

Brasil Pre-Trip Preparation Guide

Forward

Good Friends! We are delighted that you are considering a mission trip through Rivers of the World. ROW is a not-for-profit Christian ministry that targets remote river basins. Our goal is to serve with people who live in these river basins. Those we serve determine our projects. We ask them –“What is your greatest challenge- and what would you like to do about it?”

ROW emphasizes that it is their country, their village, their people, but our problem. Our goal is to serve in an atmosphere of mutual concern and respect. ROW projects run the gamut of human, physical and spiritual needs. Academics, research, education and medical/dental concerns go hand in hand with church planting, construction, evangelism and Bible distribution.

And so, we have put together this handbook, with information that should make it easier for groups who are embarking on this adventure for the first time. Some items such as Passports and Visas are mandatory. Others are just suggestions that might make the trip more meaningful for your group and for those you are visiting.

When you are preparing for your trip, and it seems like there is no way you can complete everything, just remember the reason you are going. It's all about connecting with people connecting with God, teaching others about the love of Jesus, and experiencing first-hand that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. That's the “big picture.” That's what's really important. The rest are just details.

1. Presbyterian Church of Manaus

1.1 Background Information

The Presbyterian Church of Manaus is a large church with four Sunday services as well as a Youth service on Saturday evenings. We estimated their weekly attendance at about 3000, but their membership is much greater than that, due to their outreach activities, and the many church members living in outlying areas of the Amazon region. Our contact at Presbyterian Church of Manaus is Rev. Djard de Moraes. Djard and his wife Rosario serve the people along the Amazon and Solimoes Rivers as their full-time ministry. There are currently 14 full-time ministers on staff at this church.

1.2 Mission Programs

The church is very active in reaching out to people who live in remote areas along the Amazon River and its different tributaries. They maintain and staff five medical mission boats which take regular trips up the river. Each boat includes a doctor's office, dentist's office and a pharmacy, and is well stocked with medicines and equipment. Most teams that come will bring medical and/or dental personnel with them and there are usually medical people that are part of the Manaus Pres. Church that will come along as well.

2. Pre-trip Business

2.1 Passports and Visas

You must have a valid Passport and then secure a Visa in order to travel to Brazil. Passport applications can be picked up at any U.S. post office. Passport photos are available through most photographic studios (e.g. Wolf Camera or Walgreens) Applications for a Visa are available on-line. The Brazilian Embassy website can give you lots of information as well as visa application forms (www.brasilemb.org). A **U.S. Postal Money Order** for \$75 must accompany the application. Do not use any other brand of money order as it will not be accepted. Also, on the Visa application, you should check that you are traveling on vacation and not as a missionary. The missionary box on the form is intended for use by individuals who are professional missionaries and the Visa approval process is much more extensive than for short-term visitors like your team. The Visa Application must be sent to Miami and the process generally takes about a month (although it's best to allow two months to be safe).

2.2 Health Preparation

2.2.1 Inoculations

Check with your local health department's travel clinic or your personal physician for information on the inoculations needed when traveling to the Amazon Region of Brazil.

Generally recommended:

- Tetanus (if not current)
- Yellow Fever
- Typhoid
- Small Pox
- Hepatitis A (series of 2 shots)
- Hepatitis B (series of 3 shots)

You should start the inoculation process at least 30 days before you leave because you will need at least 2 of the 3 Hep B shots before leaving and they must be administered at least 3 weeks apart. The rest of the Hepatitis shots can be completed when you return. The cost of the inoculations through the county travel clinic vary, but are approx. \$250/person.

2.2.2 Malaria Medicine

There is some disagreement among experts on the best course for malaria prevention. Some doctors do not recommend taking malaria medicine as a preventative measure, while others do. It is best that you discuss this with your doctor or the health care professionals at your travel clinic. If you decide to take the malaria medicine in advance, you will need to start taking it before you leave and continue to take it after you return. The two most common types are Lariam and Malarone. Details are available through your travel clinic or your physician.

3. Budgeting and Planning

3.1 Airline Tickets

There are many options when it comes to air travel and several different carriers that fly into Manaus (e.g. TAM, Varig, Delta). If you are a part of a group, it is best to work out the travel arrangements through one person leading the group. That way everyone is arriving at the same time and it makes it easier for the folks on the other end meeting the flight. If you need assistance with air travel, you can contact Cathy Kramlich with Travel and Cruise Professionals. ckramlich@tpc.webmail.com or 770.565.7600

3.2 Hotel Accommodations

Generally there is one night's stay at a hotel on the way into Manaus and on the way out. The best accommodations for a reasonable price is at the Hotel Amazonia. Most teams that make this trip stay here and it is walking distance (only a few blocks) from the Presbyterian Church of Manaus. It is clean, convenient, economical, and has an excellent breakfast buffet.

3.3 Boat fees and gratuity

The fee for going on the boat is \$25/person/day. The fee is paid to the Presbyterian Church of Manaus in U.S. dollars. Again, it is best if a group leader sets one price for the entire trip and this is included as a part of that price.

3.4 Local Transportation

Rev. Djard can rent a small bus for folks to use to see the sights. The vehicle can hold up to ~20 people, and costs only about \$100/day, including tip for the driver. This can be set up for sightseeing in Manaus and to go to the local market. There is also public transportation that can be taken at a very reasonable cost.

3.5 Using ATMs

Automatic teller machines allow you to withdraw only \$R 100/day (the equivalent of about \$28 U.S. Dollars. You also must have an ATM card with a 4-digit PIN for it to work. You cannot get U.S. Dollars from the ATMs. It would be prudent to bring traveler's checks or cash for your purchases of gifts, etc.

3.6 Naming a Banker/Total Trip Costs

It is strongly recommended that you estimate and collect all fees from your group before you leave for your trip. As a minimum, collect the boat fees and tips and the fees for the bus. Have one person keep track of this cash and pay for these items. It will save you the hassle of trying to collect from the group when they are all dealing with cash and currencies in Brazil. Most trips (inclusive of airfare, the boat, meals, transportation, etc.) will cost between US\$1,300.00-1,500.00 depending on airfare. It will be easiest if one person sets a price for the group and handles all the arrangements at the "Trip Leader"

4. Keeping Connected Ideas – Home Team and Away Team (Thoughts From Previous Teams)

4.1 Financial Partners/Prayer Partners

Many teams will have financial and prayer partners that support them before and during the trip. Several teams have sent out letters in advance

soliciting financial and prayer support for the team. This has been a very effective method of fundraising and friend raising. It is a good feeling to know that you are covered in prayer while you are on your trip.

4.2 Daily Prayer Calendar

All Northminster members received a prayer calendar, which members could use to pray for the team. There were different recommended topics for each day we were gone. For example, the first day the prayer calendar suggested prayers for safe travel. It also included a Bible verse for the day, which we read during in our personal devotion time. The Prayer calendars were distributed the Sunday prior to our departure as a bulletin insert.

4.3 Prayer Cards

During our commissioning service (Sunday before our departure) Northminster and Ebenezer members received a card on which they could write a brief message to the team. The messages could be signed or anonymous. They were collected with the offering, and we brought them with us to Brazil, to read while on the boat.

4.4 Satellite Phone and E-mail

Our group rented a Satellite phone for use on the trip. It cost about \$125 for the week, plus a charge for each minute used. It also had a text-messaging feature, allowing us to receive text messages sent via the Internet at no charge. We used the phone very sparingly for personal “safe arrival” calls. Its primary purpose was to send voicemail messages back to our “home team” coordinator. Each day we phoned in to a specific voicemail box and recorded a message telling of our activities for the prior day. Our home team coordinator typed up the message and distributed it via e-mail Midweek, we used the satellite phone to call in to the church, where we could address all those attending the church supper that evening. We were on a speakerphone, and each away team member spoke briefly to the group. The satellite phone was invaluable in keeping us connected with our home church, and making them feel connected to our team.

5. Living on the Boat

5.1 Daily Devotions

Each day one of the pastors will lead a devotional time. This usually includes a scripture lesson, and then a short story lesson. It really helps to become centered each day and is a very important part of the trip. It reminds us of why we are there and gives us some time to listen to God’s message and generally gets us all “on the same page” each day.

5.2 Keeping a Journal

Keeping a journal is an enjoyable as well as a rewarding part of the trip. There are things that will happen on the trip that you will want to remember for life.... if you don't keep a journal, many of those memories will be forgotten by the time you get home.

5.3 Music

Music is a critical part of the trip experience. If possible, it is enjoyable to have one of your team members lead the group in singing. Fortunately, both the crew and missionaries are gifted musicians and singers, so you will be able to follow their lead. We strongly recommend that you take along some sheet music for a few Christian songs that you can all sing together. You will most likely be asked at least once to sing something as a group. If at all possible, take some music with words in both English and Portuguese. There should be songbooks on the boat as well that are in both English and Portuguese.

5.4 Food and water

The meals on the boat are excellent and there is plenty to go around. Meals are served at regular times, but you should bring snack foods with you in case you don't like a particular meal or you need a snack between meals. Nuts, packages of crackers, trail mix, etc. are all good options.

Drinking water is provided (water cooler) on the boat, so you will want to bring along a water bottle, preferably one that attaches to your belt for easy carrying. Be sure to drink plenty of water...the sun is hot and you will dehydrate quickly.

5.5 Bathroom Facilities

The boat included four bathrooms (pretty much treated as "unisex"), which included a sink, commode, and shower. The entire bathroom is the shower stall, so you'll want to bring along "flip-flops" to wear into the shower. You can shower with water that is drawn from the river or you can bathe in the river for a refreshing end-of-the-day activity.

5.6 Sleeping Accommodations

Bring along a sheet and small travel pillow for sleeping (if you forget, they will have a limited supply on the boat). You'll also want "sweats" for the occasional night when it rains and the temperature drops, but will usually sleep in a t-shirt and shorts. You'll have the choice of sleeping on a mat on the boat deck (about 2" thick foam mattress) or you can sleep in a hammock. The hammocks are hung from the rafters on the second deck of the boat when it's time for bed, and then taken down in the morning. The top deck is nice (and covered) because there is more airflow on the top deck.

6. Teams on the Boat

It is best if the team figures out in advance what mission projects they want to do (e.g. VBS, Medical Mission, Construction) and make plans with Pastor Djard for those activities in advance. There is some cost associated with some of the projects (e.g. construction) and those funds will need to be raised before leaving for the trip. The group leader can then assign people to “teams” that work in the different areas where they feel gifted when they are on the river and in the villages.

6.1 Evangelism

The boat is equipped with projection and sound equipment to show the Jesus film and the people in the villages enjoy that. Some teams will bring laptops and take photos of the people in the village during the day. They then make up a presentation of those photos for the people in the village in the evening.... this is a BIG hit.

6.2 Medical

If your team has medical or dental skills they will likely work with the medical staff. This might include medical exams and treatment, work in the pharmacy distributing medicines, nursing/triage, or dental services. There is actually a dentist’s chair on the boat with an electric drill.

6.3 Construction

There is great need in many of the villages for construction work. The projects can range from building churches, latrines and fences, to renovating buildings that are run down. If your team wants to participate in a construction project, it is best to contact Pastor Djard in advance, identify the project you want to participate in, and ensure that the funds are raised for the project in advance.

6.4 Bible School (testimony from a team)

Some of our members participated in the Bible School sessions for the village children. We brought along many items, which had been donated by our congregations. These included children’s clothing, small toys and books. These were sorted into “goody bags” for each family, and were distributed after Bible School. Although we had planned some Bible School activities and brought along craft supplies, the actual conduct of the school was coordinated by one of the fulltime crewmembers. She did an excellent job of planning and conducting the activities, and we provided assistance.

One activity that was a huge success – we brought along a Polaroid instant camera and enough film for about 100 pictures. We took “portraits” of each child and they made paper frames for their pictures. Many of the children had never seen a picture of themselves, so you can imagine their delight at having their own portrait.

6.5 Boat Crew

The boat crew includes a captain, three sailors, a cook and a cook’s helper. Medical staff can include a dentist, a doctor, nurses, and a pharmacist. Crewmembers are very much a part of the group, participating in devotions, and in worship services. Many of the crew are bilingual and are very helpful.

6.6 Cooking

The food on the boat is excellent and there is a full-time cook that prepares the meals for you. The clean-up after meals is done by all.... the captain will prepare a chore list and you will be invited to help with clean-up after meals

7. Going Ashore

7.1 Disembarking

Depending on the water level of the river, there are several ways that you might exit the boat. Most commonly the boat will be tied off to the shore and a “gangplank” will be placed between the boat and the shore. Please be careful, as things can get slippery around the river.

7.2 Visiting with Villagers

Although most Americans on ROW mission trips do not speak Portuguese, we are able to communicate with the villagers through our interpreters and through “sign language.” Social rules to keep in mind are pretty much the same as when you are visiting someone at home. If they offer you something to eat or drink you should accept if at all possible.

7.3 Worship

Be prepared to participate in worship services with the crew and the local villagers at each stop. This includes music, scripture lessons and sermons. It also includes opportunities for the villagers to accept Christ, and to become church members. The worship services can be among your most cherished memories. The style is charismatic, and you will likely be invited to participate in praying for the new believers.

8. What to Pack

8.1 Clothing

Bring one nice outfit for church. You will wear only shorts and t-shirts while on the boat. Bring along a sweater or sweatshirt for the rare occasion when it gets cool. You'll also want a bathing suit so that you can swim if offered.

For your feet, bring shore shoes (work boots or sneakers), sandals or sneakers for on the boat, and flip flips for the shower – as well as sleeping shirt and shorts. A raincoat/poncho is also a good idea as well.

8.2 Personal Items

Here are some personal items you should consider bringing:

- Soap
- Shampoo
- Toothpaste and toothbrush
- Deodorant
- Bath towel
- Mosquito repellent (100% deet is best)
- Waterless soap or wipes (hand sanitizer)
- Sunscreen (at least factor 30)
- Sunglasses, hat and water bottle
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Camera with plenty of film,
- Video camera,
- A journal and
- A Bible.

9. Language

If you have the opportunity to learn just a few words of Portuguese, it will be well worth the effort. On past trips, previous team members began listening to tapes about a month before departure and this significantly improved their ability to communicate – especially with the crew and the missionaries on the boat. An English-Portuguese dictionary is also a very good idea. You will find that the crewmembers are as eager to learn English as you will be to learn Portuguese.

All of the worship services and devotions are translated – sometimes given in English and translated to Portuguese, but most often, originating in Portuguese and translated to English.

10. Gifts for Brazil

The need along the river is very great. Many of the teams will collect school supplies or personal items and make up little bags or kits that contain these items. They are great giveaways in the villages and are very helpful for the people there. It is also a great way to get the people you leave behind in the States involved in the mission with you. Here are just a couple of ideas of the types of items you can put into a Ziplock bag:

Bible School Supplies:

- Paper, pencils, crayons, markers
- Glue sticks, sequins, trims, buttons or craft items
- Bible Story picture books
- Bible story picture cubes
- Puppets for telling stories
- Small Dolls, games, balls or toys
- Hair Bows, Hair Bands, etc.

Personal Items:

- Motrin and Vitamins
- Yeast infection medicine
- Neosporin Ointment
- Eye drops, soap
- Children's summer clothing

11. Planning Your Away Team

When planning for team members, be sure you have identified members who will be responsible for the following:

- **Spiritual Leadership** - lead devotions and participate in worship.
- **Music Person** – Lead vocal music; Bring song sheets in both Portuguese and English if possible
- **Banker** – Collects fees from away team members in advance and keeps track of all financial transactions.

Some elements of this trip will be challenging and you should have second thoughts about bringing young children or the faith-hearted. Most adults 16 or older do fine.

12. When You Return (Thoughts from a previous team)

We prepared a slideshow for our congregation a couple of weeks after our return. So that we would all have access to all pictures taken on the trip, each team member had their pictures developed immediately and recorded on a CD. The CDs were all provided to one person who compiled them into a master disk (duplicates mostly removed) of over 500 pictures. Each team member received a copy of the CD with all pictures included on it. This was used to select pictures for the slide show presentation. Each team member spoke on a different subject during the presentation.