



Its **Your** Mission

Mexico Travel Guide

Buckner International seeks to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ by ministering to orphan children throughout the world.

**“Come, you who are blessed by my Father;
Take your inheritance,
The kingdom prepared for you since
the creation of the world.**

**For I was hungry
and you gave Me something to eat,
I was thirsty
and you gave Me something to drink,
I was a stranger and you invited Me in,
I needed clothes and you clothed me,
I was sick and you looked after Me,
I was in prison and you came to visit Me...**

**I tell you the truth,
Whatever you did for one of
the least of these brothers of mine,
you did for Me.”**

Matthew 25:34-36, 40



MissionsFAQ

Who is Buckner?

Buckner International is a Christian social service agency with more than 130 years of experience in dealing with children and youth in crisis. Buckner Children and Family Services (BCFS) is one division of Buckner International.

Buckner Missions seeks to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ by ministering to orphan children throughout the world. Buckner ministers to orphan children by giving humanitarian aid, including shoes from our national "Shoes for Orphan Souls" shoe drive, helping make orphanage improvements, developing programs, ministering through construction projects, and taking people on short-term mission trips.



with the children for only a short amount of time, bonds will form quickly. They are so open to Christ's love in you! Please take this opportunity to pray for each child (this may be the only time in their lives they are prayed for). We will guide you to the openness of each orphanage director to evangelism. Do not miss an opportunity to share the love of Christ.

Do I need to get shots for this trip?

Consult your personal doctor and the Center for Disease Control website (www.cdc.gov).

All countries require you to have an updated tetanus shot, and most countries require additional shots.

What if I get sick on this trip?

Most of the minor discomforts and illnesses that occur during international travel can be taken care of with over-the-counter medicines. Consult your doctor or pharmacist for over-the-counter and prescription

medicines to help you adjust to jet-lag and other potential health issues. Pack prescription medication that you might need along with diarrhea and upset stomach medication, cough and cold medicine, cough drops, aspirin and pain reliever.

WE RECOMMEND YOU CARRY THESE ITEMS IN YOUR CARRY-ON. If there were a serious illness or accident, staff would be available to immediately transport you to a safe hospital for quality health care.

Who will be in charge of the team?

From the time you enter the country to the time you depart, you will be under the supervision of employees of Buckner International.



Will I be safe?

Some amount of risk always exists when you choose to travel overseas. We take every precaution to ensure the safest trip possible. We consult state travel advisories and in-country ground staff, train the trip participants to be cautious, and pray for God's wisdom and guidance.

What will I do?

Relationship building is one of the most important opportunities we have with these children who, for the most part, are very limited in the number of relationships they have outside the orphanage walls. Though we are



MissionsFAQ

Please refer to the travel insurance description located in this manual for more information.

How much money should I take?

Your trip cost is all-inclusive. You should bring money for souvenirs and occasional snacks along the way. Bills need to be new (large-face bills) with no marks or tears. Small bills (1s, 5s, 10s, 20s) are recommended for shopping at markets. Credit cards are accepted in some major stores, but traveler checks are not. The amount of money you bring depends on what type of shopper you are.



Will my money and other valuables be safe?

We make every effort to have very secure hotels, but you should never leave money, plane tickets or passports in your rooms. If you have other valuables, lock them in your suitcases before you leave the room each day. Split up your money between you and your spouse/friend and try to leave small amounts in your wallet so that you do not have to get into your money belts in a public place. Please leave jewelry at home and do not take any valuables that might attract attention. Remember not to pack cash or valuables in checked luggage as well.

Can I drink the water?

No. You may not drink the water. Bottled water for drinking and brushing your teeth will be provided. If you need additional water (or soft drinks), it is usually available for purchase at kiosks outside the hotel or in shops surrounding the hotel lobby. Remember to have a few bottles with you for our plane ride overseas.



How will I be prepared for the trip?

We will have an orientation meeting (manual included) that will prepare you for your mission trip. A video of the orientation will be mailed to out-of-state participants and those unable to attend.

What will we eat?

All of your meals will be in the hotel, orphanage or restaurant. You should pack a few snack foods to eat between meals: peanut butter crackers, granola bars, nuts, raisins, crackers, etc. Most of the trip participants will tell you they get plenty of food at the meals! There are small stores where you may buy bottled water, soft drinks, juice, or small snacks. Bottled water is included in each meal; soft drinks are available in most restaurants for an additional charge.

MissionsFAQ

What do I pack?

Refer to baggage allowance guidelines for your airline. Each person will be allowed two checked bags weighing approximately 50 pounds each (one bag for personal belongings and one for supplies and donations). Refer to the packing list in the manual as a guide.

Where will I stay?

While in the city, you will be staying at a hotel. Rooms are based on double-occupancy unless you have requested and are paying extra for a single room. Some mission teams may stay at the orphanage campsite while leading ministry camps.

What will the weather be like?

Consult weather websites (www.wunderground.com) for weather forecasts and histories. Dressing in layers is recommended.



How will I be able to communicate when I do not speak the language?

It is amazing what can be communicated without language. Smiles and hugs go a long way! We have an incredible team of interpreters available to you during the trip.

What is the time difference (based on CST)?

Consult the following website for exact time difference based on the time of year you are traveling: www.worldtimezone.com. Keep the time difference in mind when making calls to your loved ones at home, or when they are making calls to you.

Will I be able to communicate via phone or internet?

The hotels we stay in should have a business center where e-mail can be accessed. Our busy time schedule may not allow daily access (as business centers close at different hours and sometimes are closed by the time we return to the hotel for the day). Phone cards can also usually be used, though some hotels require a \$50 deposit or do not allow outgoing international phone calls. Be prepared to communicate minimally with loved ones back home. Some trip participants have begun renting T-Mobile World Cellular Phones.

Will a Laundry Service be available?

Most hotels are able to do laundry. Cost is per item; one item costs approximately \$1.

Do other countries operate on different electric voltage?

Yes. Bring adapters and converters for any electrical devices; they are located in most general stores (Target, Wal-Mart, etc.) and are country-specific.



Rules Reminder

As a representative of Christ and Buckner International while overseas, we ask that you refrain from the following:

1. Possession or use of any drugs
2. Possession or use of any firearms
3. Possession or use of alcohol of any kind

In order to be an effective witness through your actions, we ask that you:

1. Refrain from romantic involvement of any kind with any person (including interpreters) other than your spouse.

2. Stay with the group and do not leave the lodging complex or group at any time (alone or with your

interpreter) without special approval from the Buckner staff.



Orphan Types

Social Orphans:

Many of the children have families. Some grew up in a family for several years, but their families could not take care of them for various reasons. Sometimes it is because the parents could not afford to raise them, other times it is because the parents divorced, were widowed, hospitalized or imprisoned and could not care for them. Some parents have had their rights revoked by the courts.

Some children see their parents several times a year. They can go on vacation with their families and can go home periodically.

Others have extended family members who care for them. They come and visit from time to time.

Some have siblings scattered among other orphanages. Others have siblings with them in the same orphanage.

There are some who have a sibling or two that have been adopted and therefore are struggling with the reality that they will most likely not be adopted.

Some children have parents in the same town as the orphanage and yet never get visited by a family member.

Some have lived on the streets.

True Orphans:

Abandoned. Have no parents or no knowledge of a family because they have been in an orphanage setting for their entire life.

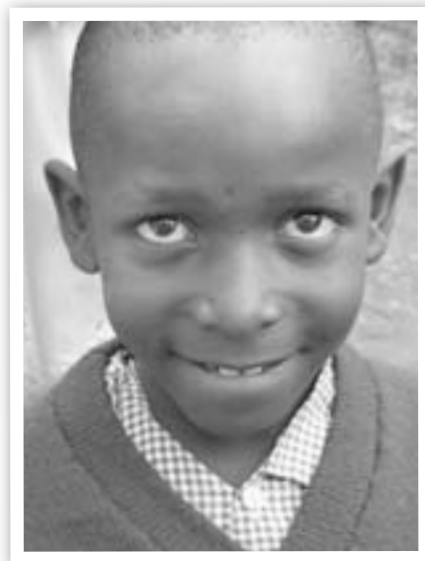
Parents are deceased.



Adoptable Orphans:

State laws require parents to visit their child at least once every six months. If a child is a "true orphan" or if the parents of a "social orphan" choose not to visit them in the first

six months, and never again after that time, they can terminate their rights as parents to make that child available for adoption.



Visitation Guidelines

Please do not make promises you cannot keep!

You will make a connection with certain kids and want to help them and bring them home. The best thing to do is simply love on the children and teenagers in Jesus' name for the time God has brought you to their country.

If you would like to write the children, please get their full name, orphanage #, and birth date or age. Then you can e-mail your letters to our follow-up team and they will translate the letters and e-mail you back the children's letters.

Be aware of the impact your questions may have on the child.

Questions that may not be appropriate involve the following subjects:

School performance – such questions may cause anxiety for the child since oftentimes these children struggle with school for a variety of emotional and situational reasons.

Biological parents and past family life – these subjects should be avoided unless the child initiates the discussion.

Relationship with foster parents or caretakers – the child is likely to feel pressured to respond in the affirmative when in the presence of his or her foster parents or caretakers.



Questions that are more appropriate to ask involve the following subjects:

- Favorite toys and belongings
- Camps and friends
- Holiday activities
- Hobbies and free-time activities
- New skills and talents

These guidelines were developed by psychologists working with children from foster care and transitional living programs in the Vladimir region of Russia



Orphan Children

Important Notes

All orphans want a home and a family.

Most children do not have visitors.

They don't own the clothes on their back; even that is a property of the state.

They are adolescents who reach out for love. They are growing, changing, trying to figure things out, and they truly realize their plight.

Most of these orphans are the poorest of the poor. Many populations are generally poor and these kids are poorer than the average individual.

Some of the children you will meet have been through a Buckner VBS or summer camp program. Some have accepted Christ into their hearts.

In one way, orphans are just like us... each of them has a story to share.

Orphans bond quicker to you than normal children. Embracing you comes easy for them. Hug them back... they get very little affection on a regular basis. A little hug goes a long way!

For some children, because they have been raised in an institutional-like setting, not in a family, their brains



have formed differently. They may ask you a question, and two minutes later ask you the same question. They do not remember or realize that they just asked you the question. This is called Sensory Motor Integration Disorder.

Some of these sweet children rock back and forth ... especially when they are singing or listening to music. It is a comfort disorder they have and one way to help them is to simply touch them on the back or shoulders... and the rocking will stop.

They listen to all sorts of music and often watch a ton of TV. There is not much monitoring of activities on the caregivers part to actually screen what they listen to or what programs they watch.

They will look at you like a movie star all the way from America! Expect bombardment when you enter these orphanages. They love you already!

In general, orphans are smaller than other children their age. If you see a child that looks about 10 or 11

Orphan Children

years old, chances are they are about 13 or 14 years old. Physically, they are skinny and some are malnourished.

Some have health issues because of lack of nutrition through the years.

Orphanages are divided into two systems: one for normal kids and one system for special needs kids. Each child takes a psychological test at the age of 3 and that determines the system in which they will grow up.

Some children have been abused sexually, physically and emotionally. Some by parents, older kids in the orphanage, and possibly even from a caregiver.

All of the younger children infected with HIV are in a special hospital. Some of the older teenagers that are HIV positive are in regular orphanages. There are only a handful of these children and youth in the general orphanage population. They do not receive enough money from the state to run the orphanage properly. Meals are not very nutritious.

In general, they get bathed two times a week and are given a stack of clothes to last the next several days. This all happens, including group showers, in an assembly line manner in most cases.

Most do not have life skills and social skills. They have not learned how to cook, sew, save money, spend money, shop at a market, fix a car... etc.

Issues they face are smoking, gang mentality, homosexuality, promiscuity, being considered social outcasts, and abuse in all ways.

Medical care is minimal.

You will see some physical scars on some and numerous emotional scars on so many others.



Travel Checklist

- Bible and devotional reading
- Trip Manual and Journal
- Passport (visa inside) with Xerox copy
- Ticket (will be given to you at the airport)
- Money for souvenirs (please take clean, new large-faced bills)
- Money belt (money, passport/visa, and ticket will be kept on you at all times)
- Phone numbers, addresses, email addresses of family and friends
- Camera, film, batteries -Put film in carry-on; x-rays on checked luggage will ruin film
- Toilet paper or small packets of tissue
- Antibacterial hand cleanser and wipes
- Travel alarm clock
- Prescription drugs for entire length of trip (place in carry-on luggage)
- Over the counter medicine (cold & cough, upset stomach, pain relief, Tylenol PM)
- Toiletries (shampoo, soap, toothbrush & paste, personal hygiene items)
- One nice set of clothing; can be slacks or skirt for women and nice shirt, khakis for men
- Everyday clothing (khakis, jeans, t-shirts and sweatshirts are fine for the orphanages.)
**** Buckner International asks all trip participants and workers to dress respectfully and appropriately according to the country culture, and the type of orphanage ministry work being performed, to the Glory of God ****
- Pack one change of clothing in carry-on luggage
- Comfortable pair of indoor shoes
- Washcloths
- Instant tea or coffee with heating element (if desired)
- Eyeglasses/Contact Lenses (with extras for emergency)
- Adapter and converter for electrical items (these are country specific)
- Snacks that withstand travel and heat
- Small flashlight with batteries
- Small Calculator (for converting money)



Travel Checklist

FALL TRIPS:

- Warm comfortable walking boots (waterproof if possible), long underwear or warm outer clothing (layering is best, rain coat with lining, gloves, hat)

SUMMER TRIPS:

- Bathing suit, Sunscreen, Bug Spray, Hat to block sun

OPTIONAL:

- Umbrella
- Ziploc bags
- Artificial sweeteners, packaged salad dressings
- Safety pens/travel sewing kit for emergencies
- Labels with email address/ mailing address for kids (buy stamps there)
- Fun things for kids
- Book/magazines for airplane
- Gifts for interpreters (hand lotions, jewelry, devotionals, praise CDs)

REMEMBER:

- Give emergency numbers to family and friends
- Airline allows 1 carry-on bag within their standard size and weight limitations
- Each person is allowed 2 checked bags (not exceeding 70 lbs).

**** Please keep in mind that one of the checked bags will be provided, packed and filled with humanitarian aid from Buckner. ****

About Mexico



Country Facts

History: Mexico was the site of advanced Amerindian civilizations and came under Spanish rule for three centuries before achieving independence early in the 19th century. Mexico has an impressive history of highly developed cultures, including those of the Olmecs, Mayas, Toltecs, and Aztecs that existed long before the Spanish conquest. Today, there are 62 indigenous people groups in Mexico that speak 288 living languages. A devaluation of the peso in late 1994 threw Mexico into economic turmoil, triggering the worst recession in over half a century. The nation continues to make an impressive recovery. Ongoing economic and social concerns include low real wages, underemployment for a large segment of the populations, inequitable income distribution, and



few advancement opportunities for the largely Amerindian population in the impoverished southern states. For 71 years, Mexico's national government had been controlled by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which had won every presidential race and most gubernatorial races until the

July 2000 presidential election of Vicente Fox Quesada of the National Action Party (PAN) He was succeeded in 2006 by another PAN candidate Felipe Calderon.

Location: Bordering countries are Belize 250 km, Guatemala 962 km, and the United States with the largest border of 3,141 km.

Size: slightly less than three times the size of Texas

Population: 108,700,891 (July 2007 est.) -- 30% under age 14, 64% are 15-64 years, and only 6% over age 64 – Median age: 25.6 – Population growth rate: 1.153%

HIV/AIDS Population: 160,000 (2003 est.)

Climate: varies from tropical to desert, unusually temperate climate year-round with the Mexican summer being the rainy season

Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (Amerindian-Spanish) 60%, Amerindian or predominantly Amerindian 30%, white 9%, other

1% (62 Amerindian or Indigenous people groups)

Languages: Spanish, various Mayan, Nahuatl, and 286 other regional indigenous languages

Religions: Roman Catholic 76.5%, Protestant 6.3%, other .3%, unspecified 13.8%, none 3.1%.



While most Mexicans profess the Roman Catholic faith, a number of indigenous people include strong pre-Hispanic Mayan elements in their religion (syncretism).

Literacy: total population over age 15: 91%, male: 92.4%, female: 89.6% In some regions such as northern Chiapas, close to 50% of adults are functionally illiterate.

Unemployment rate: 3.2% plus underemployment of 25%

Population below poverty line: 35.5%, (20.4% of the labor force earns less than \$2 dollars per day and 4.4% earn less than \$1 dollar per day)

Government: federal republic

About Mexico

Capital: Mexico City, (Distrito Federal) 2nd largest city in the world with a population of 28 million
Administrative divisions: 31 states

Economy (Agriculture & Industry)

Labor force: 41.51 million (2006 est.), agriculture 18%, industry 24%, services 58%

Agriculture - products: corn, wheat, soybeans, rice, beans, cotton, coffee, fruit, tomatoes; beef, poultry, dairy products; wood products

Industry: food and beverages, tobacco, chemicals, iron and steel, petroleum, mining, textiles, clothing, motor vehicles, consumer durables, tourism

Currency: Peso (10.9P = \$1 USD)

Culture

Family life:

- Family is very important aspect of the culture with family members dependent on one another. There is a high value on relationships, both family and friends. Mexicans are more relationship oriented, while Americans tend to be more time oriented. Valuing a relationship and finishing the conversation often results in being late to the next engagement.

- Mexican society can be characterized as a patriarchal society. Relations between men and women are unequal, with the

man being superior and the women being subservient particularly in rural areas.

- Children remain in the home usually until they are married and usually commute to the university from home. Mexican families find it strange that many American teens move out of their parent's home when they attend university or work before marriage.

Food:

- Mexican cuisine is rich in proteins, vitamins and minerals. The most internationally recognized dishes include tacos, quesadillas, enchiladas, and mole among others.

Regional dishes include mole poblano, chiles en nogada and chalupas from Puebla; cabrito and machaca from Monterrey, cochinita pibil from Yucatán, Tlayudas from Oaxaca, as well as barbacoa, chilaquiles, milanesas, and many others.

- Corn is a staple food. It is most often eaten in the form of a tortilla.
- The main Mexican ingredients consist of chicken, pork, beef, potatoes, corn, tomatoes, peppers, chillis, onions, peanuts, avocados and guavas.

- Popular beverages include water flavored with a variety of fruit juices, and cinnamon-flavored hot chocolate cooked with water and beaten into foam.

- Real Mexican food is quite unlike the dishes found in most Mexican and Tex-Mex restaurants. Mexican cuisine has some superb rich or spicy dishes.

Sports: The national traditional sports of Mexico are Bullfighting and Charrería. Football (soccer) is also highly appreciated and is regarded to be the most popular contemporary recreation in the country.

Arts: Mexico is known worldwide for its folk art traditions, mostly derived from a combination of the indigenous and Spanish crafts. Particularly notable among handicrafts are the clay pottery made in the valley of Oaxaca and the bird and animal figures made in the village of Tonalá. Colorfully embroidered cotton garments, cotton or wool shawls and outer garments, and colorful baskets and rugs are seen everywhere.

Customs & Traditions

- There are many customs and traditions attributed to Mexican culture, which are especially evident during the many festivities and celebrations. Many have evolved during the years but still have their roots in times long gone by of the Aztecs and Mayas and also of Iberian influences.

- Many of the men wear cotton shirts and trousers, many of which are



About Mexico

indigenous to their people group. They also wear leather sandals known as huaraches. Sombreros are wide-brimmed felt or straw hats. They wear ponchos when it is cold or when it rains. The women wear blouses with long, full skirts. They also wear plastic sandals. The women cover their heads with the rebozos (fringed shawls)

• Mealtimes are important to Mexicans. Eating is not only about the delicious dishes typical of Spain but also about socializing – a great way to get together with family and friends and enjoy their company. In Mexico, friends and family always come first.

• Once they know one another, people greet each other: men with a handshake and women or people of the opposite sex will kiss one another once on the cheek. Men and male colleagues never kiss one another unless it is a child, father or uncle. Christian men may often shake hands, followed by a hug, and then a final handshake.

Holidays

- January 1—New Year's
- January 6—Day of the Wise Men (Three Kings visit to baby Jesus)
- February 5—Constitution Day
- March 21—Benito Juarez Day
- April—Holy Week
- May 5—Cinco de Mayo
- May 10—Mother's Day
- September 16—Mexican Independence Day
- October 12—Dia de la Raza
- November 1-2—Day of the Dead

- November 20—Mexican Revolution Day
- December 12—Virgin of Guadalupe Day (Patron Saint of Mexico)
- December 16—Las Posadas
- December 25—Christmas



Orphans and at-risk children

- There are 1,600,000 orphans 0-17 years old in Mexico (2005 est. by UNICEF)
- Mexico City has 1,900,000 underprivileged and street children. 240,000 of these are abandoned children. (Action International Ministries)
- In the central area of Mexico City there are 11,172 street children, 1,020 live in the street and 10,152 work there (City of Mexico/ Fideicomiso, Report, 1991)

Buckner in Mexico

In August 2007, Buckner began exploring ministry opportunities in the Mexico interior, as well as along the northern Mexico border with the United States. Buckner had been made aware of an opportunity in Arcelia, Guerrero to help start an

orphanage in collaboration with a local donor and two Dallas churches. During the last quarter of 2007, more doors for ministry opportunities have also opened in Oaxaca, Mexico City, Guanajuato, Sinaloa, Camargo, Juarez, Nogales, and Tijuana/ Tecate.

Buckner services and country support include:

- On-going humanitarian aid through Gift from the Heart program and Shoes for Orphan Souls.
- On-going mission trips throughout the year ministering to the children in orphanages.
- Volunteer ministry opportunities with at-risk children through community centers and feeding programs. Also, provide job skill training for single mothers in these community centers.
- Pilot foster care program in collaboration with a Mexico City church for children born in prison, abandoned children, and babies saved from abortion through the ministry of a Crisis Pregnancy Center.
- Build and help develop day care program for at-risk children of single working moms in Juarez.

Typical mission trips include

- Church Group Trips
- Shoes for Orphan Souls Trips
- Medical/Dental Mission Trips
- Construction Trips
- Community Ministry Activities