

# International Partnership Trips

## Short-Term Trip Information for Afghanistan

Several times each year, teams of people from flatirons travel to Afghanistan. Our teams often have a specific purpose or project, but more importantly we go to encourage the staff and continue building relationships in the community. Whether we are working alongside the medical staff at the clinic or the teachers at the school, our goal is to build relationships. Over 20 teams of flatirons people have traveled to Afghanistan in the last handful of years. Flatirons people are considered friends and each team that visits is anticipated and welcomed. We continue to send teams because we believe that over time, through relationships, the light and love we have to share shines brighter and brighter.

The trip dates are posted to the website and we ask that you carefully consider the mandatory meeting dates for the team before you make the decision to apply for that team. You will be interviewed by the team leaders, who will then decide on the team and all applicants will be notified of their decision. Our short-term teams spend three months preparing, both individually and as a team to experience another culture.

### **General Requirements and Information:**

- **Age** | 18 years of age or older
- **Passport** | a valid passport with the expiration date at least 6 months past the return date of your trip
- **Visa** | applications will be completed at the first team meeting
- **Travel Considerations**
  - Air travel between Denver and Kabul is generally 33-35 hours. You will travel through several airports and sleep in broken intervals of time.
  - Ground transportation is arranged by our hosts using SUV's and vans. Most destinations are within 90 minutes of the guesthouse.
- **Health and Medical** | consider your own health in light of the limited scope of medical treatments available
  - medical emergencies in Afghanistan would be treated at one of the local hospitals or clinics
  - the dusty summer air and smoky winter air may pose respiratory, sinus or eye irritation for some
  - consult with your doctor or a travel clinic to determine needed immunizations
  - find a travel clinic at [www.istm.org](http://www.istm.org)
- **Financial**
  - You are required to cover the cost of the trip which includes air and car travel, housing, food etc.
  - A non-refundable \$150 contribution is required at the first team meeting for your visa application to be processed and reviewed. The balance of the trip cost is due two weeks prior to departure. In the event your visa application is not accepted, or the trip is cancelled for any reason, any remaining funds will be transferred to missions at flatirons.
  - Snacks, meals en route, souvenirs, etc. are your personal expenses.
  - Possible additional expenses include: obtaining a passport or passport renewal, immunizations.
  - Once you have been accepted to a team, you will be provided with information about ways to raise financial support; however, if full support is not raised, the balance is your responsibility. Do not begin to raise funds until you are notified of acceptance to the team.
  - Monies put towards trips are considered contributions. If the trip is cancelled for any reason or you withdraw from the trip, contributions will be used for missions at flatirons.
  - If your fundraising efforts result in raising funds in addition to the expected trip costs, additional funds will be used first for any unexpected costs for the trip you're a part of. Beyond that, additional funds will be used for missions at flatirons.

- **Clothing** | we honor our hosts by paying attention to the cultural differences in the dress code
  - Islamic ideas of modesty are very different from those in the west. The local attire for men and women covers the whole body.
  - Take time to be clean and tidy with your shoes dusted off, hair combed, etc. as cleanliness is considered an integral part of Islamic religion.
  - Men and women remove outside shoes when indoors – consider bringing slippers or inside shoes
  - The weather in Kabul is much the same as Lafayette, CO.
  - **Men** wear long pants and long sleeve shirts, not exposing any more skin than is necessary and don't don't normally even roll up their sleeves (particularly in rural villages).
  - **Women** wear pants that are not tight and cover to the ankle or skirts with pants underneath with long sleeve tops that cover to mid-thigh; a head scarf is worn outside of the guesthouse.
  
- **Accommodations** | our teams stay at a guesthouse in Kabul
  - the guesthouse is completely walled in and guarded
  - the two story guesthouse includes a dining room, kitchen, living room, four bathrooms and seven bedrooms (accommodated with singles beds or bunks)
  - internet access is available though impacted by power fluctuations at times
  - power strips to recharge cameras, laptops, etc. are provided
  - meals are provided at the guesthouse with occasional meals or snacks at restaurants
    - breakfast includes fruit, bread, eggs, pancakes
    - lunch is often soup, stew, vegetables, fruit, bread
    - dinner selections include rice, kabobs, chicken, vegetables, fruit
    - the meal schedule may be irregular; bringing snacks is encouraged
  - tea is the national drink and always available at the guesthouse
  - teams often bring coffee for the coffeemakers in the guesthouse
  
- **Security** | the people of Afghanistan have lived in the midst of war, conflict and terrorism for over 30 years
  - We have networked people on the ground in Kabul and communicate regularly on security issues.
  - It is always possible that a trip will be cancelled or rescheduled due to changing security situations.
  
- **Other places your team may visit** | daily schedules are subject to the security situation that day
  - Barek Aub is a village located on a high plain about an hour north of Kabul
  - Istalif is a village located in the mountains north of Kabul
  - Chicken Street is the market and shopping area in Kabul
  
- Read the **daily updates** from the previous teams at [www.flatironschurch.com/international](http://www.flatironschurch.com/international)
  
- **Suggested Reading**
  - *Inside Afghanistan* by John Weaver
  - *The Kite Runner* by Khalid Hosseini
  - *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khalid Hosseini
  - *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson
  - *Lone Survivor* by Marcus Luttrell
  - *When Helping Hurts* by Corbett & Fikkert

