

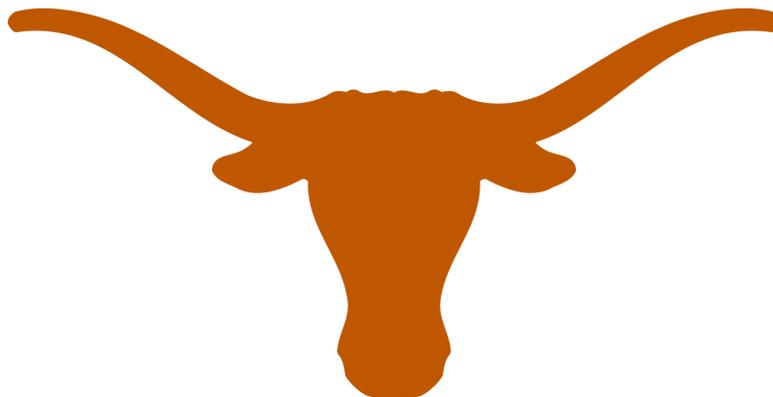


# **Trip Information Packet**

## **Panama**

**University of Texas Athletics**

**July 9-17, 2023**





Welcome to Courts for Kids. Most likely, this is your first trip with our organization and we are confident that this trip will impact you in ways you cannot even imagine. We work closely with our in-country partner to make sure your basic needs are met, so we can all focus on the task at hand, creating a multi-purpose sports court with the initiative, help and support of the community.

A sports court is a great project because it requires the help of many community members, provides plenty of work for everyone, and becomes an asset that provides not only safe places for children to play, but also various other benefits. The hard work of our team will be a great bridge between us and the community and we will develop a mutual respect that will help provide inroads into a rich cross-cultural experience and first-hand insight into a developing world community.

We are looking for great cultural ambassadors, so please only sign up for this trip if you are willing to step outside of your comfort zone. You will need to work hard, you will be eating different foods, sleeping and bathing in less comfortable environments. But, as they say, if you want to live like you're in America, why leave?

Most importantly, we ask that you enter into this with a great sense of humility. We want you to be eager to learn and grow in this process as we are entering into a different culture with different values and norms. We want you be quick to listen and slow to speak.

We will not be giving you a detailed itinerary as things are very prone to change with this sort of construction project. But your time will be spent working on the court, taking part in various cultural activities and, most importantly, connecting with the locals.

Please look through this informational packet and feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.

If you choose to go, I can almost guarantee you will look back on this trip as a life-changing experience. You will grow so much in a week it will make you wish you could stay longer. In fact, you will probably say this was the best week of your year.

Hope you can come!

Derek Nesland  
President  
Courts for Kids

# Community Information



Mamoní Arriba is located 50 kilometers NE of Panama City near the Pacora River. Mamoní is a very rural and hilly community. The hills reach a height close to 400 meters high and on clear days you can see both seas from the top (Caribbean and Pacific).

The community is very small with only 138 residents. The people of the community live from agriculture, livestock, artisanal fishing, poultry

and pig farming. The jobs in the community are day laborers, either in agricultural activities or cleaning farms for different agricultural activities.

The community has the Mamoní Arriba multigrade school for preschool, primary and secondary school children. At the end of the third year of studies the graduates of this school move to neighboring districts to carry out their high school studies.

In the community, there are two churches, Catholic and Evangelical, located fewer than four kilometers apart, where different festivities are celebrated.

The sports activities practiced in the community are baseball, softball, and soccer, but there is currently no dedicated space for practicing sports.

Other traditions that can be found in the community are the practice of typical Panamanian dances, typical traditional festivals either during the carnival season, or the traditional rodeo of Modesto Domínguez in mid-March.



Your group will be met at the airport by the Courts for Kids Panama Country Director who lives in Panama and has been working closely with the community to plan all aspects of your visit. You will be staying in a community building sleeping on mattresses on the floor. The court will also be built at the school and will be used by the entire community. You will work side-by-side with the locals and although it will be challenging there are jobs for everyone of every physical capacity. During the whole trip you will be fully immersed in the local culture eating authentic food, learning local traditions, customs, and way of life. It is important to note that this court will be built with the community not for the community. The community members are very motivated to make their court a reality and from the beginning, they have been the driving factor planning this project to see it come to fruition.



\*More specific lodging, packing, and trip logistics will be provided as the departure date gets closer.

\*\*Please note, the destination community is subject to change at the discretion of Courts for Kids in order to best meet the needs and safety of the volunteer group as well as the needs of the host community.

# Trip Safety

Courts for Kids makes your safety our number one priority. Being in a safe, tight knit community with strong awareness and ownership of the project will provide local people who will be personally invested in the safety of the team. Courts for Kids also has safety protocols in place that include, but are not limited to:

- A **Courts for Kids representative will lead the group** while in the destination country.
- We always contract **private transportation** to pick up and return the group to the in-country airport.
- We have a **strict behavior and conduct policy** for all trip participants which promotes the safety and security of the group. All participants are required to attend a **mandatory training**.
- We have **secure transportation** available to medical facilities in the case of any injuries.
- We will have a **first aid kit** with the group at all times.
- We only drink **clean, potable water**.
- We work with community cooks to adhere to our **Safe Cooking Practices**.
- We monitor the **US State Department** travel warnings and make travel adjustments as deemed necessary.
- **We do not allow cell phones**; we require all volunteers to be disconnected for the entirety of the trip.
- **Insurance coverage** for all trip participants that includes evacuation with a medical escort in a worst case situation. Policy details can be provided upon request.
- **A Child Protection Policy** which includes background checks for all adults traveling in a group where minors are present.
- Courts for Kids may conduct a **behavioral background check** through a student's school and reserves the right to refuse a participant based on the information we receive.

Safety is a team effort and every trip participant is responsible for their behavior, must use common sense while traveling, and comply with Courts for Kids representatives and trip leaders at all times.

## 2023 COVID Policies

- Groups and participants agree to comply with any COVID-19 vaccine or testing requirements imposed by the destination country as well as the US State Department. This may require participants to show proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test if mandated by either the destination country or the US State Department. Courts for Kids will not impose any testing or vaccine requirements beyond those of the applicable governing authorities.
- As of June 2022, the US State Department no longer requires a negative COVID-19 test for reentry to the United States. In the event that this requirement is re-imposed in the future, Courts for Kids will be required to introduce additional measures to ensure trip participant safety and compliance with the testing requirement. These may include the necessity for COVID-19 trip insurance and a quarantine chaperone for each trip. Groups and participants acknowledge that this may require them to incur additional costs.
- CFK will consider travel to countries identified as "Level 4" by the U.S. Department of State, provided that such level is the result of possible COVID-19 concerns. CFK will not travel to countries identified as "Level 4" due to "crime or violent activity".
- Each participant will abide by the rules and recommendations of the destination country with regards to COVID-19 safety (e.g., in regard to mask wearing, social distancing, etc.), and community-specific measures. Participants will also abide by the latest recommendations for international travel issued by the Centers for Disease Control.

# Trip Checklist

- 1. Registration:** The application process is facilitated by UT. Once approved, you will register online at [www.courtsforkids.org](http://www.courtsforkids.org) (detailed instructions to be provided later).
- 2. Passport:** Make sure you have a passport that will not expire before **January 17, 2024**. If you need a passport, go to the nearest post office for assistance. **In order to avoid the headache and stress, make sure you get your passport on time, do it ASAP.**
- 3. Vaccinations:** The recommended vaccinations for travel to Panama according to the Center for Disease Control are the following (**keep in mind these are recommended, not required. Check with your local doctor and make the decision best for you**):
  - Routine (DPT, MMR, Polio, Chickenpox, Flu, Shingles)
  - COVID-19
  - Hepatitis A and B
  - Typhoid
  - Malaria
  - Yellow Fever
4. Attend **mandatory** Courts for Kids pre-trip training, dates to be announced. At this meeting, you will go through the Courts for Kids training, receive a packing list and detail packet with more specific information.

## Flight Itinerary

### American Flight Itinerary\* (Award points cannot be used)

Date	Fl. #	Airport	Dep.	Airport	Arrival
July 9	495	Austin	7:20am	Miami	11:20am
July 9	959	Miami	5:35pm	Panama City	7:41pm
July 17	2885	Panama City	1:37pm	Miami	5:55pm
July 17	2629	Miami	7:30pm	Austin	9:35pm

You are eligible for frequent flier miles on American. To enroll go to [www.aa.com](http://www.aa.com)  
\*Flights and carrier are subject to change

Questions?

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