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General Information About Short Mission Trips (SMT) to Hospital Nacional de San Benito (HNSB)

Today, this is a self-funded activity for each individual traveling with us. However, this is tax deductible item. It qualifies as a donation for the year. We are a certified non-profit organization 501(c)3 and you will receive a letter about the amount of money that you spent for the entire mission trip. The organization covers the following:

- The cost of the orientation dinner.
- A trip to Tikal including lunch.
- The last dinner with certificates of acknowledgement for your participation.

Currently, the cost for a trip for everyone is typically as follows:

- Plane tickets from Dallas to Flores ~\$800.00.
- Hotel cost is variable, but it is ~\$400.00.
- Food is less than ~\$200.00.

Thus, my best predictions for the anticipated cost for the week during this mission trip is ~\$1,400.00 USD.

The current goal for the mission trips is for:

1. **General Surgery Cases:** Inguinal Hernias, Umbilical Hernias, Lipomas, Ventral Hernia, Cholecystectomies (open and laparoscopically), Amputations and others.
2. **Pediatric Cases:** Inguinal Hernias, Umbilical Hernias, and others.
3. **Advanced Laparoscopy:** Any form of laparoscopic cases, but more commonly we will perform laparoscopic cholecystectomies.

UROLOGY: We have begun a very aggressive urology program at HNSB. We will advance with the number of cases as well as complexity. However, currently the major need is for transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP) procedures.

We have a high need for anesthesiologists/CRNAs at HNSB. It is always best to anticipate what will be needed and bring it with you. Anesthesiologists will be working independently typically without a CRNA. Alternatively, we have CRNA working independently in each room. There might be a technician that might help, but there is only one or two.

We also need urologists for the trips as we continue to build the urology program. All the equipment for TURPs is available at the hospital.

Regional anesthesia (RA) is a lot more common than general anesthesia (GA) or local (LA). But, at least two rooms are done under GA and LA.

For anesthesia please see some of the anesthesia notes from one of our Anesthesiologist from a previous trip: [Anesthesia Primer](#).

It is best to let me know about your desire to make it to one of these trips ahead of time such that I can pencil you in for the mission trip. We typically announce the specific dates two years in advance [HERE](#). However, the timing for these trips is as follows:

January → The last week of the month

June → The third week of the month

November → The week before Thanksgiving

The typical plan is to arrive on a Saturday evening or Sunday morning in Flores. Orientation usually takes place on Sunday at 6:00 pm in Flores at La Casona del Lago. We then operate on **Monday**, **Tuesday**, and **Thursday** and sometimes **Fridays** with Urology.

Typically, on Wednesday the entire group visits Tikal. There is a tour guide for this. Transportation, entrance to the park, and lunch is included.

We typically have 3 operating rooms and have four to five cases per room. Two rooms are for open operations and one for laparoscopy. Turn around time between rooms is very quick and there is little time in between cases for too long of a break.

Dr. Huerta reviews all the cases with the staff surgeons a few weeks prior to the arrival of the AVA SMT.

We have a conclusion dinner and a certificate award ceremony on Friday at 6:00 pm at La Casona del Lago.

Saturday, we all get ready to fly back home.

Please note that the first **trip experience can be found at:**

FIRST AVA SMT TO HNSB.

Information about the dates for each mission trip for two years ahead of time, can be found at:

[AVA Events — Aid Via Action](#)

For specific information regarding the particular events taking place during each mission trip, please read some of the Newsletters published in www.aidviaaction.org in the blogs section.

[First AVA SMT](#)

[Newsletter June 2024](#)

[Newsletter November 2025](#)

Information regarding the mission of our organization and all updates can be found on our official website at:

<http://www.aidviaaction.org>

TRAVELING TO GUATEMALA

The destination is Maya Mundo International Airport (Formerly known as Flores International Airport).

From Dallas there are multiple ways to get there:

1. DFW to Guatemala City (~3.5 h) → Guatemala City to Maya Mundo International Airport (~50 min). This is the most common and the one I would recommend.
 - a. Two airlines flight from Guatemala City to Maya Mundo in Flores.
 - i. [TAG](#) → the airplane is smaller and even carry-ons must be checked in. The advantage is that they have multiple flight leaving Guatemala City daily.
 - ii. [Avianca](#) → the planes are bigger, and you can take your carry on in the flight. Today there are typically only one or two flights a day from this airline. I like Aviance better than TAG because the airplanes are bigger, and they are much more commonly on time with their flights. You can also take your carry-on on the plane.
2. DFW to Belize City → Belize to Maya Mundo International Airport.
 - a. I have used this option in the past, but to me is less desirable because the planes from Belize are smaller with [Tropic Air](#). I have found the flights are less reliable. You also need to go to immigration and customs even if you are just passing by.
3. DFW to Cancun Mexico → Cancun Mexico to Maya Mudo International Airport.
 - a. I have not used this option, but some members in the past have used it.

Travel Requirements:

- ✓ US Passport holders do not need a VISA to enter Guatemala
- ✓ You do not need any vaccinations to enter Guatemala.
- ✓ Currently, there are no COVID restrictions, but bring a mask just in case.
- ✓ You can bring sunscreen and mosquito repellent spray if you would like, but you will be able to find it in Guatemala.
- ✓ **Make sure you have a Regional Electronic Traveler Affidavit** (Summary), which can be done online at the following link below.

[Regional Electronic Traveler Affidavit](#)

- Make sure you fill this in before leaving DFW as they might ask you at the counter desk when you check in. You will also need to have do it again when you leave Guatemala and present your documents in immigration.
- Fill in all the required fields:
 - For the reason of your visit, it is best to check the Tourism box.
 - For the Address in Guatemala Say: La Casona Del Lago in Flores, El Peten, Guatemala.
- Enter your email address and they will send you a copy. If you do not see it check your spam folder. However, also take a screenshot of the QR code that it gives you and keep it in your phone.

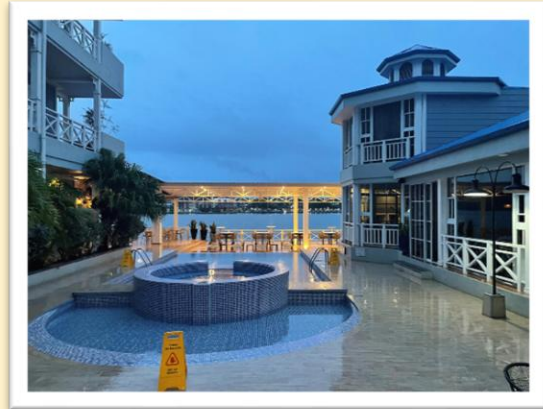
Accommodations:

Our host hotel for all AVA mission trips is [Hotel Casona del Lago](#). If you click on the link, it will take you directly to the hotel.

You can make the reservations directly on site, but it is best if you send an email to the manager of the hotel:

Liliam Vasquez:
liliam_vasquez@hotelesdepeten.com

Tell her in the email that you are making a reservation for Aid Via Action with Dr. Huerta's Group.



Please support our efforts to minimize disparities in health care and donate TODAY: [DONATE](#)

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Huerta".

Sergio Huerta, MD, FACS, HEC-C
Aid Via Action Inc.
President and CEO