

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. Trip cost is \$40 and includes transportation on a charter bus, craft project, and a delicious lunch with the kids. Everyone including children must register and pre-pay their seat. Once a successful reservation has been made, a trip confirmation email is sent as well as a receipt of payment. If you are under 18 years old, a [Parent Consent Form](#) needs to be completed and faxed to CDV at 949-296-0449.

Can I follow the bus?

We request that trip participants ride the bus if they would like to go down on a Corazon de Vida Foundation sponsored trip. It is too difficult to follow the bus because the bus enters Mexico from a different location than a car does and it should not be the responsibility of the driver to keep track of you in his mirrors.

Can I bring used clothes and/or toys?

Mexican Border Officials are now requesting that used clothing and toys NOT be brought across the border. 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.

Do I have to pre-register for a trip?

You must pre-register by completing an [online trip registration form](#) and pay the \$40.00 bus fee via credit card. You will receive a trip confirmation email once a properly completed registration is completed. If you are under 18 years young, please download a [Parent Consent Form](#), have a parent sign, and fax to CDV at 949-296-0449. Trips sell out FAST so please register early. Please do not show up on trip day if you did not register online, as we may not have room!

Can kids participate on the trips?

We encourage parents and their children 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. Please complete a [Parent Consent Form](#), fax to CDV at 949-296-0449.

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, teach them English.

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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 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. Getting items across the Mexican customs is tricky and we need to be careful as to what we are carrying.

Can I leave the orphanage facility during the trip?

For the safety of the volunteers and the children we ask that you stay on 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.

What exactly do we do for the day?

We spend the day making lunch, making crafts, and play 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, giving piggy back rides, playing Twister, 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 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.

What time do I get back?

An orphanage trips is usually a 12-hour day; however, drop off times can vary. Please see the trip registration form for trip schedules, times and locations.

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

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.

Can I drink the water?

While we try to assist with clean water tanks and filtrations systems, we 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.

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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!

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

The bus will drop us off at the Otay Mesa 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 and review your identification. Fruits and vegetables are not allowed to cross even if they were purchased in the US. The bus meets us at a designated area across the border as explained by your trip leader.

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 it will be confiscated at the border.

What identification is required for return to the USA?

A valid USA Passport is required for a [USA citizen](#). IF [NOT A USA CITIZEN](#), YOU MUST BRING A VALID PASSPORT, VISA OR PERMANENT RESIDENT CARD. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR GETTING YOURSELF BACK TO THE USA BY PRESENTING THE CUSTOMS AGENT WITH THE PROPER ID.

How much of the \$40.00 bus fee is donated to the orphanage?

None. The \$40.00 fee covers the cost of the chartered bus, food and craft. 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, its fun and so easy: <http://active.com/donate/teamcdv>

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.

Can I adopt?

It is possible to adopt from Mexico, but it can be difficult. Parents or next of kin must be found and must sign off that the child can be adopted. It is preferred that siblings be adopted together. Finally, Mexican nationals have first priority. In order to focus our efforts on feeding children, CDV is not able to help with adoptions and we do not provide referrals to agencies.

Rev. Jan 2011