



Trip Information Packet
to
Guatemala
Saint Francis High School
Easter Break
April 3-12th, 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

The community of **Xolja** is located in the northeast of the country, 6 kilometers from the municipality of Santa María Chiquimula and 212 kilometers from Guatemala City. It is a place with deep Mayan roots, located in the highlands of Guatemala, which combines cultural richness with agricultural production and is therefore known for its production of corn and black beans. There are churches, a school, shops, and many houses in the community of Xolja. The name was given because this place is located between two rivers, which is why they called it XOLJA. According to the people who currently live in the same area, a tentative estimate suggests that there are now approximately 850 people living in the area.

Xolja is located in a mountainous area with dirt road access and is a dry area because it doesn't rain much. On the positive side, our roads aren't damaged as much by rain. We could say that one of the negative aspects of our situation in the statistics is malnutrition and illiteracy.

In addition to farming, we also make textiles, raise animals, and some of our people work in other municipalities. It's worth noting that a significant portion of our economy comes from migrants who send money from the United States.

An important part is religion we are 45% are Catholic, 45% Evangelical, and 10% practice the Mayan religion. But regardless of religion, we have similar values that focus on mutual respect and, above all, respect for the elderly and their advice.

It's very important to mention that we are a very organized, united community, and that makes it very safe to live here. Since we haven't received much government support, we've learned to work together to carry out various projects that have brought development to our community.



Your group will be met at the airport by the Courts for Kids Guatemala Country Director who lives in Guatemala 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 at the school and will 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.

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*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. **Register here:** <https://courtsforkids.servicereef.com/events/courts-for-kids/2026-guatemala-saint-francis-high-school-easter-break>

Must register by November 21st

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 **October 12th, 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 February billing. The cost of the immersion is: \$2900.

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**):

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, March 2nd 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

Alaska Airline Flight Itinerary*

(Award points cannot be used)

Date	Fl. #	Airport	Dep.	Airport	Arrival
April 3	3305 Skywest Airlines	San Francisco	7:55 pm	Los Angeles	9:31 pm
April 4	1353	Los Angeles	12:35 am	Guatemala City	6:20 am
April 12	1354	Guatemala City	11:20 am	Los Angeles	4:01 pm
April 12	3326 Skywest Airlines	Los Angeles	5:55 pm	San Francisco	7:26 pm

*Flights and carrier are subject to change

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

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