



Summer Family Project 2015

Information Packet

Location: Chilibre, Panama

Project Dates: June 18-28, 2015

Participation Fee: \$895

\$745 for children ages 12 and under

Flight to Panama City is not included in the participation fee



Maranatha in Panama

Maranatha's first major initiative in Panama was nearly twenty years ago. Starting in the mid-1990s, Maranatha constructed 31 new churches, refurbished 16 churches, and built five Education and Evangelism Centers. Since then, those schools and churches have helped Seventh-day Adventist membership to grow.

In 2013, Maranatha responded to Panama's request for additional churches and schools in hopes that the buildings will have the same, positive impact.

Project Overview



This will be Maranatha's first volunteer project in the Colón region of Panama. In 2012, La Iglesia el Viente congregation started working in the New San Juan neighborhood of the city of Chilibre, Colón. They started holding meetings and making friends in the area. Soon a small group of 20 people eventually became the

Limoncito congregation. In 2014, the members bought land in hopes of building a church, but they didn't have enough money for the actual structure. They managed to construct a few classrooms to eventually serve as Sabbath School classrooms for the children, and they have been using the outdoor patio as their sanctuary.

The 80 members of the church are excited for Maranatha volunteers to arrive. Volunteers will construct the block walls of the church building, paint nearby churches, and reach out into the local community through outreach programs, including children's ministries, English language lessons, and health education programs.

Project Schedule

Thursday, June 18

Arrival in Panama City and travel to the housing location

Friday, June 19

Orientation and first work day

Saturday, June 20

Worship with the local congregations

Sunday, June 21 – Friday, June 26

Work days with midweek local excursion

Tuesday, June 23

Island and Colonial Town excursion

Wednesday, June 24

Work day

Thursday, June 25

Work day and optional Panama Canal excursion

Friday, June 26

Work day

Saturday, June 27

Worship with the local congregations

Sunday, June 28

Departure from Panama City

Giving Opportunity

This congregation has big dreams for the property. They would like to see more than 200 people attending the church. They also have dreams for a school to be built next to the church. In order to make this a reality, they have asked for Maranatha's support. There are many additional projects that the Summer Family Project team could take on for the Limoncito congregation, if volunteers can help raise the money.

One such project is the construction of the block walls of their Sabbath School classrooms. In addition there are other painting projects that could be completed, and the church is in need of funding for a dorcas room. Plus they still need to pay off a portion of the land. If you are interested in donating to any of these special projects, please contact Maranatha to make a tax-deductible gift.

About the Family Project

Each year, Maranatha offers at least two mission projects specifically for families. One takes place in the summer, and the other is at Christmas. Designed to accommodate volunteers of any age—from two to 92—the project is an excellent alternative to a theme-park family vacation or gift-centered holiday. Volunteers who participate say the experience has not only broadened their perspective on the world and missions, but it's brought them closer together as a family. Families of all types and sizes are welcome, and individuals are also welcome to join. Family projects fill up very quickly, so register early if you are interested in joining this mission trip!

Children at the Project Site

We have different expectations for young volunteers, depending on their age and maturity. We expect children ages 13 or older to put in a full day of work, whether it's on the construction site, in the kitchen, or with outreach activities. Children 12 years and under may help with construction, but they must work under the supervision of a parent or designated adult.

For younger volunteers, Maranatha will have a day camp with different activities organized during work hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.), which could include the following:

- **Work:** We'll plan simple tasks so kids can put in a few hours on the construction site.
- **Play:** We'll schedule time for kids to let loose and have fun, because playtime is an important part of being a kid. Children's activities will include swimming one or two days during the project.
- **Cultural Experiences:** We'll introduce kids to local customs, such as visiting a marketplace or washing clothes in a river.
- **Outreach:** We'll encourage kids to help with children's ministry programs and other service activities.

We won't necessarily have all of these components every day, but these categories will make up the activities available for young volunteers. Parents can drop their child off with the program leaders, stay with their child, or keep their child with them throughout the day.

Accommodations

Volunteers will stay at a large, single-story hotel in the town of Chilibre. It is roughly a two-star hotel furnished with double and single beds. Families will stay together and will be put in rooms with beds appropriate to the individuals. The hotel has air-conditioning, hot water, and a pool. Bedding and towels are provided, but you should plan to bring your own washcloth to use during the project. Although WiFi is available, the connection is incredibly slow. You should not expect to have internet access during the project.



The hotel is large and adjacent to a water park that is open on the weekends. Because we won't be the only group staying there, we will try our best to be respectful of the other guests at the hotel. You may consider bringing earplugs for the evenings.



Although the water throughout Panama is not usually safe for tourists from the United States or Canada to consume, the hotel has a filtration system so that it is safe to drink for the volunteers on this trip. However, be careful not to get too used to this. Outside of the hotel, you will need to drink the purified, bottled water provided by Maranatha leadership.

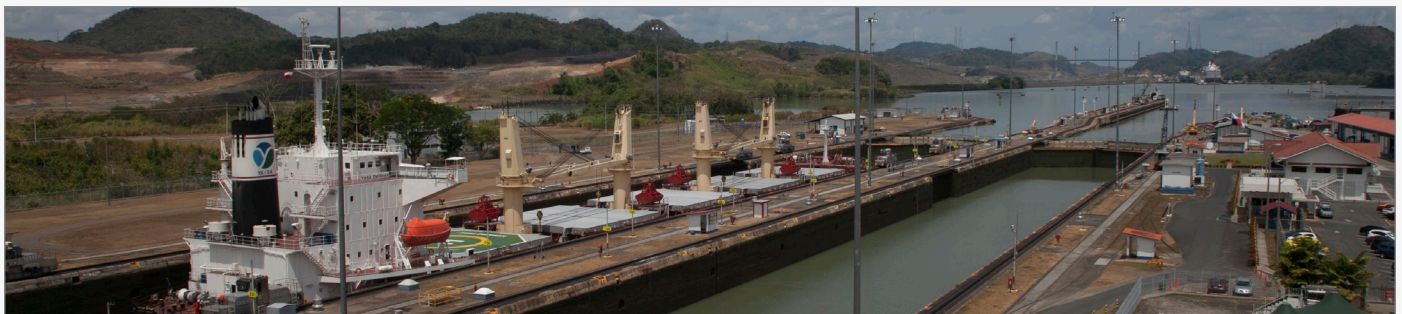
The hotel is approximately fifteen minutes from the Limoncito construction site, and the group will travel by private bus to the various work and outreach locations each day. At this time, we are still negotiating with the hotel to use their kitchen and dining room for meals and worship. If they do not let us rent their kitchen, we will set up a kitchen and meeting area at a church member's home, located near the construction site.

Excursions

Island and Colonial Town | Volunteers will have the opportunity to see the Caribbean side of Panama when they travel to the colonial town of Portobelo. The port was originally used for silver exporting and the protection of the northern seaboard. Now it stands in ruins, but visitors can explore the barracks of the fort and see remnants of war cannons. In addition, the town is well known for the Church of the Black Christ, the large cathedral in town also known as the Church of San Felipe. It is home to one of the major religious festivals in Panama. After visiting the town of Portobelo, volunteers will continue on the private bus another 45 minutes to a spot where we will take a short boat ride to an island off the coast, where the group will spend the afternoon enjoying rest and relaxation. The majority of the beach is sand and does not have a lot of wildlife. There are a few simple places for snorkeling near the shore, but no snorkeling equipment, so if you are interested in snorkeling, please bring your own equipment. This excursion is included in your participation fee.

Panama Canal (\$20) | The Summer Family Project took place in Panama two years ago, and volunteers on that trip visited the Panama Canal. Project leadership for this year's trip decided that a trip to the Caribbean side of Panama might be a better option for the group excursion since many in the group will have already seen the canal. However, the canal is still one of the seven wonders of the modern world, and we want to make sure that those who haven't had a chance to see the canal (or those who wish to see it again) have the opportunity to do so on this trip.

On Thursday, the day camp for children 12 years old and under will be going to visit the Panama Canal, and their participation fee will cover this visit. We are also opening up this excursion to anyone on the project who would like to see the canal. Those volunteers who aren't participating in the day camp will need to cover the extra charge of \$20 per person. Please bring this with you in cash, and pay the project coordinator upon arrival. The canal is a piece of Panamanian and American history. Completed in 1914, the canal enabled cargo ships to take a more direct route from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific or vice versa, instead of traversing the dangerous waters of Cape Horn. This short excursion includes an overview of the working canal locks and entrance to the canal museum, which walks visitors through the history of the canal.



Leadership

Steve Case | Steve will oversee all aspects of the trip as Project Coordinator, and he will also be leading the group worships each morning and evening. Steve has coordinated numerous short-term mission trips for all types of groups. He loves family projects and was Maranatha's first family project leader. Steve lives in Carmichael, California, with his wife Marit. He is president of Involve Youth, a ministry organization that energizes young people for service.



Danny Poljak | Danny will be leading the construction aspect of this year's Summer Family Project. He joins the group from Roseville, California where he works in the construction industry. He has served with Maranatha in Nicaragua, India, the Dominican Republic, and Panama. Danny also led the construction on last year's Summer Family Project where he was joined by his wife, Branka, and his daughter Anella. Danny is enthusiastic that something tangible, like a building, can be so transformative to a congregation and a community, and he is passionate about his daughter growing up with a desire to serve others. When not on a Maranatha project, Danny also enjoys SCUBA diving and biking.



Maggie Petersen | Maggie Petersen joins the group as the head cook for the project. She first volunteered with Maranatha through a project with her church, but has since volunteered on several more projects both in the United States and in Central and South America. She recently returned to her home state of Colorado after living and working as a nurse practitioner in California for 43 years. Maggie has two children and four grandchildren, and she enjoys traveling with her friends and family. She is looking forward to the miracles God will once again perform when putting on the Summer Family Project.



Ernie and Keri Medina | Ernie and Keri join the Summer Family Project from Loma Linda, California. They have become Maranatha regulars, and this will be their sixth Summer Family Project. The Medinas have a lot of experience with various aspects of the project. This year, Ernie will lead the health education programs, and Keri will co-lead the children's ministry programs. Ernie and Keri will be joined by their daughter, Summer, a high school senior.



Thomas and Vivian Makowski | The Makowskis joined Maranatha for their first project in 2010. They immediately got "hooked" and have since participated in four more projects with their family. The Makowskis live in Southern California, where they attend the Azure Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church. Thomas and Vivian are joined by their two daughters, Jennifer, a high school senior, and Gaby, a high school sophomore. Thomas is a cardiologist and will serve as the group's team medic, and Vivian will co-lead the children's ministry programs.



Expenses

The participation fee covers housing for ten nights, three vegetarian meals a day, ground transportation to and from the airport and project site, a local excursion, secondary accident insurance, a Maranatha t-shirt, and luggage tags.

Maranatha must receive all funds and forms by May 18 due to the time needed for the final package mailing. Wait for confirmation of acceptance on the project before purchasing your airfare.

If you are fundraising or receiving donations please either have them sent directly to you or work with your local church treasurer to collect funds and issue tax-deductible receipts, since it is difficult for Maranatha to track individual small checks. If your church will not work with you, please wait until you have collected the full amount of your participation fee before submitting your participation fee to Maranatha.

Estimate of Additional Costs

- Flight to Panama City: \$500-800
- Passport: \$130 or \$110 for renewal
- Optional Panama Canal Excursion: \$20

About Panama

Panama is approximately the size of Mississippi, and this long, narrow country marks the border between North and South America. Early inhabitants of Panama tended to reside on both sides of the country near oceans, swamps, and rivers. It is no wonder that the country was named Panama, meaning “Abundance of Fish.” As an illustration of its moniker, Panama is full of fish markets.

Panama is perhaps best known for its canal, a thoroughway connecting the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. Constructed by the United States after a failed attempt by the French, the canal opened on August 15, 1914. It was a historical moment for the world and the United States, as the country’s sovereignty over the “Canal Zone” marked America’s rise as a superpower. Nearly a century later, the canal is now under the control of Panama’s government, and it remains an important link in world trade. It has seen the passage of more than 800,000 vessels so far.

Aside from the canal, Panama is a fast-growing country with 3.2 million people. Great progress has been made in education, as access has been broadened to reach rural areas, and the literacy rate is 93%. Interestingly, female enrollment at secondary schools is dominant, and in 1999, Panama elected its first female president.

Unfortunately, Panama still struggles with socioeconomic disparities. Poverty is great, particularly among the indigenous people. While the government has implemented social programs, the problem is still widespread. Maranatha’s Summer Family Project will take place in the “Canal Zone,” where there are a lot more service jobs available because of the canal’s industry. As a result, we won’t see as much poverty as we would in other parts of the country that are outside the canal zone.

Weather in Panama is fairly tropical. Temperatures average in the 70’s and 80’s year round. The rainy season lasts from May to January, and in June, visitors can expect anywhere from 10-20 inches of rain. This weather provides an excellent environment for tropical plants and animals. Panama boasts a vast biodiversity with 218 different mammal species and the largest number of avian species in Central America, including large populations of macaws, quetzals, parrots, and toucans.

Travel Information

Volunteers will purchase their own plane tickets to the capital city of Panama City (see below). Once the group has arrived, volunteers will travel together by bus to the project location, which is approximately an hour and a half from the airport. Please wait for confirmation from Maranatha before purchasing your airfare to ensure there is still space on the project.

Arrival

Please plan to arrive in Panama City (airport code PTY) in the afternoon or evening of Thursday, June 18.

Departure

Please plan to depart from Panama City (PTY) on Sunday, June 28.



Facts and Figures

Capital:
Panama City

Population:
3.6 million

Language:
Spanish and some English

Climate:
Tropical, hot and humid. Long rainy season from May to January

Religion:
Roman Catholic 85%, Protestant 15%

Currency:
U.S. Dollar

Travel Resources

Azumano Travel: 800-454-4099 or by email with Erle at edpenha@azumano.com

Butler Travel: 503-879-5005 or by email with Nathanael at nathan@butlertravel.com or with Ellen at ellen@butlertravel.com.

Kayak: www.kayak.com

When contacting the Azumano or Butler travel agencies, make sure you mention Maranatha to receive a discounted service charge.

Entry Requirements

All tourists must have passports valid for at least six months from the dates of intended travel (December 29, 2015). If you do not have a passport, U.S. citizens can apply at any U.S. post office or online at <http://travel.state.gov>. Canadian citizens can apply online at www.passport.gc.ca. It can take up to two months to complete the entire process, so plan accordingly to give yourself enough time to receive your passport.

U.S. and Canadian citizens can travel in Panama for up to 180 days without a visa. Citizens of other countries, please consult the Panamanian embassy or consulate in your home country for entrance requirements.

Traveling with Minors

If you are traveling with a legal minor (under the age of 18 on the date you depart), both parents or legal guardians need to travel with the minor OR have two parental consent forms notarized. This provides evidence to government entities that both guardians have consented to their child leaving the country with the other guardian and Maranatha. One original will need to be mailed to Maranatha, and the other original must stay with you while you travel. If a parent is divorced, the missing parent still needs to sign the form unless the parent traveling with the minor has sole legal custody. In that case, a copy of the divorce paperwork indicating sole custody must also be included. If a parent has died, a copy of the death certificate must be included. You can download a PDF of the Parental Consent Form at <http://www.maranatha.org/resources>. This form will ask for two people as appointees of the minor. The first appointee will be the guardian traveling with the child. The other will be Steve Case, Maranatha's project coordinator for the Summer Family Project.

Staying Healthy

Maranatha requires that every volunteer have a current tetanus vaccine (within the last 10 years). The Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also recommends vaccines for hepatitis A, typhoid, and an antimalarial medication other than Chloroquine.

When many people think of Panama, they recall stories of malaria and yellow fever during the construction of the Panama Canal, 100 years ago. However, many of these disease-carrying mosquitoes have since been eradicated through aggressive interventions. Our group will be staying inside the Canal Zone, and currently the CDC does not have advisories for malaria for this region or any region west of the capital. However, mosquitoes do thrive in the tropical environment, especially during the rainy season, and can carry other diseases as well. We recommend taking personal precautions to avoid being bitten during the project, especially during dawn and dusk. If you choose to take malaria preventative medication, keep in mind that Chloroquine is not effective against the strain of malaria present in Panama.

You should schedule a consultation with a travel clinic doctor to talk about the medical risks in Panama and the ways to minimize them.

How to Register

To register, please complete the online registration and pay the full participation fee or an initial deposit of at least half the total participation fee. You can make this payment by credit card online or over the phone or with a check made out to Maranatha Volunteers International and sent to the address below. If for any reason you need to cancel your participation, Maranatha will do their best to refund your deposit up until one month before travel. After that point, \$150 is non-refundable and the remainder will depend on the reservations and the project arrangements already made.

Register online at Maranatha.org or over the phone.

Contact Information

Phone: (916) 774-7700

Fax: (916) 774-7701

Email: volunteer@maranatha.org

Website: www.maranatha.org

Mailing Address:

Maranatha Volunteers International
990 Reserve Drive
Suite 100
Roseville, CA 95678

Canadian Payments Only:

Maranatha Volunteers International
Association
c/o V06494C
PO Box 6494, Station Terminal
Vancouver, BC V6B 6R3

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