

Corazon de Vida Foundation

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Volunteer Bus Trips to Baja Orphanages

What is the procedure to register for a trip?

Corazon de Vida has an online reservation system in place for our orphanage trips. The trip cost is \$75 and includes transportation on a charter bus, a craft project, and a delicious lunch with the kids. Everyone including children must register and pre-pay for their seat. Once a successful reservation has been made, a trip confirmation email and a receipt of payment are sent. If the trip is sold out, you can add your name to the waitlist if you wish to be contacted in case a place opens up. A Parent Consent Form must be completed if you are under 18 and are traveling without a parent. A link to this form will be part of the registration process.

How much of the \$75.00 bus fee is donated to the orphanage?

None. The \$75.00 fee covers the cost of the chartered bus, the driver, food, supplies, and craft for the day. It is important for each volunteer attending a CDV bus trip to also raise money to help feed the children after your visit. Consider creating a pledge page to raise money, it is fun and easy. A link for creating a CHAMPION fundraising page will be included in the registration process.

What is the process for entering Mexico?

The bus will drop us off at the border crossing and we enter Mexico via pedestrian entry. All items on the bus must be unloaded and carried by hand and placed through the X-ray machines. The bus will also go through an inspection and an X-ray machine. Once cleared, the bus will pick up on the other side of the pedestrian entry point and will continue on to the orphanage.

What identification is required for entry to MEXICO?

A valid passport or permanent US resident card is required for non-Mexican citizens. SENTRI or GLOBAL ENTRY cards are not valid to enter Mexico, you must have a valid passport. You are also required to complete a Mexican immigration form. We will provide a link to that form as part of the trip registration process.

What is the process for coming back across into the United States?

The bus will drop us off at the border crossing and we enter the United States via the walk thru immigration. You must take all personal items with you from the bus like backpacks, purses, pillows, etc. The officers will ask you questions like your citizenship, where you were born, the purpose of your visit to Mexico, and review your identification. Fruits and vegetables are not allowed to cross even if they were purchased in the US. Transporting fruits or vegetables into the US can be subject to FINES. The bus meets us at a designated area across the border as explained by your trip leader.

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What identification is required for return to the USA?

A valid USA Passport, SENTRI or GLOBAL ENTRY Card is required for a USA citizen. If not a US Citizen, you must bring a valid passport and visa, or permanent resident card. You are responsible for getting yourself back to the USA by presenting the border/customs agent with the proper ID/documentation.

Can kids participate in the trips?

We encourage parents and their children to attend these trips but do ask that the child be at least 8 years old. While on site, they can participate in a craft project, play games and have lunch together with the orphanage kids.

Why can't we stop and shop at the border?

The trip route is from the US pick-up locations, to the orphanage and back. No other stops on the Mexico side. Our trip's focus is on the children and we want to spend the most time possible with the children. We have a limited amount of time and we are unable to make unnecessary stops. This also ensures everyone's safety.

What exactly do we do for the day?

We spend the day making lunch, making crafts, and playing with the kids. This is our opportunity to provide love and support! We encourage reading a book in English or Spanish to a child or teaching them simple English phrases. The children enjoy playing with new friends so it is common to see people playing soccer, basketball, jump rope, UNO, helping with homework and much, much more. It is a super fun day. Please, no makeup or finger nail polish as it is not allowed at most homes or schools.

Can I leave the orphanage facility during the trip?

For the safety of the volunteers and the children we ask that you stay at the facility. At no time are the children who reside at the orphanage to be taken off the facility grounds without the prior approval of the home director.

Can I leave my stuff on the bus?

Most people will bring a backpack of personal items and take it with them to the orphanage. However, you can leave items on the bus, but you do so at your own risk. While we are at the facility, the bus driver will remain on the bus, however, CDV or the bus company is not responsible for lost or stolen items. It is strongly recommended that you keep your identification with you at all times. Do not bring expensive jewelry or electronic equipment!

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Can I bring my own food?

Yes. Bring water, snacks and food for your own needs, but do not try to bring fruits or vegetables back across to the US as they will be confiscated at the border.

Can I drink the water?

We will have bottled water on the bus, and we also recommend that volunteers bring their own bottled water to drink during the trip. Water served during lunch at the orphanage will be clean filtered water.

Do I have to speak Spanish?

Speaking Spanish is not a requirement as the children are used to communicating with non-Spanish-speaking volunteers. Practice your Spanish with the children, and teach them English.

Can I bring used clothes and/or toys?

The Mexican customs prohibit the crossing of used clothing as a donation and everything we bring on the bus trip will be inspected. If we have items on the bus that are not approved by the Border Officials, our bus could be sent back or we could be asked to leave and forfeit the items that are not allowed into Mexico.

Can I bring sports equipment?

The children love to play sports. You can bring jump rope, soccer balls, and basketballs. Please no bats or baseballs – too dangerous.

Can I get community service credit for the trips?

You can receive up to 10 hours of community service for your trip participation, depending on the pickup location. Feel free to ask your bus trip leader for help with this.

Can I drop off donations of food or clothes at the CDV office?

We do not have any storage space at the CDV office. If you have items that you would like to bring to donate, we request that you email trips@corazondevida.org and let us know what you will bring. You will receive a link to our Amazon Wish List with your trip confirmation. This is the list of supplies needed by the orphanages. Supplies are delivered to the orphanages during our regular visits.

When I sponsor a child does that money go directly to that child?

Sponsorship of a specific child provides funding to the home and the money is pooled with other donations to cover food, water, utilities and other basic needs.

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Can I adopt a child?

Unfortunately, we are not involved in the process of adoption and neither do the orphanages. The Mexican Social Services department handles adoptions, however, for international adoptions from the US, the process needs to go through an adoption agency that is authorized to do Mexico adoptions and they will work with the Mexican social services department on the process.