



A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
INCORPORATED UNDER PENNSYLVANIA LAW

VOLUNTEER OPTOMETRIC SERVICES TO HUMANITY

MISSION TRIP OVERVIEW

On our week long VOSH/PA mission trips, we provide comprehensive eye care to materially poor patients in developing countries. During the five days of patient care, our team of eye doctors, opticians and volunteers generally examine about 2500 patients; dispense thousands of pairs of prescription glasses and sunglasses. Sunglasses and hats are provided to aid in the prevention of eye diseases caused by exposure to the sun and dust. Acute and chronic medical eye problems are addressed, and our surgeons and their staff perform about 100 sight restoring surgeries, often at no cost to the patients. We work in conjunction with and at the request of local officials, health care providers, physicians, nurses and health promoters to provide care to those adults and children who are most in need. On many trips, at the conclusion of the service portion, participants have the option of taking a day or two to enjoy sightseeing in the host country.

Mission participants are personally responsible for all of the costs of their trip, which is generally between \$1200-\$1700.

Lodging is in a variety of locations, local hotels, eco-hostels or camps. Conditions can range from modest US style accommodations to rustic camping. While VOSH volunteers are in the community providing services, there may be no running water, lavatories or electricity. (Lodging is not usually adjacent to the clinic site).

Food is basic and local, beans, rice, eggs, cheese, tortillas, bread, meat, fruits and vegetables. For safety, only cooked fruits and vegetables should be eaten, unless you wash and remove the peel yourself. Bottled water is readily available, and is the only water that should be consumed. If you have food concerns, you may bring along your own bars and snacks. Traveler's diarrhea occurs in 20% of the travelers in developing countries. Preventive measures include not drinking tap water, not using ice in beverages (even alcoholic drinks), not eating salads and other forms of raw vegetables, not eating fruits that can't be peeled on the spot and not eating mayonnaise, pastry icing, unpasteurized dairy products and undercooked shellfish. Tying a ribbon around the faucet and keeping purified bottled water near the sink may serve as memory aids for travelers to remind them not to use tap water, even for tooth brushing. Hot cooked food, fresh bread, dry foods such as crackers, bottled carbonated beverages, coffee, tea and beer are usually safe, provided such food items are not obtained from street vendors. Helpful maxims to keep in mind include "boil it, cook it, peel it or forget it" and the "rule of P's": food is safe if it is peelable, packaged, purified or piping hot. Careful handwashing, most conveniently achieved with packaged wipes or antiseptic gel, is essential.

Preparation

A valid passport is needed for the trip, as is membership in VOSH/PA. Minors require 2 copies of a signed and notarized permission form from both parents and a health history form. Participants should bring along a copy of their passport, and also leave a copy at home. Minors should provide the trip leader with a copy of their passport as well. Trip insurances is suggested, and may be obtained from <http://www.aaintl.com/> Insurance for International Travelers

Country/region specific immunizations and prophylactic vaccines and medications (particularly for malaria and traveler's diarrhea) may be required, are the responsibility of the participant, and on the recommendation of your personal physician. Current and specific information may be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/> Centers for Disease Control information for Travelers.

The trip leader should be made aware of all chronic health problems and concerns before the trip. During the trip, any injuries or illnesses should be reported immediately to the leader. Every effort will be made to seek prompt medical attention, but care cannot be guaranteed as we may be working in very rural areas. Participants should bring their own prescription medications and first aid supplies. Minors must give all medications to the mission leader.

Packing list

Clothing choices should be made based on providing a comfortable, respectful and professional appearance. Nice tee shirts, long shorts, skirts and lightweight pants are acceptable and comfortable in hot climates. Participants may be standing for long periods of time, so comfortable shoes should be worn (running shoes, sandals). In most communities, participants will be able to send out laundry. Some suggested items to bring are:

Backpack with toiletry items and needed medications (routine meds and anti malarial, traveler's diarrhea, motion sickness), along with one day's clothing. This can be your carry on piece. While in country, it can be used for traveling to clinic each day.

In addition to preferred toiletry items, the following items are suggested:

Small flashlight with clip or cord, camera, batteries, journal, pens, sunscreen, insect repellent (30% DEET), sunglasses, hat, tissue packs, small packs of wet wipes, small hand sanitizer, passport/money belt or pouch, leisure time items such as cards, small games, bathing suit, flip flops, lightweight rain jacket with hood, mesh laundry bag, 1 kitchen size trash bag, small gifts for kids, such as pencils, stickers, bouncy balls.

Suitcase size requirements are airline specific, so check with your carrier. Generally, carry ons can be no more than 51 inches (total of l+w+h), and checked luggage maximum ifs 62 inches (total of l+w+h). We request that you plan on one checked piece for your personal items, as you may need to transport your other allowed checked piece with VOSH equipment and supplies.

Safety

Safety begins when you pack. To avoid being a target, dress conservatively. Don't wear expensive-looking jewelry. Always try to travel light. You can move more quickly and will be more likely to have a free hand. You will also be less tired and less likely to set your luggage down, leaving it unattended. Put your name, address and telephone numbers inside and outside of each piece of luggage.

Carry the minimum amount of valuables necessary for your trip and plan a place or places to conceal them. Your passport, cash and credit cards are most secure when locked in a hotel safe. When you have to carry them on your person, you may wish to conceal them in several places rather than putting them all in one wallet or pouch. Avoid handbags, fanny packs and outside pockets that are easy targets for thieves. Inside pockets and a sturdy shoulder bag with the strap worn across your chest are somewhat safer. One of the safest places to carry valuables is in a pouch or money belt worn under your clothing.

If you wear glasses, pack an extra pair. Bring them and any medicines you need in your carry-on luggage. To avoid problems when passing through customs, keep medicines in their original, labeled containers. Bring copies of your prescriptions and the generic names for the drugs.

Pack a photocopy of your passport information page to make replacement of your passport easier in the event it is lost or stolen.

Country specific information may be found at the website for the US State Department--
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html