



South America Mission

REDEEMED LIVES | BEAUTIFUL CHURCHES | TRANSFORMED COMMUNITIES

Volunteer Handbook

We activate youth through faith connections!



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We envision **local churches** and Christian neighbors empowered to become true agents of **transformation** in their communities, by restoring and weaving the **social fabric**.

Currently, we walk towards that vision by **activating** young people through **faith connections**.

Our Vision & Mission



Dear Partner in the Gospel,

You may be a response to our prayers; and then again, we may be a response to yours. In fact, we may have been praying for the same thing all along: opportunities to participate in building and experiencing the Kingdom of God in South America. We are so glad that your search has brought you here!

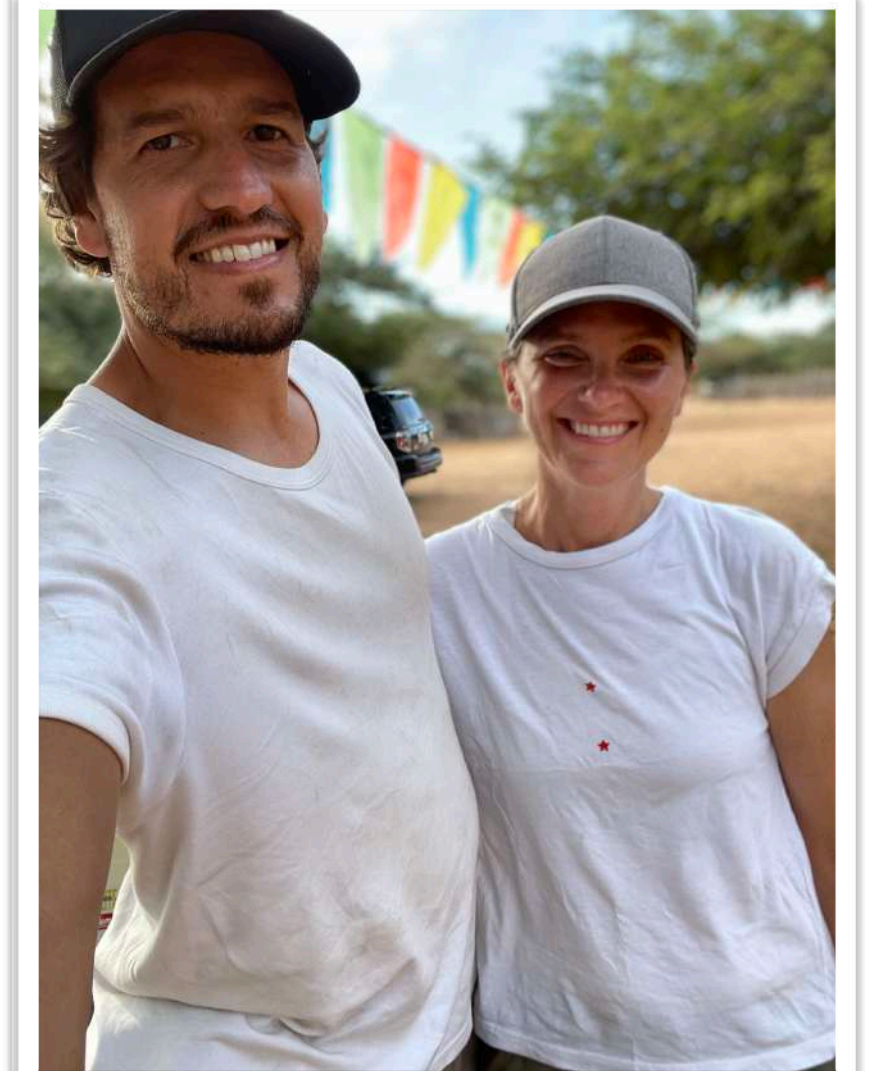
As an organization with a vision to create Christ-oriented change in Colombia (a country going through an exciting transition to peace after decades of armed conflict), we are constantly looking for the local body of Christ to tag along and play its part: being an agent of social and spiritual transformation.

As you browse our website and read through the documents, please keep a prayerful and open mindset. Allow room for the surprise factor and let yourself be challenged to join our organic yet powerful way of displaying His Kingdom. No amount of information will substitute for how God can use your hands and feet in this land.

Let's weave some hope together!

Jorge & Ginny Enciso
Founders

Hello!



Viva Youth Story



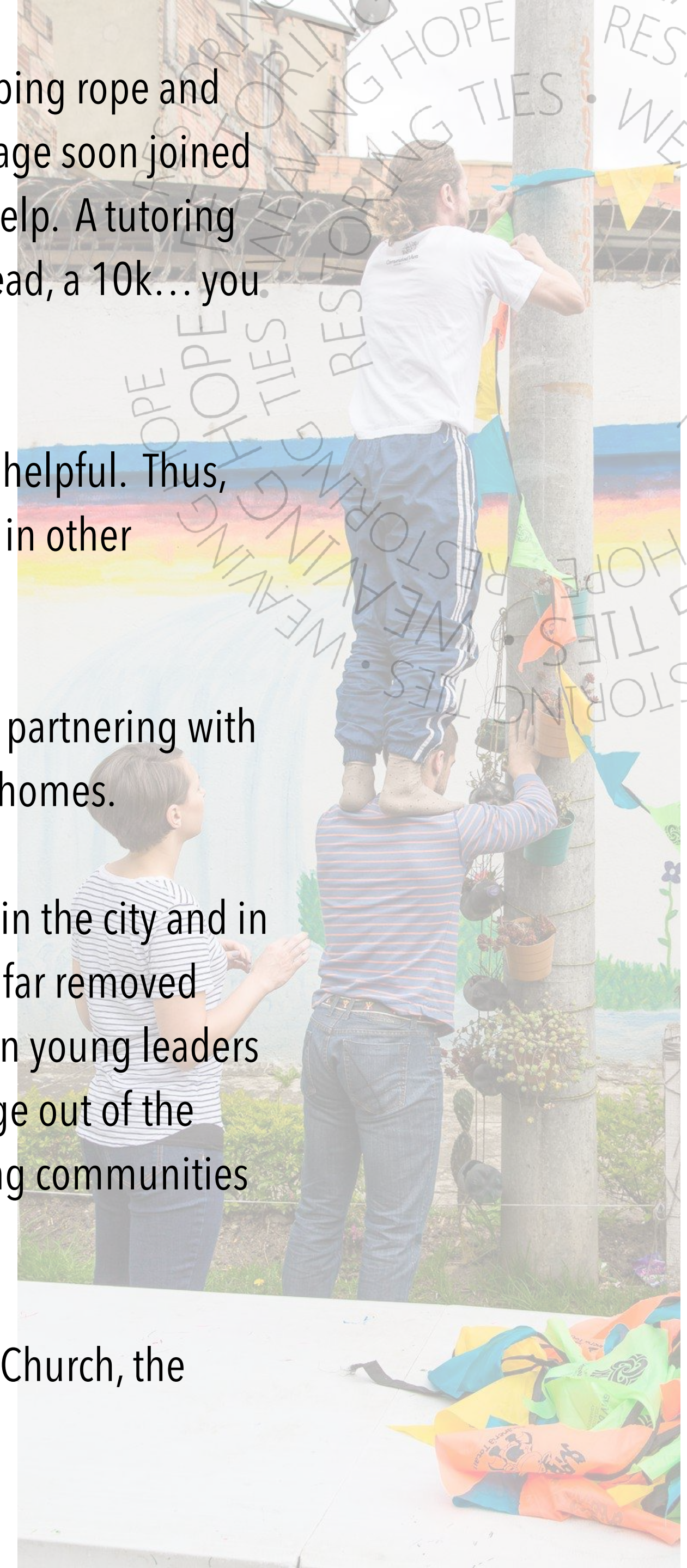
Viva Youth started germinating organically in 2008 as a bunch of kids jumping rope and playing Jenga and Ping Pong at the Encisos house. A neighboring orphanage soon joined in the fun. Then, members of a local church asked if they could be of any help. A tutoring program here, a community newspaper there, lots of hot chocolate and bread, a 10k... you know the drill. The miracle of transformation around the life of Jesus.

By 2011 it became evident that a legal framework for all this fun would be helpful. Thus, Viva Youth became a nonprofit with a clear mission to replicate the miracle in other communities, always working with local churches.

As God kept opening doors in places where there was not the possibility of partnering with a church, Ciudad Corazón was born—a movement of churches that meet in homes.

Today Viva Youth, in a strategic alliance with South America Mission, works in the city and in the fields; we discover and transform safe spaces in communities, travel to far removed locations with creative ideas for those seeking to teach about Jesus, we train young leaders to be salt and light, and (remember the orphans?) we care for those who age out of the foster care system. All of this in the context of partnering with or developing communities of faith, *ecclesias*.

We value creativity, relationships, the authority of Scripture, the role of the Church, the power of Jesus. By God's grace, we will keep reaping His fruit.



Colombia is located in the northwestern corner of South America with coastal regions along the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. It has a diverse geography: from the coastal beaches to the Andes mountains that run through the western interior of the country. The eastern regions of Colombia include the *Llanos* (plains) and the Amazon rainforest region it shares with Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, and Ecuador.

Colombia is ethnically diverse; rooted in the rich historical ancestry of the indigenous people groups, Spanish imperial influences, and African culture along the coasts. Spanish is the primary language, however there are approximately 70 languages spoken among the original people groups throughout the country.

Before the arrival of Europeans, Colombia was inhabited by original people groups. When the Spanish conquerors arrived in 1499, they brought with them their language, religion, and other cultural influences from the Iberian Peninsula. Colombia was part of the Spanish empire until 1819, but the Republic of Colombia wasn't established until 1886.

Colombia



It wasn't till 1991—when a student movement pushed for a new Constitution—that freedom of creed was legally established in a country that had been officially Catholic. Multiflavor Evangelical churches sprouted throughout the land, reaping the fruit of the trail blazed for decades by brave missionaries. But official religion had not been the only entrenched paradigm: also an internal conflict between leftist guerrillas and the government had been brewing in the thick soup of the drug wars. As a result, Colombia claimed for many years the second place in displaced population, preceded only by Sudan.


The Evangelical church paid a toll in this conflict with the lives of many pastors and missionaries, both local and foreign. In some regions, where the State could not make presence, courageous missionaries remained faithful notwithstanding the risk to their lives.

In 2013 the Government initiated dialogues with the main guerrilla movement—FARC—and in 2016 a peace agreement was signed, at the same time that a negotiation started with the second largest guerrilla group—ELN (ongoing to this day). The challenges for peace building are great, but Colombians are a resilient people.



Colombia



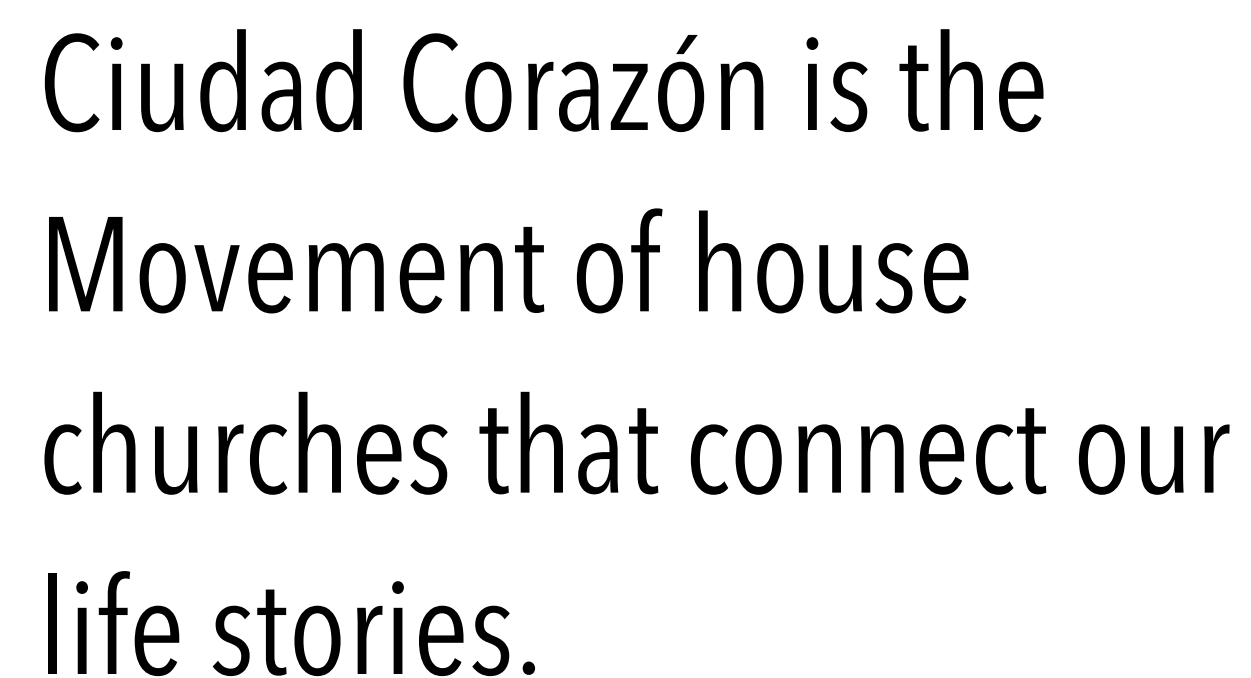
- Volunteers relate to host culture in a horizontal—not vertical—way: everybody gives love, everybody receives love. Love & be-loved!
 - Volunteer projects are based on a sincere desire to improve society at all levels, not as bait to get people to sign off to a religion.
 - Core beliefs are to be shared influentially; cultural practices are to be shared colloquially, without imposing.
 - Volunteer teams:
 - **Push us** to go further, faster, by running alongside us and encouraging us.
 - **Empower us** by providing us the right *gear* to run better.
 - **Connect us** to other people and communities of faith that are running the same race.
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Our service philosophy

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All our projects are
intrinsically woven with our
Christian faith, which finds
an important part of its
expression in the local
church.



Faith Connection





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RELATIONAL URBAN



SuperVacas: Our signature Vacation Bible School for unchurched kids from low-income neighborhoods is one of our most effective discipleship tools, specially for those who serve as volunteers.

RELATIONAL RURAL



Conexión Wayuu: A leadership training program and intercultural exchange with indigenous youth from the Wayuu people group.



Spiritual Retreat: Help us with a kids program for our annual spiritual retreat. Let the children come to you!



SuperVacas: Our signature Vacation Bible School for unchurched kids from low-income rural backgrounds is one of our most effective discipleship tools, specially for those who serve as volunteers.

PHYSICAL SERVICE URBAN

Construction: Our Resource Center is an old school with lots of work to be done. Or sometimes we just bless a *Person of Peace* that is being salt and light in their neighborhood. These projects—which help us advance greatly—are virtually impossible without the support of foreign teams and their human and financial muscle.





Construction: In post-conflict Colombia, reconstruction of the farmland is key to our reconciliation process. Volunteers can help!



PHYSICAL
SERVICE
RURAL

Medical/Dental: We take advantage of the crowds that some of our programs attract to also serve essential medical and dental needs when a foreign team has the ability to provide the resources.



	RELATIONAL URBAN	RELATIONAL RURAL	PHYSICAL SERVICE URBAN	PHYSICAL SERVICE RURAL
WHEN	Holy Week (late March to early April), Summer vacation (mid-June to mid-July), fall break (mid-October), winter break (late November to early December)	Holy Week (late March to early April), Summer vacation (mid-June to mid-July); Fall break (mid-October); Winter break (late November to early December).	Any time of the year, except January.	Any time of the year, except January.
WHERE	Bogotá, Valledupar (hot savannah) Medellín (paradise city)	Guajira (desert).	Bogotá	Guajira (desert).
WHO	Ideal number is 7, but up to 12 people are manageable. Families (with children ages 5 and up), youth groups, or children-focused groups. For larger groups, contact staff.	Ideal number is 7, but up to 12 people are manageable. Families (with children ages 5 and up), youth groups, or children-focused groups. For larger groups, contact staff.	8 to 12 people. For larger groups, contact staff.	8 to 12 people. For larger groups, contact staff.

Opportunity Matrix

Pre-Traveling

General Info

Weather
Altitude
Wi-Fi
Communications
Money

Travel Docs

To bring to Colombia
To leave in the US

Packing List

Health Prep

Vaccinations
Precautions
Special diet
Emergencies

Travel Process

Logistics

Airport pick up
Customs
Safety

In-Country Info

Safety

Host contact
Staying safe
Storage

Transportation & Lodging

Moving around
Distances
Local transportation
Walking

Food & Drink

Water
Meals
Schedules
Food Hygiene

Cultural Sensitivity

View of foreigners
Christ-likeness
Greetings
Cultural assumptions
Etiquette

Trip Prep



Pre-Traveling

General Info

What is the weather like?

Bogota (urban): The city is very temperate with average temperatures of 57°F during the day and 41°F at night. On average, temperatures in Bogota remain stable throughout the year. Because of the high elevation (8661 feet above sea level) and proximity to the equator, the sun is much stronger than most North Americans would expect. You will probably be wearing a light jacket and scarf, but bring sun protection. Prepare for rain also, as some seasons bring light rain daily.

(Medellín (urban): The second city in Colombia, is known as the *city of eternal spring*. Mic drop.

Valledupar (urban): Very hot and humid year round; small city.

Guajira (rural): La Guajira is in a desert region with average daily high temperatures around 92°F with lots of sunshine. This area is very exposed to sun and wind, and groups serving in this region will need to pack accordingly! There is a separate packing list below with suggestions for clothing in this region.

Will the altitude in Bogota affect me?

Yes; effects may be more severe for some people, but almost everyone will experience some kind of adjustment to the altitude. In the first few days, take it easy with your exercise and walking pace. You may feel light-headed or dizzy after walking long distances. Stay hydrated!

Will there be WiFi?

Urban: yes. Rural areas: no.

The Foundation headquarters in Bogota has WiFi, as do the AirBnB apartments in which you will stay. Rural areas do not have WiFi access.

How do I communicate with people back home?

If your US cell phone provider does not offer roaming service, our staff will have phones available with enough data (if there is coverage in the area where we are).

Trip Prep

Pre-Traveling

General Info

How do I get the local currency?

The Colombian Peso is the local currency and uses the same symbol as the U.S. Dollar (USD): \$. The exchange rate is roughly 4,400 pesos (COP) to 1 USD. For reference, a typical lunch in Bogota will cost \$15,000 COP, which is approximately \$4 USD.

To get COP, visit an ATM in Colombia. You may also order COP through your bank in the U.S. or exchange USD at the baggage claim in the Bogota airport upon arrival. Most U.S. airport currency kiosks will not have COP available for exchange.

Can I use my credit card?

Bogota: yes. Rural areas: no.

In Bogota, many stores and restaurants will accept credit cards (including the main market downtown).

Notify your U.S. bank and credit card company that you will be traveling internationally.

In rural areas, use COP.

Travel Docs

What documentation do I need to travel?

U.S. passport

Vaccination documentation (including Covid as of 02/2023)

U.S. driver's license

Insurance cards: regular and travel

Make three copies of all documentation: one for family in the U.S., one for your carry-on bag, one for your checked bag. Your passport will need to remain valid for six months after your return to the U.S.

What information should I give my family back home?

one copy of all travel documents

flight information

travel itinerary

address of the Foundation

in-country phone number (if possible)

Trip Prep

Pre-Traveling Packing List

GROOMING

- shampoo
- conditioner
- soap, body wash
- face wash
- toothbrush
- toothpaste
- contact lenses, solution, case
- razor
- hairdryer
- hairbrush
- hair products: pins, gel, bands
- makeup
- medicines
- sunscreen
- lip balm
- insect repellent (rural areas)

PERSONAL

- Bible
- journal
- pen, pencil
- cell phone, charger
- umbrella
- credit card
- cash (USD, COP)
- backpack, purse
- water bottle (reusable)
- small first-aid kit

- *also see
- "Travel Documentation"
- section

CLOTHING (one-week trip)

- Bogota, Medellín*
- 2 to 3 pairs of jeans
 - sweaters, cardigans
 - casual short-sleeve tops
 - 1 to 2 light scarves
 - light jacket, rain jacket
 - shirt, pants for gardening, painting
 - underwear
 - socks
 - walking shoes (for hills, cobblestones, and rain)
 - pajamas

- Guajira, Valledupar*
- long pants, skirts, shorts
 - thick-strap tank top shirts
 - shirts, pants for gardening, painting
 - light sweater
 - light shawl for shoulders
 - hat
 - sandals (example: Chacos)

Trip Prep

Pre-Traveling Health Prep

What vaccinations do I need?

Depending on the location and current alerts, you may need: Typhoid; Flu; Hepatitis A; Tetanus. Most likely you won't need any of these.

A U.S. primary physician may have access to these medicines or you can visit a travel clinic, such as Passport Health. Check the Center for Disease Control and Prevention website for health recommendations when traveling.

What health precautions should I take?

Bring general, over-the-counter medicines like ibuprofen, anti-diarrheal and anti-gas remedies, motion sickness medicine, and a basic first-aid kit.

High-DEET Insect Repellent Recommendation: Sawyer, UltraThon

Anti-Diarrheal Recommendation: DiaRescue, Cipro

What if I have allergies or dietary restrictions?

Alert your team leader so they can communicate this with the staff at the Foundation. You will also want to alert the airline you are using before your flight by phone and again when entering the plane.

While in Colombia, you may have food prepared for you or you may eat at restaurants so be prepared to communicate with your hosts to ensure everyone's safety and comfort.

What if I get sick in Colombia?

There are very good hospitals in the cities. If an emergency occurs, you will be accompanied to the hospital by a Foundation staff member. A staff member will stay with you to ensure that you receive proper care and to facilitate communication with the medical staff.

The Foundation does not require travelers to purchase travel health insurance, but some teams may.

Trip Prep

Travel Process

Logistics

Will someone meet my team at the Bogota airport? How do I find this individual?

Someone (picture provided) who speaks English will meet your group at the Bogota airport with a vehicle to take you to your lodging. The baggage claim area has a large window in the front which the individual meeting you will be standing behind. Be sure to locate and make eye contact before proceeding through customs.

How does migration work?

Every person will need to go online and fill out a form that our Migration office is requiring (link provided).

The immigration pre-enrollment can be done 72 hours before the flight and up to one hour before the flight closes.

When you finish filling out the form, you will receive an email. You will need to show that email at the counter. No need to print it, you can just show it on your phone.

When leaving Colombia, you'll have to do the same procedure.

At the airport, you will first check your passport and obtain a tourist visa. Keep your answers simple as to why you are traveling here: either "visiting friends" or "tourism." You will then proceed through baggage claim.

How do I ensure the safety of my team at the airport?

Keep your luggage by or on you at all times. When walking out of the airport, there may be people not from our community who offer to assist you with your luggage wherein it is important to say, "No, gracias," and keep walking.

Trip Prep

In-Country Info

Safety

How will my team communicate with the Foundation staff?

There will be a member of the staff with your team at all times. In addition, all team leaders will be given a pre-paid phone that works in-country, should you need to contact a staff member.

What are some important tips to ensure my team's safety while engaging with the community?

Stay with your group. Do not travel alone or without someone who is local to the area, even if it is close-by.

Your language and accents will stick out. When in public, keep your voices low and avoid drawing additional attention to yourselves.

Keep your bookbag, purse, and personal items in front of you and a hand on them when in a populated or public area.

Carry minimal things with you in the city. Leave credit cards or other documents stored at your lodging and carry a photocopy of your passport.

Only have your cell phone out when someone from the Foundation says it's okay.

Store money in various places, especially when carrying it on you.

Walk confidently. Always appear to know where you are and what you are doing (even if you don't).

Is there a safe place for my team to store personal items?

Money and valuable items may be kept in your lodging. It is important to find a safe place for your passport. If you do not feel comfortable storing these items at the place you are staying, they can be stored at the Foundation.

Trip Prep

In-Country Info

Transportation & Lodging

How will we travel in-country?

local public transportation (Transmilenio, commuter buses)

walking

personal transportation (the Foundation has a Honda Pilot for use, or will rent vans)

How far will we travel to our various destinations?

For urban trips, most of your time will be spent at or near the Foundation's office. This will be within walking distance from your lodging. The various barrios (burroughs) you visit are typically a 30-minute to one-hour bus or car ride. All group members *must* travel with a Foundation staff member.

What should we know about using local transportation?

The Transmilenio travels throughout the city and utilizes many connecting commuter buses to specific barrios (burroughs). Many staff members understand or speak English and will explain to you how to use the transportation. It is always best to look confident and be alert at all times, keeping your personal items in front of you.

For how much walking should my team prepare?

Walking is one of the primary methods of transportation in Bogota. There will be days you walk more than ten miles on streets high in elevation, which can be strenuous. There will also be days where walking is minimal, as the Foundation office is located close to your lodging. In rural settings there may be more walking involved with alternatives of motor transportation.

Trip Prep

In-Country Info

Food & Drink

Can I drink the water?

It is recommended to drink only bottled water in Colombia. In Bogota, you may brush your teeth with tap water but drinking water from the tap may cause sickness to foreigners (although Bogotanos drink it). In rural areas, only use bottled water.

What will our team eat?

Meals will consist of a mixture of eating out and homemade from items bought from the local grocery store. Lunch is typically the heaviest meal of the day; dinner is lighter. Bread, coffee, sugar, cheese, rice, beans, corn, meat, and potatoes are popular.

What is our eating schedule?

Breakfast can be prepared by team at AirBnB or be consumed at local *panadería* (*breadstore*). Lunch is served between 1:00 and 2:00 p.m. and is the main meal of the day. Coffee and a light snack is usually provided as a treat in the afternoons, followed by a light dinner around 7:00 p.m. Depending on project, some teams may be asked to prepare a brown bag lunch.

Are there dietary considerations to protect my team from food-borne illnesses?

When preparing food for visitors, we make sure that we use filtered water and wash all fruits and vegetables. When eating out, we will choose restaurants we know are clean and have healthy food. Be cautious to seek guidance from your hosts when purchasing food outside of what has been provided or prepared for you.

Trip Prep

In-Country Info

Cultural Sensitivity

How are U.S. visitors viewed in Colombia?

For the most part, people from the U.S. are treated well in Colombia, and most Colombians will be friendly and helpful. You will stand out and that is okay. There might be people that want to talk to you, try to speak English with you, and ask you questions. This is good, as you can interact and build relationships.

How can my team communicate and express ourselves best in a way that reflects Jesus?

Colombians are typically very social and outgoing. They appreciate being listened to and treated with an attitude of mutual respect. The community values individuals working together and, therefore, ensuring your team works together to support the staff is important. During work sessions, it is important to remember that we are working but the time is also about eating, getting to know each other, and talking.

How do we greet one another?

It can vary in different situations and among different societal classes, but Colombians typically greet everyone with one kiss on the cheek when arriving and leaving a room,, although men typically greet one another with a handshake. Men don't kiss men and only kiss women after a first encounter (first introduction = handshake; after that, kiss in the cheek, more like a cheek to cheek than a direct hit). Expect to be asked several times how you are and how things are going.

Trip Prep

In-Country Info

Cultural Sensitivity

Are there cultural assumptions we should be prepared to encounter?

Time is managed differently in Latin America and Colombians tend to not stick to a linear schedule. Rather, they focus on the relationship aspect of any engagement. It is essential you take time to get to know the people in the community and in programs. It is not necessary to stick to a schedule. Part of this is cultural; the other part is the implications of traffic and weather conditions (when it rains, everything slows or stops). The more flexible your team is, the better experience it will have.

We are all Americans. It is courteous that you don't refer to yourselves as Americans, but as "estadounidenses", or more colloquially as "gringos". You should not say, "In America, we have..." but, "In the United States..." You may say, "Soy de los Estados Unidos," (I am from the United States), or "Soy estadounidense," (I am a United States-ian) if someone asks from where you are.

It can be considered rude to point to an individual. Colombians gesticulate with their lips or facial gestures.

Is there etiquette for which I need to prepare my team?

Do not flush toilet paper. Instead, a small trash can will be located next to the toilet in which you may dispose of used paper.

Trip Prep



In close cooperation with:



South America Mission

REDEEMED LIVES | BEAUTIFUL CHURCHES | TRANSFORMED COMMUNITIES