare, and are extremely naïve about health and hygiene. Since many Mayans do not speak Spanish, there is often a three way translation process.

PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS:

- All volunteers must submit an application and purchase travel insurance with medical evacuation coverage.
- Medical personnel must provide a copy of current professional registration. First time medical volunteers must provide a short CV. The CV is not required for returning medical volunteers.
- Participants need to be comfortable working in rural areas, where conditions are likely to be basic. They need to be flexible and able to take things as they come. Medical staff will be working with non medical people who are very willing and hard working, but may not have experience in what they are doing, and thus may need explanation. Everyone is required to do what is necessary on a trip and to work as a team. Work days may be long, and food and accommodation will likely be simple while in the

rural communities.

COSTS (in Canadian dollars):

- Flight: CA\$1100 (budget figure for a flight from Vancouver)
- Ground package: CA/US\$830 per person. The ground package **includes** accommodations, breakfasts in Antigua, meals while in rural areas, airport pickup/drop off (if traveling with the group) and local transport. The ground package **does not include** lunches in Antigua, airport pickup/drop off if not arriving/leaving with the group, spending money, travel insurance with medical evacuation.

Note: HANDS is a registered Canadian charity and can issue tax receipts to Canadian participants for the total cost of the trip. U.S. citizens can process their payments through PFS in order to obtain a tax deduction.

TRAVEL:

- 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.
- HANDS books flights for those traveling to and from Vancouver on the trip dates. If you plan to extend your travel plans or are traveling from a different location, you will need to book your own flights. If your flights coordinate with the main team itinerary, it may be possible to include you in the group airport transfers. If this is not possible you will need to arrange the transfers yourself and meet the group at the hotel in Antigua. If this is necessary we will provide you with the details of our local travel agent, who can book a taxi for you – about \$30US.
- If you are extending your stay in Guatemala and would like assistance, our local Guatemalan travel agent can make arrangements by email or once you arrive in Antigua.

REGISTRATION: The registration form is available online at www.projecthands.org. Click on Trips, then select your trip dates. Please note that your place is not secure until we receive your completed registration form, deposit and all required paperwork.

PRE-TRIP FAMILIARIZATION: It is our aim for team members to be familiar with what to expect on a trip, however, each location and facility is different. We provide what information we can, and the Team Handbook is available online to help you in preparing for the trip. Go to www.projecthands.org. Click on Trips then select your trip dates. If necessary, an Addendum to the Handbook will be sent to you closer to departure. We try to arrange a time when participants can meet each other, receive information and ask questions, however this is not always possible if volunteers do not live in the Vancouver area.

Working in Guatemala is a wonderful experience, and we hope that you will find it as rewarding and interesting 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. If after reading this package you have any 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. If we have missed anything, please let us know and we will do our best to answer your questions.

If you would like to participate in this trip, please let us know as soon as possible, as the team fills up quickly and we would hate for you to be disappointed. If these trip dates do not work for you but you are interested in volunteering in the future, please look for announcements about upcoming trips.

Best regards,

Debbie Jefkin-Elnkave
Recruiting Officer
debbie@projecthands.org
808-214-6053 (Hawaiian Standard Time)