



Trip Information Packet
Panimatzalam,
Guatemala
April 26– May 3, 2025



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 this is where the greatest lessons are learned.

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

You will be traveling approximately 4 hours by bus from Guatemala City to Panimatzalam, a microregion within the San Andrés Semetabaj Aldeas. It is bordered to the North by Chuti-Estancia and the South by Las Canoas. Like much of Guatemala, it is in a mountainous area with an altitude of 7,545 feet.

The dietary and economic staple for Panimatzalam is corn, and prolific corn fields surround its hills. Tortillas are at the heart of every meal, and many families sell their produce to make a living. In addition to corn, beans are also a commonly produced crop. The community is also home to artisans who make crafts to sell locally. Some of their population migrates to the United States for work.



Families in Panimatzalam speak the Mayan languages K'iche and Kaqchikel, but Spanish is used by children and teenagers in an educational setting. There are 1,600 residents of Panimatzlam and 320 homes, most with piped water and built with concrete and tile. The pressing needs of this community are to ensure a dignified way of life for the future, which is why they are motivated to complete this court project with your help.



Your group will be met at the airport by a Courts for Kids staff member who has been working closely with the community to plan all aspects of your visit. You will be staying in a large communal house sleeping on mattresses on the floor. 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.



General Itinerary

April 26– Arrive into Guatemala City at your convenience. We will most likely overnight near the airport, depending on everybody's final flight arrival times.

April 27– Make way to community. In-community orientation and activities. Acclimate to altitude before starting construction.

April 28, 29, 30- Service work on court, cultural activities, traditional food, team reflections, structured and unstructured relationship building and games with team and community members.

May 1– Day tour of Lake Atitlan

May 2– Court inauguration, clinic and games on the new court. Final celebration of all of the hard work and final goodbye to the community members you connected with. Make way to Guatemala City to overnight by airport.

May 3– CFK trip completed. Please schedule your departure at any time.

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 student 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.

Funding Responsibilities

Everyone in your group will contribute to the total project costs.
Each participant will be required to fundraise/donate this amount:

\$1,800

100% of all donations are fully tax deductible

All funds raised are applied to the following group expenses:

- Construction materials– sand, gravel, cement, etc
- In-country costs (food, water, lodging, and transportation)
- Additional activities
- Emergency medical insurance
- Full time Courts for Kids staff member to handle all logistics

Does not include: airfare, passport, immunizations, food or incidental costs on layovers and delays, or spending money for souvenirs.

**All donations are non-refundable (unless the entire project is canceled by Courts for Kids, funds will be refunded less non-recoverable costs). If you raise/donate more than the above amount, you can choose to apply the excess to passport or immunization costs (must submit receipts), the court construction costs, sports equipment, toward the balance of another trip participant or towards Courts for Kids in general. You will not be eligible for any other refunds or reimbursements due to IRS regulations.*

Trip Checklist

1. Registration: Register online at www.courtsforkids.org.

2. Passport: Make sure you have a passport that will not expire before **October 26, 2025**. If you need a passport, go to the nearest post office for assistance.

3. Fundraising amounts due:

\$300 deposit upon registration | **\$750 due January 15, 2025** | **\$\$750 due March 15, 2025**

4. Vaccinations: The recommended vaccinations for travel to Guatemala 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
- Rabies

5. Everyone must attend a **mandatory virtual Courts for Kids pre-trip training, dates TBD, in spring 2025**. At this meeting, you will be provided a detailed informational packet, including a packing list.

Contact Information

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