



Trip Information Packet

to

Oaxaca, Mexico

Saint Francis High School

Winter Break

December 26th, 2025– January 3rd, 2026





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

Travel and Leisure Magazine just named **Oaxaca the best city in the world to visit** (July, 2023). They stated, “Oaxaca is a mecca for the area’s colorful culture, beautiful weather, and iconic architecture created by some of Mexico’s best designers.”

The community of **San Mateo Sindihui**, “Pie del Cielo” in the Mixtec language, located at 1,450 meters above sea level in the mountains of the state of Oaxaca, which belongs to the Mixtec region. The territory occupied by the community is mostly covered by hills and legend has it that it is a seven headed snake that came to consume the people until a priest put a spell on it turning it to stone- which can be seen today in the hills and mountain ranges.

On the east side, the community has another mountain known as “La Cumbre” with an altitude of approximately 2,300 meters above sea level, a place that holds mystical significance for the community. Also there is the “Piedra de Agua” (Water Stone) and “La Cueva de Agua” (Water Cave), two places where the community gathers to perform a ritual to ask for rain, attributing it to some mysterious deity. This type of ritual is performed at the end of April, just when the first signs of rain begin to appear.

The community still practices subsistence agriculture. Most people grow crops for their own consumption,

and when there is a surplus, they can sell it at the local market,

but they are unable to participate in the regional market.

Very few people are engaged in the trade of livestock, fruits or vegetables, groceries, and hardware, and the community is just beginning to experience this change. Therefore, there is no production for export either within or outside the state or country.

There are several religious sects in the community, but currently there are only two churches built, namely the Catholic Church and the Christian Church. The others do not yet have their own space to carry out their activities.



Your group will be met at the airport by the Courts for Kids Mexico Country Director, Juan Carlos, who lives in Mexico and has been working closely with the community to plan all aspects of your visit. We will be staying in a community building sleeping on mattresses on the floor. The court will also be built in a location to be used by the entire community. Many times it will be a place where the community will gather to dance and hold celebrations and ceremonies. We 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 we 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.



Funding Responsibilities

Everyone in your group will contribute to the total project costs.

Each participant will be required to pay:

\$2,900

All funds raised are applied to court construction costs and the following group expenses:

- Round trip airfare (award points cannot be used)
- In-country costs (food, water, lodging, and transportation)
- Entrance/exit fees
- Emergency medical insurance
- Special activities
- Chaperone expenses
- Court construction costs (in addition to your giving, the host community also contributes making this court a reality).

Does not include: passport, immunizations, travel to and from the US airport, food or incidental costs on layovers and delays, or spending money for souvenirs.

**Costs are non-refundable (unless the entire project is canceled by Courts for Kids, funds will be refunded less non-recoverable costs).*

Financial Aid

A student should not be discouraged from applying for an immersion based on finances. The financial aid is based on the percentage of aid they receive for tuition. So for example, if a student receives 50% financial aid for tuition, they receive 50% financial aid for immersions. The cost of a student's immersion is automatically adjusted once confirmed for an immersion. If you need to set up a payment plan or have circumstances that need to be discussed please contact Maryann

O'Leary at maryannoleary@sfhs.com.

Trip Checklist

1. [Application for the Winter Plunge](#)

Deadline to apply is Monday, September 8th.

See Mrs. Butler in Campus Ministry with any questions or email her lisabutler@sfhs.com.

2. **Passport:** Make sure you have a passport that will not expire before **July 3rd, 2026**. 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. Please note that your non-refundable fee will be billed to Blackbaud Tuition for November billing. The cost of the immersion is: \$2900.

4. **Vaccinations:** The recommended vaccinations for travel to Mexico 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**):

a. Routine (DPT, MMR, Polio) and COVID-19—all travelers

b. Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Typhoid—most travelers

c. Rabies and malaria—some travelers

5. Students must attend **mandatory Courts for Kids pre-trip training on Monday, November 3 from 4:30-7:30 pm** (more information will be sent once the group is solidified) and parents/guardians are **required** to watch the **Parent Informational meeting** which is posted on the website.

Flight Itinerary

AeroMexico Airline Flight Itinerary*

(Award points cannot be used)

Date	Fl. #	Airport	Dep.	Airport	Arrival
December 26	0699	San Francisco	6:33 am	Mexico City	1:05 pm
January 3	0664	Mexico City	5:05 pm	San Francisco	8:15 pm

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 require all volunteers to be disconnected for the entirety of the trip. No cell phones will be allowed once in country.
- **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.

Contact Information

info@courtsforkids.org

[360.499.2185](tel:3604992185)

Selene Nesland

360.909.0684

selene@courtsforkids.org

Courts for Kids

PO Box 873786

Vancouver, WA 98687



<https://www.courtsforkids.org/>

Tax ID number- 20-8332371