Short-Term Mission Trip
General Information: Reynosa, Mexico

How to Register
You can apply for all Austin Ridge short-term trip opportunities on our trips page, listed below. More specific details for each Reynosa trip, including actual dates, cost and mandatory team meetings are located at www.austinridge.org/trips.

Trip Overview
This trip is open to all families at all of our Austin Ridge campuses. We will spend 4-5 days enjoying our friends in Reynosa, Mexico! Our team will serve at the orphanage & school at Rio Bravo Ministries, helping with construction projects, leading fun activities and discipleship times with the children of Rio Bravo. Please visit our trips page listed above for information about trip cost for each Reynosa trip.

Location
Reynosa, Mexico is approximately five miles across the Anzalduis International Bridge from McAllen, TX. Our base of operations is Rio Bravo Ministries (RBM) led by Pastor Ray Hansen.

Ray, and his wife Leah, began RBM in 1992 when the city of Reynosa donated land on a literal junkyard. Today RBM is a walled compound on 6+ acres that is home to 75 children (infants through college age) and is the largest school in Reynosa with around 650 students. More info available at www.rio-bravo.org and www.facebook.com/riobravomin.

Travel
For all Austin Ridge led trips to Reynosa the church does not provide transportation, but we do discuss a specific travel plan at our mandatory team travel meeting which is typically scheduled 1-2 weeks prior to the trip.

Contact your trip leader for the exact meeting date. We ask folks to either caravan in groups and/or meet our designated trip leaders on the scheduled date and time (see sample itinerary below) at Ray Hansen’s house in Mission, Tx. From Ray’s home, we travel across the Mexico border as an entire team with Rio Bravo Ministries. You will have the option of driving your car across in a caravan or leaving your car parked in the US and being shuttled across in a Rio Bravo Ministries van. This is approximately a 10-minute commute from Ray’s home to walls of Rio Bravo Ministries.

Travel Documents
Passports are required, by the U.S. government, for all international travel; however, traveling into Mexico, you can also substitute an original copy of your birth certificate with and I.D. For minors that do not have I.D. cards, the birth certificate will be sufficient.
Travel Protection Plan
The cost of your trip includes a travel protection plan, which provides coverage for emergency medical expenses, medical evacuation, accidental death, political and security evacuation, etc. It is highly recommended that participants have their own comprehensive health insurance for the duration of their trip as well.

Cancellations
In the event that you end up not participating in the trip for any reason, please understand we cannot provide refunds. Please note that per IRS regulations, any charitable contribution made to Austin Ridge designated to your personal trip account (whether the contribution is from you or from someone else) is considered a tax-deductible donation, and therefore cannot be refunded.

Safety
Safety is always a concern when traveling outside of the country. Although, you immediately know you are in a different world, RBM is located five miles from the US/Mexico border, a 10-minute drive from the Anzalduis International Bridge from McAllen, TX. The RBM compound is a very nice facility with 8-foot walls surrounding the perimeter. For the majority of the time spent, we stay within the walls of the compound. We may travel outside the compound if there is an opportunity to attend a church service or visit the nearby village of Colonia. If/when we do travel outside the RBM compound, we only do so during the daylight hours, with Ray Hansen, a well-respected member of the community. In the 25 years, RBM has been participating in short-term trips they have never had an incident. Additionally, we cross the border together with the Rio Bravo Ministries vans, so you have the option of driving your car across in a caravan, or leaving your car parked in the U.S. side, at the home of one of RBM directors, and be shuttled across by vans labeled as Rio Bravo Ministries.

The U.S. State Department Travel Warning for Reynosa
Please note, there are a variety of warnings about traveling to Mexico including a level four travel warning for Reynosa from the U.S. State Department. These warnings are unchanging, having been the same for the past ten years. Nonetheless, we want to be certain to communicate all of the information beforehand, so our Austin Ridge families are not surprised to learn later. We want you to make the best decision for your families. We do reiterate that no mission trip to RBM in the past 25 years has ever had an incident. If you have any questions, let us know, we will happily put you in touch with other who have gone before you.

Activities
We’ll be active with a variety of activities including work projects at the orphanage and school, VBS, plenty of time with the kids, and worship. Those who wish to can also spend time working on some projects at a nearby small village or “colonia,” where people live in truly third world conditions, named Strong Union Colonia #21 or the “Blue School”.

Facilities
RBM has a clean and safe campus, with high walls surrounding the entire property. We will be eating all of our meals in the RBM dining room and sleeping in rooms holding up to eight people with a private bath.
Sample Itinerary (5-Day Trip)

Flexibility and understanding are key on any mission trip; most of our trips have a similar itinerary as the following:

**Saturday, March 16**
- Leave Austin by 7:45 a.m. (pack a lunch & snacks for the road)
- Meet in Mission, TX at 2:00, depart 2:30 p.m. for RBM
- 4:00 Rio Bravo Tour - meet in parking lot
- 5:30 p.m. Dinner in the Rio Bravo cafeteria
- 7:30 p.m. Orientation & Rio Bravo Ministries testimony by Ray Hansen

**Monday, March 18**
- 7:15 a.m. Devotionals & Time in the Word
- 8:00 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00 a.m. Two Tracks: Rio Bravo & Colonia
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch at RBM
- 1:00 p.m. Project work continues…
- 3:00 p.m. Arts & Crafts or Sports at RBM
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner at RBM
- 8:00 p.m. Worship & Social Time

**Sunday, March 17**
- 8:00 a.m. Attend services at local church
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch at RBM
- 1:30 p.m. Fair at the Blue School: sports, crafts, games
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner at RBM
- 7:30 p.m. Worship & Family game night

**Tuesday, March 19**
- 7:15 a.m. Devotionals & Time in the Word
- 8:00 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:30 a.m. Continue Projects on Two Tracks
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch at RBM
- 1:00 p.m. Work projects continue…
- 6:00 p.m. Peter Piper Pizza trip with the kids
- 8:00 p.m. Worship Service

**Wednesday, March 20**
- 7:15 a.m. Devotionals & Time in the Word
- 8:00 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00 a.m. Project wrap-up
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch & Concluding Meeting
- 12:30 p.m. Campus Clean-Up
- 1:00 p.m. Depart for Austin
General Trip Attire
Our desire is to make sure we dress in a way that will not offend our hosts. Please dress conservatively and modestly. A flashy wardrobe can be a stumbling block to our friends who may have far fewer material goods.

• We typically ask women to wear longer length shorts, or pants, and short-sleeve shorts for project days in Reynosa. For church attire, it is preferred for women to wear casual dresses or skirts that are at least knee length. The wardrobe may vary for each trip and the scheduled activities. Please check with your team leader for more information. Bring closed-toe shoes for project days.

• Men may wear shorts or pants, jeans, and short sleeve shirts for project days. Bring at least one collared shirt for church services to wear with pants.

• You can wear the same skirt or pants several times, but you will want a clean shirt each day.

• You will want a good pair of running shoes. Make sure they are comfortable. Sandals are acceptable on non-project work days (make sure you can walk a distance in them). It may not be wise to purchase new shoes just before you leave. Give yourself time to break-in any new shoes.

Additional Items & Supplies
If there are project-related supplies or additional items requested for your trip, the designated trip leader for your trip will communicate these specifics to your entire team.

General Packing List
• Water Bottle
• Sleeping bag and/or sheets/blankets
• Pillow
• Towel
• Good shoes (appropriate for your destination & activities)
• Alarm clock
• Phone charger
• Flashlight
• Snacks (limited amount)
• Bible & Journal
• Bilingual Dictionary
• Soap & Hand Sanitizer
• Shampoo
• Deodorant
• Toothbrush & Toothpaste
• Kleenex
- Sunscreen & Bug Repellent
- Band-Aids
- Advil, Tylenol
- Allergy medicine
- Anti-Diarrhea medicine
- Probiotics (always a safe choice when traveling internationally)
- Chapstick
- Eye Drops
- Supply of any prescription medications you typically take. Please remember, refrigeration may not be available.
- To avoid problems when passing through customs (or border checks), keep medicines in their original, labeled containers.

**DO’s**

- **Only bring one bag.** Make sure you can carry everything you bring, and it is labeled with your name.
- Leave your jewelry at home. In most areas, it confirms the stereotype of the rich American. In all areas, it can be distracting and get lost or stolen. Carry a minimum number of valuables necessary for your trip and plan for places to conceal them.
- Your passport (or birth certificate), cash and credit cards (if you choose to carry any) should be carried in a pouch or money belt under your clothing. ONLY SHOW YOUR I.D., PASSPORT OR BIRTH CERTIFICATE WHEN NECESSARY.
- Do carry a copy of your passport (or birth certificate) and travel insurance on you at all times.
- Check the weather when packing for your trip (i.e. a rain jacket may be necessary).
- Leave a copy of your itinerary and flight information with family or friends at home in case they need to contact you in an emergency. Family or friends can contact the Austin Ridge Mission’s office for assistance in locating you. (Contact information will be provided.)

**DON’Ts**

- PLEASE DO NOT BRING weapons, knives, sharp scissors, etc. Small pocket knives and/or tools are OK if you pack them in your luggage. Please make sure your trip leader is aware of these items.
- If you cannot carry it by yourself, don’t take it! This doesn’t mean, “Can I carry this comfortably across my living room?” It means, “Can I travel with this to a foreign country?”