



Trip Information Packet

Panama

Brown University

May 29-June 7, 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

El Potrero is a small town in the district of La Pintada in the province of Coclé. It is located 112 miles west of Panama city (3.5H drive). According to the 2010 census there are 3,165 people. There is an elementary and middle school; however, in order to finish high school and go to college, students have to travel everyday to Penonomé, the capital of the province which is about 40 minutes away. There are many professionals in El Potrero, you can find teachers, lawyers, nurses, secretaries, etc. There are not illiterate people here because education has always been a priority. Also, there are a lot of people who are farmers who plant different crops like rice, corn, beans, ñame, yucca. There is a lot of sugar cane too, people extract the sugar cane juice to make syrup and "raspadura" a solid form derived from the boiling and evaporation of this juice. Many people raise cattle, chickens and pigs in their homes for local consumption.



Other traditions in El Potrero include traditional dances, tamborito (traditional music), cantadera, parades and bull riding. The gastronomy includes the traditional rice with chicken, grilled pork, fried fish and homemade pastries made of corn and tamales, vegetables are not too common because El Potrero is far from the markets, especially during the winter. People typically drink lots of coffee and natural juices.



There is a sports field where people practice sports like baseball, softball and soccer, there is not a space to play either basketball or volleyball. There are no banks or big supermarkets where people purchase most of the food, they are all in Penonomé as well, to get there people use public transportation. Since 2021 there is been a reforestation program, community member have been planting Guayacán trees, a native tree in Central and South America, this tree blooms magnificent bright yellow flowers when grown and can be spotted from miles away.

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 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.

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-19 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.

* If a participant tests positive and is unable to travel, there will be no refunds or credits given.

Trip Checklist

- 1. Registration:** The application process is facilitated by Brown University. Once approved, you will register online at www.courtsforkids.org (detailed instructions to be provided later).
- 2. Passport:** Make sure you have a passport that will not expire before **December 7, 2023**. 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.

Flight Itinerary

United Airlines Flight Itinerary*

(Award points cannot be used)

Date	Fl. #	Airport	Dep.	Airport	Arrival
May 29	592	Boston	10:30am	Newark	11:54am
May 29	1021	Newark	3:20pm	Panama City	7:37pm
June 7	727	Panama City	9:15am	Newark	3:34pm
June 7	1779	Newark	6:30pm	Boston	7:55pm

*Flights and carrier are subject to change

Questions?

Courts for Kids
PO Box 873786
Vancouver, WA 98687

Derek Nesland
360-521-0592
derek@courtsforkids.org