



## **Children's HopeChest Travel Guidelines**

**Our Mission Statement:** Children's HopeChest believes that every orphan has the right to know God, experience the blessing of family, and have the opportunity to develop independent living skills.

*The policies of Children's HopeChest have been very carefully critiqued to ensure the safety of the trip participants and the integrity of our ministry. The policies are to protect the invested interest of the ministry audience within respective countries, and our national staff. We expect that all trip participants, including leaders, fully respect and submit to the designated authority of Children's HopeChest leadership and staff, including the times, before, during and after your trip. We require that you adhere to the authority of Children's HopeChest without exception due to the potential liability that Children's HopeChest incurs within respective countries. While it is our desire that each group has a positive experience, the breadth and scope of the ministry is such that each decision impacts many other aspects of the ministry. Some of the requirements are predetermined by governmental structures, laws and policies.*

### **Your Team's Role**

Short-term mission teams meet a variety of needs. Some are construction teams, some evangelistic teams, some vision teams and some training teams. All have a distinct purpose to fulfill while on the field. It is your team's responsibility to try and perform the tasks for your trip to the best of your ability.

Please remember that you are on a *mission* trip. Your role is to represent Christ, your church/business and Children's HopeChest while serving the orphans, vulnerable children, orphanage/CarePoint directors, teachers and staff. **In order to protect staff, volunteers, and children, trip participants should avoid being alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others. Please educate your team on personal conduct with the vulnerable children we work with.**

Keep in mind also that the most well planned itinerary **will** change on occasion. Remember, *"flexibility is your friend; expectation is your enemy."*

As you travel with Children's HopeChest, you'll become aware of many cultural differences. We will give you some knowledge of the cultural differences between the U.S. and the country in which you'll be ministering. Don't be the proverbial "ugly American," instead be flexible!

### **Communication with Children's HopeChest**

Communication is the most important aspect involved in organizing a trip. We have set several guidelines for groups.

1. You should expect clear, timely communication from Children's HopeChest.
2. Teams should only communicate with Children's HopeChest through your team leader (or assistant).
3. All travel plans are arranged through our Colorado office.

### **Communication on the Field**

While in the field, the first person a team member should address ideas, problems, concerns or questions is the team leader. Then, the team leader can address the HopeChest national staff member present. The staff member may confer with the appropriate person of authority at your location. Note: Although our translators are normally warm, concerned, helpful individuals, they are contract employees and not Children's HopeChest national staff and as such, do not make decisions for HopeChest.

### **Airline Tickets**

1. Children's HopeChest encourages you to make early reservations for your flights. Group fares can aid in lowering costs. Please remember that some change is inevitable, and you may want to consider purchasing airline tickets that can be changed if necessary.

2. All members of your team **must** arrive and depart on the same day, as well as on the same flight. HopeChest tries to ensure lower costs for your trip, and multiple trips to the airport by our national staff and onward to your location can increase your team's cost.

### **The Land Package**

The land package price of a trip includes the following:

- Children's HopeChest Trip Planning Expense
- Visa processing (**Russia Only**)
- Travel Insurance (covers medical emergencies)
- In-country ground transportation – defined by itinerary
- Lodging
- Meals (Wines and spirits not included)
- Snacks and bottled water
- Translator fees and expenses
- Tours and Day-off excursion (if applicable)
- Staff services and incidentals

### **Team Size**

The ideal team size is between 10 and 12 travelers, however this can vary from country to country. ***For all Swaziland trips we require a minimum of 8 travelers.*** We would recommend a maximum of 20 travelers for any of our country trips.

### **Deadlines**

Planning trips for groups does require paperwork for visas and land packages. To complete all items in a timely manner, we have established a few deadlines. Submission after these deadlines can result in additional cost to an individual or team.

Team leaders should collect all necessary paperwork from each team member and submit it to the Colorado office according to the due dates. We ask the team leader to make sure all forms are signed and properly filled out. **We ask team leaders to notify the Colorado office in advance if any individual team member cannot submit paperwork on time.**

We require all trip expenses to be paid in full, **4 weeks** prior to your departure date. When final payment has been received, we will send all visas, itineraries, emergency contact information, etc., to the team leader. The team leader will then distribute the documents to his/her team. Any extensions on deadlines will be approved on a case by case basis.

With over seven hundred travelers each year, trip planning is a very detailed and time consuming process. We are not able to make last minute additions or adjustments for teams or individuals.

### **Special Requests**

As you build relationships and memories with kids, teachers, translators, caregivers and staff members, we realize you may want to see these people each time you travel to the country. This is a natural reaction and the way all of us build relationships. Often, travelers contact our Colorado office and even our national staff with special requests to take side trips to their favorite orphanages/CarePoints, which do not appear on the team's trip agenda.

We understand the many reasons of special requests. However, with the ever-increasing number of volunteers who travel with us each year, honoring these special requests is becoming more and more difficult. Special requests often mean a more expensive land package for you and/or your group. If you have a special request, please contact your team leader at least **60 days** in advance of your departure date. Your team leader will, in turn, contact the Colorado office. While we will try to honor each person's request, please understand that we will not be able to make each one work.

Please keep in mind as you travel that Children's HopeChest's National Staff has already spent hours gaining the proper permissions and making all arrangements for the finalized trip itineraries. **Once in country, please do not ask the staff to honor a special request that was not worked out with the Colorado office prior to arrival in their country.** Though it appears that these last-minute requests are easy to honor, closer scrutiny will reveal how our national staff have to scramble to gain all necessary approvals from government and orphanage officials in order to change plans.

Please know we are striving to give you the best experience possible. As HopeChest ambassadors, we ask that you honor your set itinerary, be humble guests and acknowledge cultural differences between our countries.

### **Individual Trips**

Along with the number of special requests, Children's HopeChest receives many inquiries for people wanting to travel overseas on their own. Our focus is to help various communities serve overseas and therefore individual trips are not part of our vision and cannot be arranged at this time.

### **Leaving Money with In-Country Staff**

Often times during a trip a team will see needs at their CarePoint or orphanage that require funding. In order for all donations to be closely accounted for, we ask that teams never leave money with in-country staff. Any projects, initiatives, or needs that a team would like to fund always needs to go through the Children's HopeChest headquarters in Colorado.