

Vineyard Ministries Central Mexico: *Mazatlan, Mexico* (updated Nov. 17, 2022)

Mission Team Information Packet

Mission teams from the United States and Canada provide irreplaceable encouragement and support for Vineyard Ministries Central Mexico. A mission trip to Mazatlan is a unique opportunity to serve God and take part in His work among the poor of western Mexico. There is a growing hunger for the truth of the Gospel and the gift of salvation among the people here. At the same time, the physical and material needs of the poor in Mazatlan are tremendous. God is bringing salvation, healing, and hope to this city. We would love for you to see and share in His work. Because Mazatlan is located on Mexico's west coast, there is also ample opportunity to enjoy God's creation: sunshine, sandy beaches, and the Pacific Ocean.

Before you come to Mazatlan, please carefully review all the information provided in this packet personally and with all of your team members. At the end of this is an important form which you need to fill out and return to VMCM via email.

Our Goals

Our primary goals for short term mission teams are:

1. To make the visiting team effective in their outreach.
2. To give the visiting team a positive missions experience.
3. To bless the poor.
4. To bless the church.
5. To facilitate fellowship between team members and the Mexican Christians.

You will see these goals reflected throughout this document, in our organization, planning, ideals, and outreach opportunities.

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To Schedule a Short Term Mission trip, email your possible dates to missionsteam@vineyardmcm.org. We will check availability and put your team on the official calendar. Please be aware that the following dates are blackout dates and we can not accept teams during these dates; Carnival, Holy Week(Palm Sunday to Easter) and Christmas week(Dec. 24th, 25th, 26th). We apologize for any inconvenience.

Typical Outreach Day

At the start of the day, teams leave their hotel and walk five minutes to the church. After praying, Vineyard staff serve a generous buffet-style breakfast. Depending on the day's activities, breakfast will begin between 8:00 and 8:30am. Teams are welcome to come earlier for team devotions or prayer time. Church staff join the teams for breakfast, providing a good opportunity for team members to get to know members of our team. Teams are encouraged to greet staff, which is a great chance to brush up on Spanish skills.

After breakfast, the team and staff load up La Viña's vans or buses. On the way out to the colonias, we stop at Mazatlan's Sam's Club to buy food and other necessities for the day's outreach. Usually, we arrive at the colonia around 10:30, depending on how far away the colonia is from the tourist area. There are several different outreach options or combinations of options that may happen on a given day. Teams may distribute groceries or bags of clothing or toys to needy families. Medical and dental teams may set up a clinic in the local colonia church. Teams may use the mobile kitchen to provide a hot meal. If the team has prepared dramas, puppet shows, Sunday school lessons or activities for children, worship, testimonies, or preaching for adults, we will invite the colonia to a service for these activities. Team members may go to a home to pray for an injured individual. If a team would prefer to do construction, some team members may pour concrete, paint, or other physical activities.

Distribution of food bags, groceries, or toys

Any time that a large number of items are given away to needy people, chaos can happen. In order to ensure equitable, orderly distribution of goods, we use a ticket system that allows both those serving and those being served to feel blessed. We do ask that no toys, clothes, food, or money are distributed apart from VMCM organized distributions, as these can cause jealousies and mob like behavior.

The bags will be prepared ahead of time. Toy and clothes bags will be prepared by the team in the donation room prior to leaving the church. If we plan to distribute food bags, we will purchase sufficient beans, rice, cooking oil, sugar, soap, detergent, etc. to supply about 100 needy families. Team members then bag up the food in Sam's parking lot. Tickets will be made ahead of time corresponding to the number of bags we have prepared: 100 tickets for every 100 bags of groceries, etc.

When we arrive in the colonia, the team will be split into groups of 3-5 with a translator and given tickets to distribute. Each group will hand out tickets at homes in the colonia, beginning with those nearest to the distribution site. Each home receives one ticket, and tickets are only given to adults. During this time, if the group encounters a home with a sick or injured person, groups are encouraged to pray for the person and the home. When giving tickets, the group will tell the person when and where to redeem the ticket, for example: 11:30 by the large tree, or 12:00 at the Vineyard colonia church.

Residents of the colonia return with their tickets and gather around the bus where the bags are stored. As we wait to begin distributing food from the van, team members talk with the people who've gathered. The outreaches also attract a large number of children, all of whom love to play games (especially soccer) and interact with the team. The team can also pray for any of the people who have a need. At this time, other team members may serve lunch from the mobile kitchen or may entertain the children using the mobile Sunday school. Teams may perform

Christ centered dramas or give personal testimonies. All of these activities can work together on one outreach day.

When bag distribution is ready to begin, the adults with tickets form lines. A member of the church staff announces our purpose for coming, to share food as well as the love of Jesus Christ, and prays over the people. When all those with tickets have received their bags, ideally no left over bags remain. However, after an hour or so if no one has claimed the few remaining bags, extras are divided among any other adults who have come.

Medical and dental clinics

Teams whose members include dental and/or medical professionals may have the opportunity to hold dental or medical outreaches in the colonias. Such outreaches can also be coordinated with food distribution. Because the church does not have a medical doctor on staff, medical supplies must be supplied by the team members. This can be done by bringing medications or money to purchase them in Mazatlan. Make sure that VMCM knows you are bringing a doctor or dentist before you come to ensure that we use your team the most effective way possible. We can send you a list of the medicines you will most often need before you leave.

Construction teams

Often we need some help with various physical projects. The projects are highly varied, from painting to pouring concrete, and may or may not be available depending on when your team comes. If you would like to do some physical labor, make sure to let us know how many people from your team are interested, and their specific skills, for example: 2 carpenters, 1 painter, and 3 other people who are handy but not professionals.

Lunch options

Often teams will return to the church to eat a generous lunch made by VMCM staff. The team may even have some time in the afternoon to hit the beach with VMCM boogie boards or take a nap before going on an evening outreach. Other times, the team may do outreach all day in the same place and VMCM will bring the food to the team. Sometimes when teams use the mobile kitchen, they eat the same food they are serving to the people. If this is the case, team members are in charge of making sure they eat. If a person gets too busy doing outreach and comes to the kitchen to grab a hamburger too late, there might not be any left! We recommend bringing along some granola bars or other quick snacks, especially for teenagers, as lunch times will probably be later than you are used to.

Using the mobile kitchen

When taking out the mobile kitchen, it is best to designate a team of 6-8 people to work inside it. These workers do everything from preparing the food to serving the food. After breakfast at the main church, usually it takes the missionaries a little time to get things prepared for the team to leave. If your team designates one leader to be in charge of mobile kitchen preparation, we will give him or her a list of all the things that should be clean and ready to go in the kitchen before we leave, which can help us leave for the outreach sooner.

In the colonia, usually assume that it will take 1-2 hours to prepare the food when going around inviting people to eat. Once the food is prepared, the children line up first, with adults behind them. We will pray over the food, and then try to get everyone through the line with their plate and drink as quickly as possible. Afterwards, get some children to help pick up all the garbage.

Playing with children

Children flock to outreach events. Often they are longing for love and attention. Even if you don't speak any Spanish, smiles and hugs go a long way. Children also love to have their picture taken, especially if you have a digital camera and can show them their picture. Children love to play soccer, jacks, jump rope, and Frisbee, if you bring these things along. They also love balloons, kites, bubbles, play-dough, and stickers. Games like duck, duck, goose are also popular favorites.

We do have a few guidelines when playing with children for your safety, VMCM's safety, and the children's safety. If you bring toys to give away make sure to check all toys with VMCM staff. Do not plan to give away toys unless you have enough for every single child AND you have already pre-approved toy distribution with the missionary in charge. On any given day of outreach, it is best to bring along only what you can play with. If you bring a soccer ball, play soccer with as many kids as you can. If you give the soccer ball to the first kid who shows up, no one else will get to play, and jealousies begin. Tell the children they can borrow the toys, but not keep them. Remember you can find yourself in the middle of a mob with the littlest children getting knocked down even when giving away small items like candy and stickers. If this happens, have the children form a line or have several members of your team distribute the items at the same time. Never give children any money, even a few pesos. Never offer to give a child a ride anywhere in a vehicle.

Prayer Groups

Although most activities have room for prayer, some team members may want to do more. We highly encourage prayer ministry, and have seen amazing miracles happen when teams pray for hurting people. If a small group would like to pray in people's homes, usually the missionary may know of some nearby people with needs or who are open and receptive to receiving prayer. He or she may take the group to these homes. Prayer groups will need a translator with them. If no translator is available and the group would like to simply walk the streets praying for the colonia, this is also encouraged.

Having a special church service

First, the team helps set up for the service. This can include setting up chairs, sound equipment, or children's classroom/area. Then small groups walk the colonia to invite people to the service. If the service is happening alongside other activities, such as lunch on the mobile kitchen or groceries distribution, invite people to all events at the same time. While waiting for people to gather, team members talk with the residents and play with the children who come.

The percentage of Mexico's population under twenty years old is far larger than that of the US or Canada. Therefore, when planning a service, know that usually there will be far more children present than adults. Services may include dramas, skits or puppet shows the team has prepared that communicate the love of God and the truth of the Gospel. Some team members may share personal testimonies. We provide translation. Teams with special talents (juggling or balloon making, to name a couple) are also able to share. Normally, after worship half the team takes the children somewhere else for a Bible lesson and a craft or play games, while the other half ministers to the remaining adults. Remember when preparing children's activities that you will often have more than 100 kids. If you can provide arts and craft supplies for that many children, their response will be ecstatic. While the children do are in their class, a member of the team shares a brief evangelistic message with the adults. Afterwards, we invite people to come forward to receive Christ or to receive prayer for healing or other needs. Team members and church staff pray in groups of two or three for the people who come forward. This is the most

exciting part of the outreach, glory to God! Usually most of the adults would like prayer and are even willing to wait until you finish praying for someone else.

End of the day

At the end of the day, we load up the van with the equipment and chairs, and head back. We arrive at the church, unload the equipment, and wash any dishes or other items we may have dirtied during the day. Teams are free to meet in the church building afterward for “debriefing”. The day’s work is officially ended and team members can catch a late dinner at any of the fantastic Mazatlan restaurants or return to their hotel to rest up for another day of serving Jesus. Some days may be half days giving the team plenty of time to relax on the beach. Others may be 12 hour, highly exhausting days. Other times the outreach may be split into two times: a morning outreach, a break for lunch and beach time, and an evening outreach. Your group needs to stay very flexible with the schedule, and remember that in Mexico often things come up at the last minute and may affect the schedule. The more flexible your team is, the more you will enjoy whatever activity you may do.

Typical Weekly Schedule

Most teams come for 8 days and 7 nights. You may arrive any day of the week, but keep this information in mind when planning your trip. When you arrive, we will meet you at the airport right outside of customs. All of the luggage is loaded into a pickup truck and everyone is taken by van to the hotel. The church has done check-in ahead of time and keys to rooms are distributed immediately upon arrival at the hotel. After settling in, you will meet in the lobby and discuss the schedule for the time you are Mazatlan and a brief orientation. You have the rest of the day to relax and get comfortable.

Sunday

The team will attend the morning English church service at 9am. If you have team members who preach in your church or are a part of your church's worship team, we would love to have them share their skills with the English church. Please let us know ahead of time if this is the case. Team will either stay for the Spanish service or go out to colonia church at 11am. After a break in the afternoon, the team will attend one of the many smaller colonia church services in the evening. Be prepared to share dramas, testimonies, or kid's crafts at this service if you would like to.

Monday

Monday is the day off for VMCM staff. Usually the weekends are full of feeding centers and church services, so we need a relaxing Monday to prepare for the hectic week ahead. This will be your team's day off as well. Feel free to spend time on the beach, shop in Mazatlan's historic centro, or hike up to the top of the lighthouse. Several boogie boards will be at the hotel for you to use.

Tuesday-Friday

These are the typical work days when you will do the majority of your outreaches.

Saturday

Depending on the schedule, Saturday may be a half day or full day. The team may help one of the colonia feeding centers in the morning and early afternoon or do other outreach activities.

What VMCM Provides

- Purified drinking water and water bottles
- Access to a cellular phone (so that the team can be reached at any time in case of emergency)
- Free e-mail at the church
- Free phone calls to the US and Canada at the church
- Boogie boards
- Transportation to and from the airport and to all colonia outreaches
- Two meals per day on outreach days (breakfast and lunch)
- Translators for all outreaches
- Hotel arrangements
- Sound equipment, chairs, etc. needed for outreaches
- Valuable mission experience 😊

Expenses

Hotel accommodations and meals

Accommodations and meals are arranged through VMCM. The hotel is a five-star hotel with beach access in the tourist section. Two generous meals are provided each day, except on days of arrival and departure, on Sundays and rest days. Total room and meal costs vary depending upon the number of occupants desired per room. Please list the occupants in each room and send us an email listing the occupants of Room #1, Room #2 and so on.

The suggested donations are as follows:

	Per person per day
4 occupants per room:	\$70USD
3 occupants per room:	\$75USD
2 occupants per room:	\$80USD
1 occupant per room:	\$140 USD

In order to avoid complications or confusion, please contact us about paying your donation four weeks before your scheduled visit. See the following page discussing how to pay.

Additional meals can be purchased in any of the many restaurants in the tourist section. Most meals cost \$6-15 USD. It is recommended that trip participants (especially teenagers) bring snacks (granola bars, crackers, cookies, etc) if desired.

Outreaches

The team is responsible for paying for outreach materials such as food for the mobile kitchen or medicines for medical outreaches. Feeding a few hundred people gets expensive. We suggest a donation of \$300 USD per day of outreach to cover outreach materials. Teams who would like to raise more outreach money prior to arriving may be able to give away other more expensive items. For groups over 20 people this amount will increase as we divide the teams and go to different colonias. There are usually four outreach days, so the total amount of outreach funds for the team usually comes to \$1200.

Air Transportation

VMCM does not coordinate air transportation. It must to be organized by your team.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *How long are most trips?*

Most trips are scheduled for 8 days 7 nights. It is possible to arrange longer trips.

2. *What is the typical group size?*

Normally between 10 and 30. Smaller and larger groups can be accommodated with advance notice.

3. *When can teams come to Mazatlan?*

Teams are welcome anytime, except during July and August when members of the church staff are on vacation and rain prevents most outreaches. To avoid overbooking, please schedule your trip through us before you buy your plane tickets!

4. *What is the weather like?*

The weather is extremely warm and humid between May and October. It is cooler and less humid during the winter months. The sun is far more direct than in the north, so sun screen and sun glasses are recommended.

5. *What sort of clothing should we bring?*

Bring comfortable tennis shoes. Although T-shirts and shorts can be worn comfortably almost year-round, slacks and long sleeves may be preferable in the evenings during the winter. Also, dress pants or dresses are normally worn during Sunday church services and conferences. As members of a mission team, it is important to dress modestly and appropriately. Women should bring shorts that end close to the knee, and please no spaghetti strap tank tops.

6. *Is transportation provided to and from the airport?*

Yes. We also take care of transportation during outreaches. On rest days or time off, taxis and buses are available at affordable rates.

7. *What if I don't speak Spanish?*

No problem, we'll translate. When planning outreach services, dramas are especially effective.

8. *Is it wise to buy goods from street or beach vendors?*

That depends on your ability to negotiate. Most prices are tremendously inflated, but vendors are almost always willing to haggle. If in doubt, ask a member of the church staff.

9. *Is it safe to eat the food? To drink the water?*

The food sold in restaurants in the tourist section is comparable to that found in American or Canadian restaurants. Eat well, but avoid food sold by street vendors, and be careful to thoroughly wash any fruit or fresh produce before eating it. We recommend that teams purchase sealed bottled water. Purified water is readily available in the tourist section. To be safe, pack some Pepto-Bismol or Imodium AD.

10. *How do we change dollars for pesos?*

No problem. There are plenty of change-houses and banks in town. Also, there are a number of ATM machines in the tourist section. Most major bank or credit cards are accepted and most restaurants accept credit cards. Many places will even accept American cash for payment, however you will get a better exchange rate elsewhere.

11. *Do I need special health insurance to come to Mexico?*

We recommend that all visitors buy travelers insurance for duration of your stay. Should something happen to you while in Mexico, although Mexican hospitals and clinics are excellent and cheaper than up north, your insurance may not be required to cover injuries sustained out of the country. Travelers insurance is usually not very expensive, especially when purchased as a group.

12. *Do I need any shots to come to Mexico?*

We also recommend that you are up to date on your tetanus booster, as many of the streets are full of dirty, sharp objects.

13. *Do I need a passport?*

If you fly to Mazatlan, you must have a valid passport. The airlines will not allow you to board the plane without one. This applies to minors as well. If you drive, check the latest travel information as the laws are changing. Visit the US Department of State for more information http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html.