

# **The Emiliani Project Volunteer**

**Information Packet**

**Mission Trips**



## **About this Packet**

Congratulations on your decision to volunteer with The Emiliani Project! We are very excited to have you be part of our organization and to introduce you to our wonderful kids and project in Medellin.

This packet is designed to help you understand the mission work that you will be engaged in this upcoming year. It is important that you read this packet in its entirety. Once you have read it, and once you decide this trip is for you, you will need to do the following for us:

1. Return the signature page (last page of this section of the packet)
2. Return the background check application (to be provided after registration).
3. Return the foreign travel waiver (to be provided after registration).
4. Return the presentation and fundraising waiver (to be provided after registration).

Any questions not answered by this packet can be sent directly to: [charles.navarrete@emilianiproject.org](mailto:charles.navarrete@emilianiproject.org). Please note that in the interest of time, we may respond to your questions to the entire volunteer group as others will likely have the same questions.

Thank you and welcome aboard!

The Emiliani Project Team

## **Fundraising**

One of our primary objectives when starting The Emiliani Project was to ensure that we provided opportunities for good people like you to do good things. And so, here you are...good people using your own time and money to do good for others. However, there are costs involved in hosting these opportunities. Because The Emiliani Project commits 100% of donated money directly to the children and our building efforts, we are unable to use conventionally donated funds to support our volunteer trips. As such, for this trip we are asking that you undertake a special fund-raising effort to help us cover those costs.

For the 2022 trip, we are asking each volunteer to donate a total of \$500 per person. This money will be specially earmarked for the trip and will go to cover the trip expenses. Those expenses include your room, food, transportation to/from the airport, and transportation to/from planned volunteer activities. Any and all remaining donated funds earmarked for this trip and not used to cover the aforementioned costs will be given directly to the children's home.

You have many options for raising the donations. We recommend you reach out to people who love and support your initiative and desire to help others. To help, we have included in this packet a donor pledge form you can use to gather your donors' information so that we can send them all end of year tax information. Remember, all donations to The Emiliani Project are 100% tax deductible as we are a 501(c)(3) organization under the U.S. tax code.

## **About Medellin, Colombia**

We are not going to put a great deal of information on Medellin in this packet. We have a comprehensive Travel Guide to Medellin, Colombia on our website.

Please go to that page as it will answer most of your questions. Please keep in mind that the Medellin Travel Guide is not specific to your trip. It is a general guide to traveling to Medellin, Colombia. You'll receive specifics on your trip from the Emiliani staff throughout the Mission Trip planning process.

# About the Mission Trip

## **2022 Mission Trip Dates:**

Our two mission trips in 2022:

- July 9-17
- Nov 30-Dec 6

## **Organizations Involved**

1. **The Emiliani Project** - this is our U.S. charity, mostly responsible for fundraising and interfacing with mission volunteers. The Emiliani Project has five board members: Chuck Navarrete, Cristina Ramirez, Matt Monroe, Bryan Hunter and Brian Midtlyng. We also have special advisors to the board: Debbie Monroe, Elizabeth Hunter, Katie Midtlyng, Madison and Cooper Strand. All are volunteers.

2. **Fundacion Emiliani Colombia** - this is our Colombian charity. We established Emiliani Colombia in order to enter into legal contracting agreements in Colombia (building contractors, etc.) and for managing mission trips like yours. Emiliani Colombia does all of the work in Colombia. This charity has five board members: Chuck Navarrete, Matt Monroe, Cristina Ramirez, Cooper Strand Juan Pablo Botero. All are volunteers.

3. **Fundacion Gente Unida** - this is our charity partner in Medellin. Gente Unida is a Colombian organization run by Padre Jorge Villalobos under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Medellin. Gente Unida runs the Hogar Bohio de Maria in Bello and four schools for at-risk children throughout Medellin. We chose Gente Unida as a partner due to their long-standing work in Colombia (over 20 years) and solid reputation as an honest and extremely effective children's charity. The Emiliani Project/Fundacion Emiliani Colombia has a formal joint venture agreement with Gente Unida.

## **Volunteer Location:**

Hogar de Cristo - New Home Construction Volunteer

You will work at our construction site in Caldas, Colombia (30 mins south of Medellin) where we are in the process of building our new children's home. You will have beds, hot showers, a full kitchen, washing machine, etc. We have a building that we have completely renovated in order to accommodate volunteers. This volunteer site is for helping us in the construction of the new home. There will be construction underway while you are there. We will have children visit from our sister home, Gente Unida, for those who want to work with children.

## **Travel to Medellin**

Most of the information you need to travel to Medellin is located on our Travel Guide page on our website. However, here are a few additional thoughts/ideas that are specific to your trip.

### **Arrival in Medellin (MDE)**

When you touch down at Jose Maria Cordova International Airport, do the following:

- a. Go from the plane to "Inmigracion/Aduana" (Immigration/Customs)
- b. Go down the escalator to Immigration. They will ask you where you are staying, how long and what is your purpose of travel. We recommend you give them the hotel name of the staff in Medellin (this will be provided) as the home does not have an address that is recognizable to the agents. Give them the # of days you are there, and tell them you are a "Tourist". Do not say you are there to "work" as they will take that to mean you need a work visa.
- c. Proceed to baggage. Retrieve your checked bags.
- d. Walk over to the customs agent. They will ask you for your checked baggage ticket and sometimes how much money you are carrying. They will take your customs form (that you will receive on the plane), and then they may put your bags through a scanner.
- e. Proceed out of customs. Once you pass through the guarded double doors, you will likely see a swarm of people, many signs with names and many of whom trying to get you to ride in their private cars. One of our staff will be waiting for you.

### **Travel "Do's"**

- Do plan to check with your doctor prior to your trip to ask about recommended vaccinations for Colombia.
- Do call your bank and make sure they know you are using your credit/debit cards in Colombia.
- Do call your cell phone carrier to see if you have to have a specific plan for Colombia.
- Do bring a current/active passport (make sure it is valid at least 3 months in advance.).
- Do make a copy of your passport to carry on your person.
- Do bring an extra credit card in case one is lost or stolen...or canceled by the bank.
- Do know the international customer service numbers for your bank and cell phone company.
- Do arrive at the airport early. International flights normally start boarding 1 hour before departure.
- Do keep your checked luggage ticket (you will be asked to produce it)

- Do hold on to your boarding pass stub (you'll need the info for the customs form)
- Do check the monitors at foreign connecting airports for changes to your gate (happens much more frequently than in the U.S.)
- Do bring a washcloth if you need one.
- Do bring an umbrella if you don't like rain. This is a tropical environment.

### **Travel "Don'ts"**

- Don't bring overly expensive watches or jewelry.
- Don't bring more than \$10K USD (it's illegal)
- Don't bring more than 10 of any same item (or customs might charge you tax)
- Don't bring unmarked prescription medication
- Don't try to bring medications back from Colombia (prescribed medication in the U.S. is over the counter in Colombia)

## **Colombia Accommodations**

**Hogar de Cristo in Caldas.** We have a newly renovated house ready for you with everything you need - WiFi, washer/dryer, hot showers, new beds, complete kitchen, etc.

When you're working on the new home, you'll be living on the same property. It's bucolic and safe and the amenities are excellent. Also, it's VERY beautiful and quiet (save the construction during the day). You also cook for yourself. We provide the food, however, you choose what you want to eat. Staff members will be staying with you at the Caldas site.

## **Ground Transportation**

### **Airport Transportation**

Airport transportation is included in the mission trip. We will arrange transportation to/from where you are staying. The airport is about 30 minutes east of Medellin.

## **Communications**

### **Cell Phones**

We won't go into much detail on this. If you want the whole scoop on cell phone use in Colombia, go to the travel guide page. However, here are a couple of pieces of advice/thoughts:

1. Using your U.S. phone (with a U.S. carrier). We use our U.S. phones down there and have no problems. We've tried AT&T, Verizon and TMobile. With AT&T and Verizon you will have to call your cell provider before you leave and set up the service you want. With

TMobile it's easy. You don't have to do anything unless you want 4G service 100% of the time. TMobile simply works everywhere. With AT&T and Verizon you have to buy minutes, data and text packages, but it generally works fine once you do.

If you use your U.S. phone down there, just know that you will have to dial +57 before dialing local cell numbers. 57 is the country code for Colombia. If you want to dial a business or home phone number (landline), it's a bit trickier. Go to the travel page to learn how.

### **Internet**

Our site has WiFi, but data is limited, so you won't be able to stream movies, but you can make phone calls, check emails and the internet.

### **Good Apps for your phone.**

Whatsapp - great chat tools for international chatting. Please install this on your phone, as all of the Emiliani staff use it while in Colombia.

Google Translate - another great tool if you don't know Spanish.

### **Local Points of Contact information (add these to your contacts):**

- Chuck: 760-470-0425, [charles.navarrete@emilianiproject.org](mailto:charles.navarrete@emilianiproject.org)
- Cristina: 310-463-9523, [cristina.ramirez@emilianiproject.org](mailto:cristina.ramirez@emilianiproject.org)

Here are the best ways to get ahold of us:

1. **Whatsapp:** a messaging/phone calling app. It is free and instant. Download it to your phone and add us as contacts. If you need help downloading it, send one of us your phone number that you will be using and we'll send you an invitation with the download link. It works the same whether you use a U.S. phone number or a Colombian phone number. This is the best and most reliable method for communications there. You can reach all of us anytime on this app as we are on it all day.

2. **SMS text:** If you are using your U.S. phone, this is exactly the same as in the U.S. If you are using a Colombian phone number it will depend on the phone carrier. But, 90% of the time you either have to add "1" or "001" to the front of the number (e.g., 001 760 805 3042). If one doesn't work, try the other.

### **Power Outlets**

No adapters needed. Colombia has the same setup as the U.S.





## Frequently Asked Questions

- **Can we choose to come and go as we please?**

No. If you choose to do mission work with us, we ask that you adhere to the schedule. This is not designed to be a vacation. However, if you want to see the sites, please arrive a few days early or stay a few days after.

- **When should I book airfare?**

After you register with us as going, please do it soon. Other people traveling to Colombia will book early so flight availability gets low quickly.

- **Should I bring stuff for the kids?**

If you want to bring stuff, feel free. But, here are a couple of tips:

1. There are 70 kids at the Hogar (ages 0-18).
2. Customs in Colombia is tough. If you have multiple of any items (say you bring gifts, or used clothes) they may assume you are bringing them to sell. So, they are allowed by law to tax you. If you bring stuff, be prepared. Also, this might delay you at the airport...no telling how long. There are always agents there and they will be looking for people bringing in commercial items. If you do bring something, please just be honest. You don't want anyone to catch you "fibbing" on a customs form.
3. Just an FYI, we never bring things into the country. When we bring the kids gifts, we buy them there. That is easier for us because it supports the local economy. If you wish to purchase something for the kids while you are there, just let us know so we can make arrangements.

- **Why should I not worry about gifts for the kids?**

First, they are going to be excited to see you with or without gifts. Second, we are going to have multiple things planned for them. They are going to have a great time without any individual gifts.

- **Where do we get Colombian Pesos?**

Unless you leave either of the homes, you won't really need them. However, there are ATMs at the airport when you arrive. Exchange rates from best to worst:

1. ATM
2. Money Exchange store in Medellin
3. Your bank before you leave
4. A hotel
5. Airport

- **Can we drink the water?**

Yes, but we do not recommend it. Bottled water will be provided for your trip.

- **Where is Hogar de Cristo?**

Hogar de Cristo GPS coordinates: 6.015882, -75.618398.

Just type into Google Maps.

- **Can I stay longer if I wish to see the sights?**

Yes but the staff of The Emiliani Project will leave at the conclusion of the trip and will not be available to help you.

- **Do I have to speak Spanish?**

No. The children do not speak English, but half the fun will be letting them teach you Spanish. By the time you leave, you'll be surprised how much you'll learn! We should mention that outside the home, few Colombians speak English...including taxi drivers. If you plan to leave on your own, you'd be wise to learn some key phrases and carry Google translate in your pocket.

- **Can I donate more money or to the home directly?**

Yes. The Emiliani Project is extremely grateful for any additional donations you are able to raise or wish to donate on your own. If you wish to donate directly to the children's home, simply either include the additional donation as part of your mission trip fundraising (remember, excess goes to the children's home) or speak to one of our staff. Please do not hand money directly to anyone at the home. Any donation to the home that you give will be handled via a deposit to the home's operating account. We can provide you the receipt along with notification to the home of your personal generosity. NOTE: donations to the home directly are not tax deductible as it is a Colombian entity outside the domain of the U.S. If you donate to The Emiliani Project beforehand, you'll get the tax deduction.

- **Can I bring prescription medication?**

Yes, just be sure that it is in the prescribed medication bottle and labeled appropriately.

- **Can I buy prescription medication in Medellin?**

Not recommended. If you need medication for your health, we recommend that you bring the type and quantity you need with you in appropriately marked prescription bottles.

- **Anything special I should pack?**

We've put together a list of recommended things to bring. Nothing on here is vital, but it's a few good ideas from past experience and volunteer input. It may help you remember to bring things that you may not have considered. Generally speaking it will be warm, but it does rain frequently as it's a tropical environment.

- Personal Hand Towel - Bath towels are provided.
- Wash Rag
- Bug Spray - with DEET. DEET is illegal in CO so their bug spray doesn't work.
- Afterbite
- Flip Flops - good for around the shower/sleeping area.
- Rain Jacket - it rains everyday in Caldas.
- Hand Sanitizer - some will be provided but in case you want your own.
- First Aid - We will have a first aid kit at the home. However, it is always good to have a few things of your own. Suggestions: Pepto Bismol, Aspirin/Tylenol, Sudafed, Imodium, and personal Antibiotics. NOTE: if you bring prescription medications, be sure to bring the original prescription bottle with them.
- Water Bottle - for refilling. We normally have large jugs of water for you.
- Phone Charger - plugs are the same as the U.S.
- Notebook
- Shampoo/Conditioner/Bodywash - we provide some, but you may want your own.
- Lotion - good for sunburns. You're near the equator!
- Sunglasses
- Toothbrush/Toothpaste
- Shorts
- Work Clothes
- Hiking Boots
- Knee Pads (for construction work)
- Work Gloves

## **Administration**

You will need to do the following before working with us in Colombia:

1. Sign and return the signature page (last page of this packet)
2. Sign and return the foreign travel waiver (to be provided after registration).

Please reference the State Department and/or CDC travel information for Colombia. You can go to their websites, but those reports have also been included with this packet. We

want you to be informed by those who are in the business of informing you about international travel.

## **Signature Page**

I have read the Emiliani Volunteer packet in its entirety and agree to all of the rules and provisions outlined therein; and I have reviewed the Emiliani online Travel Guide located at [www.emilianiproject.org/medellin-travel-guide](http://www.emilianiproject.org/medellin-travel-guide).

---

Signature

Date

