



Christmas Family Project 2017

Information Packet

Location: Boquete, Panama
Project Dates: Dec. 20, 2017 – Jan. 1, 2018
Participation Fee: \$850
\$700 for children 12 and under
(Age determined on the start date of the project)

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 Panama. In 2013, Maranatha responded to the country's request for additional churches and schools in hopes that the projects will have the same, positive impact. Today, we are continuing to work on various projects in Panama.

Project Overview

Volunteers on the Christmas Family Project will have the opportunity to help with a variety of activities. Because this is a Family Project, there will be activities for volunteers of all ages.

The primary focus will be on the construction of an Education and Evangelism Center outside of Dolega, Panama, in a neighborhood called Algarrobos. This large school building has several classrooms, a large gymnasium, offices, and bathrooms. Maranatha volunteer groups will start work on the school in July, but because it is such a large building, there will be plenty of work in December.

Volunteers on the Christmas Family Project will lay part of the floor, as well as assemble the metal structure, and complete masonry block work on one of the side walls.

In addition to the construction, volunteers will help with two different outreach activities: a medical clinic and a children's ministry program. The medical team will work two or three days of the project. If we have enough medical providers, we could extend this to all work days. On the medical team, volunteers will be needed to triage patients, and medical professionals are encouraged to help treat patients. The children's ministry program will also need volunteers to sing songs, play games, and teach the local children about Jesus. The head cook will also need some people to help in the kitchen to help prepare the volunteer meals each day.

Project Schedule

Wednesday, December 20
Arrival and overnight in Panama City.

Thursday, December 21
Travel to Boquete, Panama.

Friday, December 22
Work day

Saturday, December 23
Worship with the local congregation.
Afternoon nature excursions.

Sunday, December 24
Work day

Monday, December 25
Christmas activities and outreach

Tuesday – Friday, December 26 – 29
Work days

Saturday, December 30
Worship with the local congregation.

Sunday, December 31
Travel back to Panama City.
Panama Canal excursion and shopping.

Monday, January 1
Departure from Panama City.

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 during 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 may 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 available activities. Parents can drop their child off with program leaders, stay with their child, or keep their child with them throughout the day.

Accommodations

The group will spend the first and last night in Panama City at the Riande Aeropuerto Hotel, located near the Tocumen International Airport. The Riande is a nice hotel with private bathrooms, hot water, air conditioning, swimming pool, and Wi-Fi.

During the project, volunteers will stay at Hotel Fundadores in Boquete, Panama. The hotel is basic, between a 1 and 2-star facility, depending on how you rate hotels. We chose this level because it's adequate, safe, and clean, and it keeps the participation fee manageable for families. We mention this in advance so you can adjust your expectations for the mission trip.

The hotel is clean, provides bedding and towels, private bathrooms, and hot water. Air conditioning is not provided, although in Boquete you'll be at a higher elevation than at the construction site, and it is usually cooler. You may choose to bring a portable fan. We also recommend that you bring your own washcloths as they are not commonly provided in Panama. Wi-Fi is available, but it will probably be slower than your connection at home. There is no swimming pool, but there is a large field area for kids to play, and the hotel is located in a beautiful setting with trees, plants, and even a small creek.



Families will room together, or, depending on the family arrangement, in rooms near each other. Room configurations include mixtures of double, queen, king, and single beds. Large families may be placed in rooms with several single beds. Single volunteers can expect to be placed with a roommate. If you would like to room with someone in particular, please let Maranatha know in advance.

Our group will use a makeshift kitchen at the hotel and eat and worship in the dining room. The drive from the hotel to the work site will be about 25 minutes each way by bus.

Excursions

Boquete is a popular tourist destination in Panama. The area is known for its natural beauty, and on the first Sabbath, volunteers will hike to several waterfalls. This hike can be a bit strenuous at first, so volunteers are encouraged to go at their own pace. There may be opportunities for other area attractions, mid-week; those trips will be identified later.

At the end of the project, volunteers will return to Panama City where they'll have the chance to see an important part of Panamanian and American history when they visit the Panama Canal. Completed in 1914, the canal, which cuts across the Isthmus of Panama, enabled cargo ships to take a more direct route from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, instead of traversing the dangerous waters of Cape Horn. The Panama Canal is considered one of the seven wonders of the modern world. This short excursion includes a stop at the Miraflores lookout tower, which gives a view of the working canal locks, and a visit to the Panama Canal museum.

After visiting the canal, the group will stop by artisan markets for souvenir shopping before heading to the hotel for the night; everyone should be departing the following morning.

Expenses

The participation fee covers housing for 12 nights, three vegetarian meals a day, airport pick-ups and drop-offs, bus trip to and from Boquete, translators, local excursions, health and accident insurance, a Maranatha t-shirt, and luggage tags.

Maranatha must receive all funds and forms by November 20 due to application processing time. Wait for confirmation of acceptance on the project before purchasing your airfare.

All prices are listed in US Dollars. Payments can be made by cash or check sent to the Maranatha office in California (please include your name and "Christmas Family Project" on the memo line) or by credit or debit card online or over the phone.

For Canadian tax-deductible receipts, payments must be made by check to the Maranatha Volunteers International (Canada) Association (address located at the end of this information packet. At this time Maranatha cannot issue tax-deductible receipts for credit card payments.

If you are fundraising or receiving donations please 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 it to Maranatha.

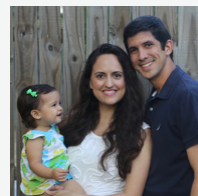
Estimate of Additional Costs

Round Trip Flight to Panama City: \$700 – 1,100

Passport: \$130 or \$110 for renewal

Leadership

Claudio and Elizabeth Japas, Project Coordinators | Claudio and Elizabeth join the group from Texas. Claudio has enjoyed participating in and leading Maranatha projects since his first mission trip to Mexico more than 20 years ago. In the year 2000, Claudio was a student missionary in Nicaragua, serving as Maranatha's Volunteer Support Coordinator in the country. Soon after Claudio and Elizabeth got married, they spent part of their honeymoon leading Maranatha's Young Adult Project. Since then, the couple has led several more Maranatha projects. Today, Claudio and Elizabeth have a 2-year-old daughter and a baby boy on the way. Both Claudio and Elizabeth work in the medical field. They look forward to serving God and fellow brothers and sisters in Panama, as a Maranatha family, this Christmas season.



Manuel and Elizabeth Brenes, Volunteer Support and Head Cook |

Manuel and Elizabeth have worked for Maranatha for more than fifteen years in countries including Costa Rica, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Honduras, and Panama. They live in Costa Rica, where they are involved with many different evangelism efforts. In addition, Manuel stays busy running an organic farm, and Elizabeth owns several small businesses. Manuel assists the leadership team with arrangements in country, and Elizabeth often joins projects as the cook, preparing delicious vegetarian meals for the group.



We Need Your Help!

The team is looking for a Children's Day Camp Director. This important position involves planning interactive activities for the youngest volunteers in our group. Daily activities could include construction work, outreach and VBS, helping in the kitchen, cultural activities, and of course, play! Maranatha can help connect you with leaders who have helped in this area before. We're also looking for medical providers (Physicians, dentists, nurses, nurse practitioners, etc.) who would like to help lead and provide care on the medical team. If you would be interested in leading in either of these areas, please contact Maranatha at (916) 774-7700.

About Panama

Panama is approximately the size of Mississippi. 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 throughway 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.



Facts and Figures

Capital:
Panama City

Population:
3.5 million

Language:
Spanish and some English

Climate:
tropical, hot and humid. Rainy season from May to January.

Religion:
Roman Catholic 85%, Protestant 15%

Currency:
U.S. Dollar

Weather in Panama is fairly tropical. Temperatures average in the 70s and 80s 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 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 Panama City (see below). Please wait for confirmation from Maranatha before purchasing your ticket to ensure there is still space on the project. Volunteers will travel by chartered bus to the project location.

Flights

Arrival | Please plan to arrive in Panama City–Tocumen (airport code PTY) in the afternoon or evening of Wednesday, December 20, 2017.

Departure | Please plan to depart from Panama City–Tocumen (PTY) in the morning or early afternoon of Monday, January 1, 2018.

Arriving Early or Staying Late

Panama has some beautiful travel destinations. You may choose to arrive earlier than December 20 or stay beyond January 1 to explore the country on your own. Please make your own hotel and transportation arrangements for any days outside of the Maranatha project dates. If you have any questions, call Maranatha at (916) 774-7700.

Travel Resources

Azumano Travel: 800-777-5149 or by email with Erle Dpenha or Azumano Team at corporatetravel@ciazumano.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

Passport | All passports must be valid for at least six months from the dates of intended travel (July 1, 2018). 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 process, so start the process with enough time to receive your passport.

Citizens of the U.S., Canada, and most European countries do not need a visa to enter Panama. Tourists are permitted to 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 must travel with the minor. Otherwise, you must have two parental consent forms notarized. This provides government entities with evidence that both guardians have consented to their child leaving the country with the other guardian and Maranatha. One original must 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 Claudio Japas, Maranatha's project coordinator for the Christmas 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.

Some of these you may already have and some you may deem unnecessary for this trip. You should schedule a consultation with a travel clinic doctor to talk about the medical risks in Panama and the ways to minimize them.

Zika

Recently the Zika virus has been spreading around Central America and the Caribbean. This mosquito-borne disease acts similar to a hard-hitting flu with symptoms lasting about two weeks. There is currently no vaccine or treatment for the disease, and the CDC has issued a **Level 2 warning**. This warning does not suggest that you postpone all travel, but it does urge travelers to take **heightened precautions** to avoid being bitten. This virus is still being studied, and information is continuing to be released. Currently, there are no known long-term effects; however, there does seem to be a link between the virus and possible birth defects in babies born from women who were infected during their pregnancy. The virus can remain in a woman's body for approximately eight weeks and in a man's body for approximately six months, and it can be spread through physical contact. If you or your partner is pregnant, think you might be pregnant, or are trying to get pregnant in the next six months, Maranatha recommends speaking with your doctor to determine if you should travel.

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
(Canada) Association**

c/o V06494C

PO Box 6494, Station Terminal

Vancouver, BC V6B 6R3

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CAP \$12



All cotton and easy to pack, this cap is sure to keep the sun off your face on a mission project and at home.

HARD HAT \$11



This MSA V-Gard hard hat, with Staz-On suspension, ensures excellent shock absorption on the job site.

WATER BOTTLE \$15



The autospout water bottle by Contigo features a one-touch-button spout for convenient one-handed drinking. It also has a spout shield to protect the spout from debris and dirt when not in use—perfect for the project site.

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*All confirmed volunteers on an International Maranatha Open Team receive a Maranatha t-shirt as part of their participation fee.

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