# MISSION TRIP

# guidebook

BRIGHT HILL COLLECTIVE

almost all the answers to all the questions you ever had about going on a mission trip with bright hill collective

# Welcome!

**We're so glad you're going to El Salvador with us.**

We love nothing more than introducing people to our friends and neighbors there and inviting them into the work God is doing. You're not just taking a trip. You're stepping into a ministry that has been part of this community since 2004.

Thank you for saying yes to being part of it.

**ABOUT THIS GUIDE**
We hope this guide is full of helpful information. Unfortunately, we can't answer every question in one book. **Because each trip and tripper is unique, we'll need to give you some information that's specific to you and your trip. Remember to check your email for updates from us as we get closer to your trip date.**

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# What to Expect

*what a bright hill trip is like*

## Short-term trips with a long-term impact

Bright Hill trips might feel a little different than what you've experienced before on other mission trips.

We don't go door to door or hand out tracts. Instead, we work side by side with our neighbors—building, serving, and spending time together. Since we first started this work in 2004, we've found that relationships open doors for the Gospel in a way nothing else can.

Our trips are:

**Work-focused** (with plenty of fun mixed in)

**Relational** (getting to know people, not just projects)

You'll be there for only a week, but the work continues after you leave. And many people come back to pick it up again.

Each trip is unique, but you'll always have many opportunities to serve. You might help build a home for a local family, teach vacation Bible school, or share a testimony during a Bible study.

You may do all of those things.

That's part of the beauty of our trips. Each person has the opportunity to do a little bit of everything, regardless of previous experience.

If you've never operated a chainsaw but are up for a challenge or if you never acted before but think you might like to help out with a VBS skit, this is your time to try it out.

We hope you'll also have a little time while you're there to reflect on the work you're doing, to find your favorite spot to read your Bible and have a cup of coffee each morning, and to connect with the friends and neighbors we've been blessed to work with in El Salvador.

# What to Expect

## *where you'll be staying*

### How "rough" are we going to "rough it" on a Bright Hill trip?

We know that you might have questions about how nice Bright Hill's accommodations are but that you might be too embarrassed to ask. You know that this is a mission trip, so you should be grateful for whatever accommodation you get, act like everything's fine, and feel #blessed.

Yeah, we get that, but that's not Bright Hill. So, we're going to give you some of the info we'd want to know if we'd never been on a Bright Hill trip.

**Colonia la Colmenera Lote #10**
**Calle Plan del Pino, Ciudad Delgado**
**San Salvador, El Salvador**

*Searchable on Google Maps by inputting this address or "Fundación SHIP" (our old name).

We take room assignments seriously, and we work hard to match you with just the right roommate and just the right room. **If you have a special room request, please let us know as soon as possible, and we will make every effort to accommodate.**

# rooms

Rooms are modest but nice with comfortable beds and air conditioning.

Married couples stay together in a room; people traveling solo will be either in a private room or in a shared room of no more than four people.

We have one two-bedroom apartment and one three-bedroom apartment  that, when possible, we use for families traveling together or for larger groups of solo travelers.

# beds

Our mattresses are comfortable. If you need anything like an extra pillow or blanket, just ask.

# bathrooms

Many of our rooms are equipped with full bathrooms. For those rooms that don't have attached baths, full bathrooms are available throughout the facility and will be a short walk from your room.

# Before You Go

## spiritual prep

**Pray before you go.**
As you prepare, begin praying now (even just a couple of minutes a day) for your trip—how God might use you, what He might teach you, and for the people you'll meet.

**Prepare a 3-minute testimony.**
Prepare a short (2–3 minute) version of your story and how God has worked in your life. You may have opportunities to share it.

You might be working with a translator to tell your story. Remember to speak slowly enough for the translator to translate and to use shorter sentences. Take a break after each sentence or phrase to give the translator an opportunity to convey your words accurately.

# Before You Go

## team culture & attitude

**"Be excellent to each other."**

Our pop culture reference might be a little dated, but the wisdom of Bill and Ted is timeless.

You're about to spend a week working with a team of people you may or may not know very well, in a culture that will be new to most of you. Doing that well (and reflecting the love of Jesus at the same time) means committing to all of us treating each other with Christ-like love and patience.

### Our Most Important Practices

- Be flexible.
- Follow team leaders, even when it doesn't make sense (perhaps especially when it doesn't make sense).
- Pray for each other, both before and during the trip.
- Remember who you represent:
  - Jesus
  - The United States
  - Bright Hill Collective

# Before You Go

*practical prep*

## In the weeks before your trip, check these items off your "to do" list.

You'll be travel ready, and we'll be better prepared to make your trip to El Salvador safe and comfortable.

- Make 2 copies of your **passport**.
  - Leave one copy at home with a trusted person.
  - Keep one copy in your carry-on (separate from your passport).
  - Carry your real passport where you can access it easily while traveling.
- Give a copy of our **contact information** (included on page 28) to a trusted person.
- Register with the **U.S. Embassy**.
  - Go to mytravel.state.gov/s/step.
  - For further instructions, feel free to email contact@brighthillcollective.org.
- Download your **airline app** (usually United or American).
- Tell Bright Hill staff about any **allergies, food sensitivities, and medical needs** you might have.

### Mangoes

We love these little guys, and mango trees grow all over Bright Hill's property. Unfortunately, some people are allergic to mango skins. If you have bad reactions to poison ivy, stay safe by keeping your distance around mango skins. You might be able to eat the mangoes, but let someone else do the peeling.

# Before You Go

*practical prep*

- Let us know if you will be bringing a **CPAP machine** and will need **distilled water** for it.
- Consider updating your **tetanus shot** if it's been 10 years since your last one.
- Ask your doctor if any additional **immunizations** are recommended.
- **Request mobility assistance** when you check in for your flight, or contact the airline if you think you'll need it.

## Airport Assistance

In El Salvador, the ramp from the plane to the terminal is long and very steep. Even if you usually don't need assistance, you might find yourself needing assistance there.

**A wheelchair assistant will:**

- Help you off the plane or meet you outside the plane door
- Guide you through immigration
- Assist with baggage and customs
- Take you all the way to meet our drivers

# Pre-Trip Info

## checked bags and travel teams

**When you hear us talking about "checked bags," "travel teams," and "travel team leaders," this is what we mean...**

### Packing for Your Trip

You'll pack for your trip in a carry-on suitcase and a personal item (a backpack or purse). Details about what to pack are on the next few pages.

### Checked Bags

Usually, your travel team leader will give you a bag to be checked in under your name during airport check-in. That bag will be assigned to you by a travel team leader.

**What's in your checked bag?** Great question. Our travel team leaders will have a manifest that lists the contents of each bag. Bags may contain building materials, food, supplies for Bible studies, or whatever is needed.

### Travel Teams

Each travel group will be broken into smaller teams and assigned a travel team leader.

### Travel Team Leaders

Travel team leaders are there to help you through your journey to El Salvador. They're not experts, but they usually are people who have traveled with us before, are comfortable with navigating airports, and said yes to leading a team.

They'll help you get where you're going. If you've never traveled with us before and/or are traveling alone, you'll have someone looking out for you.

# Packing
*the basics*

**Pack like you're going somewhere comfortable. Be ready to get a little messy.**

### What to Pack In

+ 1 carry-on
+ 1 personal item (backpack or purse)

### What You'll Need (the basics)

+ clothes
+ shoes (must include a pair of closed-toe shoes)
+ prescription medicines
+ sunscreen and mosquito repellant (See page 11 for info about liquids larger than 3.4 ounces.)

### What You Won't Need

x towels and bedding
x toiletries (bathrooms are stocked with shampoo, conditioner, and body wash.)
x electrical adapters
x Salvadoran currency (El Salvador uses U.S. dollars.)
x Anything that would break your heart if got lost or broken/harmed

This is our VERY basic list. For a more comprehensive list, check out pages 13 & 14!

*United Airlines specifications for height, width, and depth of baggage allowed on board, circa 2026. Always verify with airline website before travel.

### Carry-On Suitcase

### Personal Item

# Packing

## *items that can't go on board*

Carry-on suitcases aren't big, but they're big enough for a week's worth of clothing and the basics. But what about things that just don't fit? We're not talking about wants here (not things like your favorite hair gel). **We're talking about needs: sunscreen, insect repellent, work boots, prescription liquid medicines that are over 3.4 ounces, or a gift for the child you sponsor.** Here's what to do with those items:

### Liquids larger than 3.4 ounces

- Place in a one-gallon Ziploc bag
- Label the bag with your name
- Drop off at the front door of 801 North Rosemary, Bryan, by the Sunday before your trip

### Larger items

- Label with your name
- Ensure that all pieces will stay together (For example, tie bootlaces together.)
- Drop off at the front door of 801 North Rosemary, Bryan, by the Sunday before your trip

### a couple of important notes:

1. **Do not include scented items (perfume, cologne, aftershave).**
2. **Liquids can leak and react in strange ways at high altitudes.**

   **We suggest securing lids well and double bagging.**

# Packing

*clothing guidelines*

## Think: practical, modest, and work-appropriate.

We dress in a way that reflects and respects the culture we're serving in. Salvadoran Christian culture has very conservative views about clothing. And, even though these views aren't always consistent with our own views or how we dress at home, we need to dress in a way that fits the culture we are serving.

Our neighbors in El Salvador refer to our team members as "missionaries," so their expectations for how we all dress and conduct ourselves are very high.

- Shorts must have a **minimum 6-inch inseam**
- Shirts must have **sleeves or wide straps**
- Shirts must be worn at all times in public
- Dresses and skirts must be **knee-length or longer**

## Tops

this

not that

this

not that

## Dresses

this

not that

## Bottoms

this

not that

this

not that

this

not that

# Packing
## checklist

This packing checklist is just a suggestion (except for the passport). We're not checking to make sure you've got a shirt for each day or that you've brought $150 in spending money. Please bring clothes, and please bring a little cash. How much you bring of each is up to you. That said, **please keep in mind that you won't have access to a washing machine.**

- [ ] **Passport**

- [ ] **Clothes**
  - 3-5 jeans, skirts, and/or shorts with a minimum 6-inch inseam
  - 1 top per day of the trip
  - clothes appropriate for church and outreach services: dresses or skirts; pants or jeans with a nice shirt or a Bright Hill trip shirt
  - shoes: Closed-toe shoes for worksite; sandals/flip flops around the building
  - work clothes
  - swimsuit (modest)

- [ ] **Prescription Medicines**

  Bring more than what you'll need for your trip, just to be safe.

- [ ] **Toiletries:**

  We stock all showers with body wash, shampoo, and conditioner. You will need:
  - Toothbrush/toothpaste
  - Hairbrush
  - Makeup/beauty products (must be under 3.4 ounces)

- [ ] **Bible**

- [ ] **Water Bottle**

**You will never get home from a trip and think: "I really wish I had packed more stuff!"**

## Money

- $100-150 cash should be adequate. Check emails for excursion updates. No extra money is required for excursions, but there might be optional activities that cost money.
- Credit cards can be used many places (including some vendors at the souvenir market). Notify your bank/credit card company/ID theft service if you plan to use your credit card.

## CPAP Machine (if needed)

- CPAP machines are considered medical devices and are typically allowed in addition to your regular carry-on items by most airlines.
- Because checked baggage can be lost or delayed, we do not recommend checking.

## Snacks

Take something to eat on the plane, or buy something in the airport. You will be going straight to Bright Hill from the airport (a 1-2 hour trip) with no stops for food in between.

## Extras

Flashlight, binoculars, rain poncho (summer trips) hand sanitizer, cap or hat, and jewelry (not flashy, not your good stuff).

## EpiPen (if needed)

- Keep your EpiPen in your carry-on.
- Upon arrival, notify BHC staff about where it will be kept.

- Mosquito Repellant
- Sunscreen

You'll need these, but they'll probably be too large to carry onboard.

**Check out page 11 for what to do!**

# Travel Day

*the day before you leave*

## We can't wait to see you in El Salvador!

Have these things ready to go the day before so that your travel day starts off smoothly.

- **Check in** for your flight.
  - If needed, request **airport wheelchair assistance.**
- Put your **passport** somewhere you won't forget it. (Keep it with you and easy to access—not packed away in your carry-on suitcase.)
- Set out your **team t-shirt** to wear the next day.
- Pack or purchase **food** for the flight.
  - Add your credit card during flight check-in if you plan to buy food on the plane.
- Double check the **packing list** on pages 13 & 14.
- Check items off the **Travel Day Checklist** on the next page.

**You'll go directly from the airport to Bright Hill (a 1-2 hour trip), so plan ahead for meals and snacks.**

### REAL ID

You may see a message about **REAL ID** when checking in.

**Ignore it.**

Your passport is all you need for this trip.

# Travel Day
*checklist*

**PRO TIP**
Make a bulleted list on your phone so you can check things off as you make sure that you have each item.

- [ ] Carry-on suitcase
- [ ] Personal item (purse or backpack)
- [ ] Passport
- [ ] Wallet
- [ ] Money
- [ ] Snacks
- [ ] Entertainment (book, headphones, etc.)
- [ ] Comfort items (blanket, travel pillow)
- [ ] Prescription medicines
- [ ] Any emergency medications you need

# Travel Day

## *at the departure airport*

1. Meet up with your **travel team** (if you didn't travel together).
2. Get your **Call Home Card** from your travel team leader.
3. Check your assigned **bags**.
4. Go through **TSA screening**.
5. Wait together until boarding, or have a planned time to meet up before boarding.

**Cell Phone Reminder**

To avoid unexpected international charges:

- ☑ Put your phone in airplane mode before takeoff
- ☑ Check occasionally to make sure it stays in airplane mode
- ☑ We have WiFi at the Bright Hill facility, so you might want to download WhatsApp to use there.

# Travel Day

## arrival in el salvador

1. Exit the plane, and **wait for your full team in the terminal**.

2. Proceed to **passport check**.
   - Have your **passport** and **Call Home Card** ready
   - You may be asked:
     - How long you're staying → one week
     - Why you're there → tourism
     - Where you're staying → address on your Call Home Card

3. Head to **baggage claim** (usually carousel one for United flights).

4. Help collect all checked **bags**.
   - Team leaders will check that all bags have arrived.

5. Go through **Aduana (customs)**.
   - You may be asked what you're bringing.
   - Bags may be scanned. (This is normal. Don't stress.)

6. **Exit** the airport and look for your **drivers**.
   - The drivers will be looking for Bright Hill shirts.
   - Usually, the drivers will be wearing Bright Hill shirts.

**You're almost done with your travels.**
**Just one van ride, and you'll be at Bright Hill!**

# In El Salvador

*a few guidelines*

## You're finally here and ready to go!

Keep in mind that you're in a new culture, one that looks similar to ours in many ways but really does have things that make it unique. Here are some ways to be respectful and keep our youngest neighbors safe.

### Interacting with Our Neighbors

- Do not give gifts unless you've brought enough for everyone and had the gifts approved by Bright Hill staff. This rule doesn't include gifts to sponsored students.
- Avoid comments about politics and living conditions (theirs or ours).
- Do not offer to bring anyone to the U.S.
- Side hugs are best; handshakes are great.
- No locals (children or adults) are allowed in team sleeping areas with the exception of adults doing maintenance upkeep.

### Technology Boundaries

- Do not let children use your phone or computer.
- Do not share the Bright Hill WiFi password.
- Be mindful of your social media presence.

# In El Salvador

*staying healthy*

## Medical Care

- Bright Hill provides international medical insurance.
- We have access to local medical care if needed.

## Water Quality

- All water inside our buildings is safe to drink. It goes through a 3-step purification process.
- Only drink tap water provided at Bright Hill.
- Do not drink tap water away from our facilities unless marked purified or unless Bright Hill staff say it's okay to drink.

## Hydration

- Stay hydrated.
- If you're thirsty, you've already gone too long without a drink of water.
- Prioritize drinking WATER over things like Gatorade and sports drinks.
- If you're feeling overheated, take a break in an air conditioned area, and drink some water.

# In El Salvador

*staying healthy, continued*

## Mosquito Awareness

- Mosquito-borne illnesses exist here. Teams traveling during the summer (rainy season) may encounter more mosquitos.
- Use repellent regularly.
- Avoid scented products.

## Lice

- Don't share brushes, combs, or any hair accessories.
- Keep long hair tied up.
- If someone borrows your hat, it's now that person's hat.

## More about Mosquitoes

In El Salvador, mosquitoes are tiny party crashers that nobody invited. They love warm weather and yummy fragrances, and sometimes they bring unwanted guests like dengue, Zika, and chikungunya.

The good news: A little prevention goes a long way. Think of bug spray as your superhero cape, long sleeves as stylish armor, and fragrance-free products as a big stop sign that tells mosquitoes to back off.

If you get fever, rash, body aches, or feel unusually crummy after bites, check in with a member of Bright Hill staff. Best plan? Practice prevention so you can enjoy the adventure, without having skeeters RSVP to your trip.

# In El Salvador

*staying safe*

**NON-NEGOTIABLE RULES**

- ☑ No one leaves the facility without a staff member.
- ☑ No one leaves the facility alone.

These are the two rules we take most seriously.

Tripper safety has always been a top priority for us. In the past, we had to be incredibly cautious because El Salvador was home to dangerous gangs. However, over the past few years, El Salvador has become incredibly safe. Things have changed, but we're still serious about safety.

## What Bright Hill provides

+ Secure property (walls, cameras, controlled access)
+ Strong relationships with local authorities
+ Emergency medical insurance
+ Background checks for all participants

**We want your time at Bright Hill to be memorable (for all the right reasons).**

# In El Salvador

*staying safe*

## What you can do to help maintain safety

- Stay in pairs or groups
- Carry your call-home ID card
- Keep your passport secure (we provide a safe)
- Carry only small amounts of cash
- Avoid drawing attention to yourself

### Earthquakes

Sometimes they happen, but because most earthquakes happen off the coast, we usually don't have major tremors.

Earthquakes aren't cause for major alarm. All of our buildings are built to withstand earthquakes.

**Here's what to do in case of earthquake:**

- ☑ Stay calm.
- ☑ If it lasts more than a few seconds (very unusual), head out to the driveway, and wait for it to stop.
- ☑ Follow directions from Bright Hill staff.

**So, we do everything we can to keep you safe.**

# In El Salvador

*daily routines*

## What are the days like on a Bright Hill trip? They're a little like this:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Breakfast**<br>(with a devotional time) | 7:30 am |
| **Work Time**<br>(construction projects, other work projects, home visits, prep for Bible studies) | 8:30 am - 12 pm |
| **Lunch** | 12 pm |
| **Bible Studies**<br>(each lasting one hour) | 2-5 pm |
| **Dinner** | 6:30 pm |

Are you a "clipboard and whistle" type?

When you watch The Sound of Music, do you think of Maria as a villain who disrupts all the order in the house?

Your comfort zone is about to get a little bit bigger!

Most days follow the schedule above.

Some days start a little later.
Some start a little earlier.
Some are longer, some shorter.
All are PACKED with activities.

Plans can change at any moment, so just remember to be flexible.

# In El Salvador

*excursions*

## Everyone needs a little break. Time for an excursion!

We've done all kinds of excursions over the years. You might go to the beach, a lake, or a water park.

Maybe we'll head into the city center and do some exploring. Wherever we go, it's always fun.

### Why do an excursion?

We hear you. You came to serve, not to have a vacation. For years, we didn't do excursions.

But, El Salvador is a country FULL of beauty that God created. We think it's worth taking a little time to rest and appreciate all that He has done and the ways He's worked through each team during their time here.

**Check your email for details about what your group will be doing on excursion day.**

# Timeline

## when to get things turned in

| | |
|---|---|
| **Deposit** | **Shortly after application acceptance is received.** (The deposit holds your place on the team, so please get that to us ASAP.) |
| **Airfare** | **As soon as application is accepted** (Airfare prices often fluctuate, so start looking ASAP. ) |
| **Background Checks** | **Within 24 hours of receiving the consent form** |
| **Final Payment** | **One month prior to trip departure date** |
| **Allergies/ Accommodations** | **In the application** (at least one month prior to trip departure date if not stated in the application) |
| **Oversized Items** (re: boots, tools) | **Sunday before trip departure date** |
| **Large Liquids** | **Sunday before trip departure date** |

# Emails

*what to watch for*

**For all the information that won't fit in here, we have email!**

We sure wish every we could answer every question right here in this little guidebook, but we just can't.

Each trip is unique, and each tripper is unique. That's part of the fun of these trips. For information that's specific to your trip, we'll send out emails. Below you'll find some of the topics those emails will cover and when you should expect to see them.

## Check your email for information about:

- your team's excursion
- reminder about dropping off large liquids — one week before travel
- team T-shirt pickup
- final instructions (where and when to meet to travel, travel teams, and travel team leaders) — a few days before departure

# Contact Information

*how to find us when you need us*

**You have questions.**
**We have answers. (We also stole that slogan.)**

## In the US and El Salvador

These are the people to contact when you're in El Salvador or the US and have questions about your trip.

Just arrived at the Salvadoran airport and wonder where your ride is? Call one of these ladies.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ann Horton | 1.979.324.2599 | ann@brighthillcollective.org |
| Sara Horton | 1.979.324.0281 | sara@brighthillcollective.org |

## Bright Hill Office

Susan is the woman who knows everything about the admin side of our trips. Want to pay your trip balance, but have some questions? Ask Susan!

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Susan Lee | 1.979.260.7447 | susan@brighthillcollective.org |

## Bright Hill El Salvador

This is the actual physical address where you'll be staying.

Colonia la Colmenera Lote #10
Calle Plan del Pino, Ciudad Delgado
San Salvador, El Salvador

contact@brighthillcollective.org
www.brighthillcollective.org

Shelter the Homeless International Projects, dba Bright Hill Collective,
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