



PUENTE DE AMISTAD

Team Member's Manual

****Open Bible Churches requires that all team members read and sign the Waiver of Liability form and the Code of Conduct which acknowledges that they have read and will comply with all rules and policies put in place by Puente de Amistad that are written or implied in this manual or on Puente de Amistad's website.***

About Puente De Amistad

Puente De Amistad, a ministry of Global Missions of Open Bible Churches, is a mission base in Tijuana, Mexico, designed for short-term, cross-cultural outreach. It is an innovative approach to missions, providing a location for youth, adults, and family groups to experience missions by visiting a foreign country, evangelizing the lost, ministering to the hurting, and strengthening local churches. Puente De Amistad means “Bridge of Friendship.” It is a Christian bridge of love between the first and third world countries that meet at the U.S./Mexico border.

Puente de Amistad has a variety of ministry opportunities that can be arranged for visiting groups. Some of these can include visiting children’s feeding kitchens, orphanages, and churches, and conducting street ministry. Groups can use mime, skits, puppetry, singing, and evangelism with the help of translators. Construction projects to help local ministries and house-building projects for low-income families are also available. The selection of your ministry activities will depend on the skill of your group members, your resources, and your creativity. The base staff, in consultation with the visiting group’s team leader, will arrange the best ministry opportunities for your group.

What to Pack

Team members arriving at the base should have enough clothing to last the length of their stay without needing to do laundry. However, laundry facilities are available at the base at a cost of \$2.00 per load to wash and dry. Clothes should be suited for the planned activities of the week.

Appropriate Clothing

- **Males:**
 - Knee-length shorts may be worn for all activities except church
 - No clothing with worldly themes (no alcohol advertisements or suggestive statements)
 - No Speedo swimsuits
 - For church, please dress nicely:
 - A nice shirt – polo or button down (no t-shirts)
 - Nice slacks or jeans with no holes (no shorts)
- **Females:**
 - Mid-thigh shorts may be worn for all activities except church (active wear for nighttime, at the base only, is ok but must still come to mid-thigh)
 - No clothing with worldly themes (no alcohol advertisements or suggestive statements)
 - For church, please dress nicely:
 - A dress or skirt is preferred (knee-length or longer)
 - Nice slacks or jeans with no holes (no shorts)
 - No sleeveless tops

Appropriate Footwear

Because there are needles and trash that carry various bacteria and viruses, closed toed shoes are required at all job sites and ministries. Only around the base or at the beach are open-toed shoes permitted. Flip-flops are okay for lounging around the base but are not appropriate for church, ministry, and construction sites.

Recommended Personal Items for Team Members		
Passport	Bible	Picture I.D.
Notebook/Journal/Pen	Canteen/Water Bottle	Ministry Tools
Glasses & Contacts (Cleaning Sol.)	Medication (in original container)	Swimsuit
Shampoo	Deodorant	Brush/Comb
Soap	Casual & Work Clothes	Dress & Work Shoes
Sunscreen (50 SPF or higher)	Sunglasses	Dress Clothes (for church)
Flashlight	Tissues/Baby Wipes	Camera
Gifts for New Friends	Snacks	Hand Sanitizer
Pocket Spanish Dictionary	Spending Money (small bills only)	Chapstick
Anti-Diarrheal Medication		
*Food for Special Dietary Needs		

****Please contact Puente de Amistad about your special dietary needs. In most cases, it is recommended to bring specialty items along or purchase them in San Diego on the way to the base. Puente staff will do their best to accommodate your needs, but ultimately it is up to the individual team member to be prepared for any special dietary needs.***

Recommended Construction Tools for Team Members		
Tool Belt	Hammer	Sunscreen
Work Gloves	Screwdrivers	Sunglasses
Tape Measure	Cat's-claw	Water bottle
Construction Square	Hand Sanitizer	Hat

Ministry Items

*It is the team's responsibility to bring and provide all ministry items for their team.

Recommended Ministry Materials for Team Members:		
Costumes	Puppets	Sound Equipment
Spanish Tracts	Drama Props	Coloring Pages
Crayons	Markers	Craft Materials

What not to bring:

- Puente de Amistad provides sheets, blankets, pillows. You do not need to bring your own bedding.
- Puente also provides towels and washcloths.
- We have an ample number of fans available.
- Do not bring unnecessary valuables. Anything that is irreplaceable is better kept safely at home.
- Valuable jewelry should be left at home.

Insurance

Since most insurance carriers have poor coverage outside the United States, **supplemental medical coverage is required by Puente de Amistad**. Several insurance providers can be found by searching the internet for “travel medical insurance.” Also, you can find several suggestions on our FAQ section on the Puente de Amistad website.

Safety

The safety of your missions team is Puente de Amistad’s number one priority. We are confident that you and your team will be safe when we go out to minister in the neighborhoods of Tijuana. To ensure this safety, there are a few rules that must be followed at ALL times:

- No one should ever go off alone. A lonely walk may be a good time to talk with the Lord, but it is not wise for those unfamiliar with the area and the language.
- If you do need to go somewhere make sure there are at least three of you together. Always advise your team leader and Puente staff of your destination and estimated time of return.
- Leave unnecessary valuables at home. Theft happens frequently and pickpocketing is common.
- Obey all Mexican laws. Mexican authorities follow the Napoleonic code, which states that you are guilty until proven innocent.
- Firearms, fireworks, and pocketknives will result in jail time. Do not bring them to Mexico!

Health

At Puente de Amistad we desire that you get the most from your cross-cultural experience and that you gain a firsthand knowledge of the daily life of the local people. However, our bodies are accustomed to the lifestyle we experience at home, and adapting quickly to a foreign environment can prove difficult. Localized germs (which we have not yet built immunity to) and change in climate can sometimes overtax those who are not acclimated to the environment. That is why we do our best at the base to give everyone a taste of Mexico while still addressing health and safety concerns that may otherwise negatively impact your experience.

- Purified drinking water is provided at the base.
- Non-purified water should not be consumed at all (not even for brushing teeth).
- Showering water is not purified. Do not drink it.
- Restaurants in Mexico use purified water.

Immunizations

It is highly recommended that all team members complete their Hepatitis vaccinations, bring anti-diarrheal medication, and make sure they are up to date on their tetanus shots. Consult your local U.S. Health Department for current vaccination recommendations for Mexico since they do change from time to time.

Be sure to bring sufficient quantities of any personal medications that you may need, especially prescriptions. Mexican pharmacists may have trouble duplicating your medication because of the language barrier and varying names of drugs.

****If you do forget your medication, it is not the responsibility of Puente de Amistad to locate an alternate source of medication. We will do our best to help you, but the responsibility is on you, the group member.***

Individuals with respiratory ailments such as asthma should be warned that Tijuana is a dusty place with a lot of pollution. Be sure to bring your aspirators. It is a good idea for each group to bring a comprehensive First Aid kit to take care of minor medical needs. In case of serious illness or accident, U.S. hospitals will be used if time permits.

Physical Requirements

Puente de Amistad is a ministry located and serving in a third-world country. Team members will not have all the luxuries of the United States while visiting us. Although we do our very best to accommodate reasonable requests from team members, everyone should be physically and mentally fit to meet the demands of the missions trip.

Physical requirements include but are not limited to:

- ✓ Must be able to remain standing in a stationary position for 1 to 2 hours.
- ✓ Must be able to move heavy objects up to 40lbs at different locations.
- ✓ Must be able to work in outdoor, sunny weather conditions up to 80 to 90 degrees.
- ✓ Must be able to climb multiple flights of stairs and/or sandy hills without the assistance of hand railings.
- ✓ Must be able to walk a ½ mile continuously.
- ✓ Must be able to stay active for up to 12 hours per day.

In the past we have had several teams bringing members with limited mobility and much falling has occurred. Due to the number of stairs present in the base, strenuous outdoor activities, walking up or down sandy hills, and walking across the border into the United States, those with limited mobility are not recommended or advised to choose this mission trip.

Attitudes

Groups coming to Puente de Amistad must function as a team. ***Teamwork requires a servant's heart.*** Each person's motivation should be to serve Christ and other team members. Attitude changes everything! It can build up a team or tear it down. Do all that you can to weed out your own negative attitudes. Avoid these following examples.

- **A complaining attitude is contagious and can ruin the trip for the whole group.** Paul said, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances" (Philippians 4:11, NIV). No pity parties allowed.

- **Faultfinding is harmful.** It is not one member's role to correct teammates or to help improve the Mexican culture.
- **Cliques destroy team unity.** Individuals should not keep to themselves or try to isolate other members. Be inclusive.
- **Unwillingness to cooperate burdens the team.** Every team member should be willing to take on any task from sharing a testimony in church to cleaning toilets. No one is along "just for the ride." When staff or leadership asks you to get on the bus, do it quickly.
- **Romantic involvement diverts the purpose of the team.** Romantic involvement with another team member or a Mexican national could be cause for a team member to be sent home.

Cultural Differences and Similarities

- Mexicans greet each other with a handshake.
- At church services and on special occasions men will greet each other with a hug and a handshake. Women will greet one another with a kiss on the cheek.
- Culturally, refusing an invitation is considered impolite, so a Mexican will often accept an invitation but never intend to show up.
- Do not compliment a Mexican's possessions too highly or they may feel obligated to offer them to you and then be offended if you refuse.
- "No" is indicated by moving the hand back and forth with the index finger pointed up, facing outward. "Yes" is indicated by pointing your index finger up, facing outward, and bending it repeatedly.
- The thumbs up sign that we use in the United States is also used in Mexico.
- Never beckon someone with one finger. It is offensive. Beckon with the whole hand turned down.
- Never throw money on the counter when paying for something. Always hand it to the person.
- Mexicans greatly appreciate foreigners attempting to speak their language. It is considered a sign of respect.
- Mexicans are very family oriented. Family responsibility often supersedes all other responsibilities.
- Mexicans are more event oriented versus time oriented, so they frequently show up 30 to 45 minutes late.

Adapting to the Culture

Since your main purpose for coming to Tijuana is to be a witness to the local people, you must adapt to their ways rather than expecting them to adapt to U.S. ways. Think of their ways as different, not inferior or strange. What a shame it would be to impede the witness of your whole group by acting in a manner that offends the people you are trying to reach.

Visiting Ministries

When visiting various ministries, you may experience people living in conditions (*considered subpar by United States standards*) that may cause you emotional distress. Although these conditions are unfamiliar to you, this is normal life for those living there. Please be aware of your facial expressions and the words that come from your mouth. We do not want our emotions to speak for us, and in turn, be talking "down" to their living conditions. Watch that you are not making comments like:

- "How can people live like this?"
- "I could never live like this!"

- “Why don’t they try to get a job?”
- “Don’t they know that there is a better way to live?”
- “Can I adopt your children?”

**Although, you may think you would never make these statements, all these statements have been heard from short-term mission team members coming from the United States.*

These ministries and families that we are ministering to are content and thankful for what God has provided them with. We should be as well. Be careful to be gracious with people in their circumstances. Be happy for them in what they do have, even if it is not much in your eyes.

Remember the Golden Rule! Would you want someone to visit your home and then gasp at its state or lack of cleanliness? How would you like it if someone richer than you offered to rescue your children from you because you were not doing a good enough job (in their eyes) of providing for their physical needs?

Having Compassion

Compassion is an emotion that can overwhelm people, especially those who have not been exposed to extreme poverty before. Matthew 14:14 tells us that Jesus healed the sick because “he had compassion on them.” It is a natural and godly human emotion. Team members should allow themselves and others to feel it. It will not hurt them. The danger is in getting angry with those who are not equally moved. We are each responsible for our own response to the needs of others, not for the response of others around us.

It is not God’s choice that there be such poverty and suffering. It is a result of sin in the world and man’s sinful nature. By sharing the Gospel in Tijuana, teams are doing more to alleviate the causes of poverty than could be accomplished by millions of dollars in aid. If some are moved to give to individual Mexicans, they should first consult a Puente staff member. If local Mexicans wish to share with team members, do not refuse. That would offend them. “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others” (Mark. 12:43). They gave you the gift out of their love for you and what you are doing to help them. Do not refuse their gift.

Prayer

Prayer before the trip is very important! Ask God to prepare your heart, the hearts of your teammates, and the hearts of the people to whom you will minister. Ask Him to reveal His will and to move during your time at Puente. It is strongly recommended that each team member have prayer partners who will pray for them before, during, and after the trip. Team members are encouraged to spend regular times of prayer and worship with their teammates, their prayer partners, and alone before, during, and after the trip. Fasting before the trip is also recommended.