

Frequently Asked Questions

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How do I meet up with my team?

We will make your flight reservations for you so that you meet up with team members in the Gateway city in the United States. For teams going to the Americas, these gateway cities vary but include Miami, Atlanta, and Houston. For teams to Africa and Asia, these gateway cities may include Washington DC, Chicago, or New York. Team members often fly together from these gateway cities so that they arrive together at the main airport in the country where you will be working. That way you can go through immigration and customs together, and meet up with our national partner as one group. Many of these airports are not the kind of places that you want to wander around alone, and you certainly don't want to leave the airport and take your chances with a taxi. Your safety and security are very important to us, which is why we manage these flight reservations so carefully.

May I use frequent flyer miles for my ticket?

Yes. You will have to make your own reservation, and will need to first coordinate carefully with Global Health Outreach (GHOTravel@cmda.org) to make sure that you are on the same flight as the rest of the team when they arrive in the International airport.

May I arrive or depart at a different time than the rest of the team?

Rarely. Most of the countries where we work are not safe for one or two Americans to be wandering around on their own. Our teams often get on the bus and depart the airport for the ministry site. Sometimes the site is a two-day bus ride away. When this is the case, it is not possible for someone to arrive late. When the ministry site is relatively close to the

international airport, exceptions can sometimes be made. These exceptions are on a case-by-case basis, and must be carefully coordinated between the team leader, the Global Health Outreach Director, and our national partner. Almost always, the national partner must find someone who comes to the airport to meet the late arrival and bring them to the ministry site. Before you ask for an exception, you should prayerfully consider if God wants you serving on this team, and if so, will he free up your schedule so that you can travel on the dates with the rest of the team.

Why are airline ticket prices so high? I can find lower prices when I look on Expedia!

All of the major US airlines have declared bankruptcy in the past 10 years. They are cutting costs left and right, and are charging for second pieces of luggage, overweight bags, and many other services that used to be free. Airlines cater to the business traveler where price is not nearly as much of an issue. Pricing is very dynamic and changes on a minute-by-minute basis, depending on how many seats on a particular flight are booked. Tickets cost more as seats fill up. If we look for nine seats on a particular flight and we look at several different sites, then the airlines computers think that 27 people are interested in flights. The fares go up accordingly. We work with a travel agency that has a low price guarantee. They will match any fare that was purchased at the same time on the same flight. This does not include Travelocity, Expedia, or the other consolidators. These consolidators do not offer any emergency service or re-booking if airline schedules change.

May I make my own flight reservations?

Rarely. For a missions trip to be successful, the individuals that make up the team must function as a team. This involves give-and-take. The cost of moving the team of 30 or 50 people from their homes all over North America to a ministry site in Central America, Africa, or Asia is more than the cost of one person making such a flight. This often means that your airline ticket will cost a little more than if you were going somewhere by yourself. Most of our trip participants are depending on the Lord to provide the resources that they need to serve. We take being righteous stewards of the Lord's resources very seriously, and this includes paying a little bit more money in order to make sure the team arrives safely with all of their luggage, and are able to make it through Customs without difficulty.

When will my flight be booked?

Reservations are usually made about six weeks before the team is scheduled to depart. The airlines have various times when they raise prices, typically 7, 14, 21, and 28 days before domestic flights, and 50 days before international flights. Once we are sure that a team has enough members to go, we begin looking at flight options. Once your flight is ticketed, you will receive the itinerary by e-mail and your credit card will be charged for the cost of the ticket plus the \$30 travel agent fee. This ticket is in your name, and is nonrefundable. If you are unable to travel after your ticket is purchased for you, the ticket must be canceled prior to the flight date or the full amount will be forfeited to the airline. Most airlines will allow you to rebook a flight on their airline within 12 months from the original date of purchase for a \$200 rebooking penalty. These costs and cancellation rules change often and are

controlled by the airlines, not us. You should be aware of these constraints before signing up for a trip.

When must I pay for my airline ticket?

Your credit card will be charged for your airline ticket when the ticket is purchased. The ticket is in your name, and is nonrefundable. If you are unable to travel after your ticket is purchased for you, the ticket must be canceled prior to the flight date or the full amount will be forfeited to the airline. Most airlines will allow you to rebook a flight on their airline within 12 months from the original date of purchase for a \$200 rebooking penalty.

How much will my ticket cost?

Airline ticket costs vary greatly, depending on how many seats have been sold on a particular flight, what time of day the flight departs, the time of year of the flight, what day of the week the flight is booked, and how many tickets are being bought at once. The domestic leg of a flight varies greatly as well. For the summer of 2014, the approximate range of flight costs were as follows:

Central America: \$950 - \$1150

Ecuador: \$1150 - \$1350

Africa: \$1500 - \$2000

Asia: \$1500 - \$2400

What happens if I have to cancel my flight after my ticket has been purchased?

You need to make sure that your airline ticket is cancelled before your first flight, or you will forfeit the entire amount of the ticket to the airline. Contact GHO at GHOTravel@cmda.org to make sure that your ticket is cancelled. Most airlines will allow you to rebook a flight on their airline within 12 months from the original date of purchase for a \$200 rebooking penalty.

Will I get charged for extra baggage?

Airline policies differ on how many suitcases you can bring for free. Some flights allow you to bring two suitcases at no cost, while others will charge you for the second suitcase. We ask you to limit your personal clothes so you can take a suitcase of medications for the trip. For most of our trips, we bring in medications and supplies for the team to keep costs down and to get quality medications. A significant part of your project fee goes to purchasing these medications. We will send you a box of medications about 10 days before the team departs. Since most full-sized suitcases weigh 3 to 4 pounds empty, these boxes typically have 44 pounds of medications. This keeps your suitcase under the 50-pound maximum. We will send you a humanitarian service letter to use when you check your bags. Many airlines will waive their fee for a second bag and for wheelchairs and crutches for humanitarian service. This is optional on their part, so make sure to be very kind to the airline employee who takes your bag. As we build volume with airlines, we anticipate negotiating a free second bag on all of our trips. In the meantime, you may be charged for

your second bag. If you save the receipt, you can use it as an additional tax-deductible contribution when you file your taxes.

Will there be a separate flight inside the country where we are ministering?

Sometimes. There are several team sites in Asia and Africa where we take a domestic flight after arriving in the country. These flights are relatively inexpensive, costing from \$100 to \$150 each way. Sometimes we book these flights in advance, and charge them to your credit card. Other times the flights are purchased with cash once we arrived, and the cost is added to your overall cost. The trip description will usually identify if this flight is necessary, and your team leader will let you know for sure.

What if I have a family emergency and have to cancel one week before the team departs?

First, you need to make sure that your airline ticket is cancelled before your first flight, or you will forfeit the entire amount of the ticket to the airline. Contact GHO at GHOTravel@cmda.org to make sure that your ticket is cancelled. Most airlines will allow you to rebook a flight on their airline within 12 months from the original date of purchase for a \$200 rebooking penalty. You will be allowed to use the amount of the project fee, less the \$150 application fee, that you have paid on a future GHO trip for up to 12 months. You will need to complete a cancellation form and fax it to us at 423-764-1417 in order to be removed from the trip.

Will there be time to do sightseeing and shopping on this trip?

Occasionally there will be a short period of time to see some of the sights and pick up a few gifts for people back home. The point of the trip is to serve our national partners and the people who need medical and dental care, so sightseeing is a low priority. If you are interested in staying a few days longer in the country at your own expense, then you must request permission from both your team leader and the GHO Travel Coordinator.