

Travel Notes # 1: Airport Talking Points & Leader Guide

Note: Most information on page 1 assumes your team is flying on **Copa Airlines** through **Miami (MIA)** and **Panama City (PTY)** to **Manaus, Brazil (MAO)**.

1. Outbound Departure (First Leg)

Preparation & Check-In

- **Travel Documents:** Keep all physical travel documents in an accessible place. Ensure you have every team member's **locator number** readily available.
- **Checking Bags Through (U.S. carrier/Copa):** If flying on two separate tickets (U.S. carrier and Copa), ask the U.S. carrier agent to check bags all the way through to **Manaus (MAO)**. You must request this individually for **each separate locator number**.
 - *Return Trip Note:* Copa may be reluctant to check bags to your first U.S. port of entry on the return from Manaus, but always ask politely before checking in.

Team Gathering (15 Minutes Before Boarding)

- **Location:** Meet at the departure gate 15 minutes before boarding begins.
- **Action Items:**
 1. **Headcount & Intro:** Perform a headcount, thank the team, and facilitate brief introductions if needed.
 2. **Accountability Groups:** Assign **4 accountability partners** per group to make tracking easier throughout the week.
 3. **Document Backup:** Ask every team member to take a photo of their **passport photo page** and **visa** on their phone.
 4. **Communication:** Confirm everyone is active on the team's **WhatsApp group**.
 5. **Code of Conduct:** Remind the team that, per the AO Code of Conduct they agreed to, **alcohol, tobacco, and vaping are strictly prohibited** starting now through the end of the trip. The full Code of Conduct is at the bottom of this.
 6. **Payment Warning:** Airports outside the US generally do not accept cash—credit or debit cards only.
 7. **Hydration:** Remind everyone to start hydrating immediately.

2. In Miami (MIA)

Understanding Your Tickets

- **Ticket 1:** Your origin city → Miami (MIA)
- **Ticket 2:** Miami (MIA) → Panama City (PTY) → Manaus (MAO)
- **Baggage Reclaim Required:** Because these are separate tickets, **you MUST collect your checked bags at baggage claim in Miami** (both departing and returning). You will *not* need to claim bags during the Panama layover.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. **Retrieve Bags:** Go to Baggage Claim. Rental luggage carts are available via credit card.
2. **Transfer Terminals:** Exit the secure area (stay inside the airport building) and make the long walk to **South Terminal / Concourse J**.
3. **Locate Copa Check-In:** Find the Copa check-in counter located across from **Entrance #30**.
4. **Timing & Queueing:**
 - Copa check-in typically opens **3 hours before departure**. Be there as soon as it opens.
 - Get the team in line, then find a Copa agent to let them know you are a large group (they may expedite your check-in).
 - **Layovers over 4 hours:** Create a rotation plan so team members can watch the checked luggage while others go eat.
5. **Boarding Passes:** Verify that every team member receives **BOTH boarding passes** (MIA → PTY and PTY → MAO).
6. **Gate Meeting Time:** International flights board ~60 minutes before departure. Gather the team at the gate **1 hour and 15 minutes before departure**.

3. In Panama City (PTY)

General Arrival & Transit

- **Stay in Security:** **DO NOT** exit security or go to baggage claim. Your checked bags will automatically transfer to Manaus.
- **Proceed to Gate:** Walk straight to your next departure gate.
- **Gate Gathering:** For longer layovers, have the team assemble at the gate at least **15 minutes before the posted boarding time** (not departure time).
- **Documents Ready:** Have passport and the second boarding pass in hand.
- **Payments:** Airport vendors take credit cards, **not cash**.

Food & Rest Options

- **Vista Corona (Terminal 2, 4th Floor):** Accessible only via elevator. Features free Wi-Fi and hammocks (must purchase food/drink to stay).
 - *Note:* Requires advance reservations for groups larger than 10.
- **Guy Fieri's Restaurant:** Located between Terminal 1 and Terminal 2.

Return Flight Only (Panama Gate Security)

- **1.5 Hours Before Departure:** Copa clears the gate area to set up a secondary portable security checkpoint.
- **No Liquids Allowed:** No food or drinks are permitted through this secondary check. **Warn your team not to purchase drinks to bring onto the plane.**

4. In Manaus (MAO)

1. **Pre-Immigration Regroup:** Gather the team at the restrooms right before entering the Immigration line.
2. **Hydration:** Do not drink from water fountains. We will provide bottled water after you exit security.
3. **Immigration Answer:** If asked the purpose of your visit, state clearly, "**Tourism.**"
4. **Customs & Baggage Reclaim:**
 - Pick up checked bags and wait until the **entire team is together** before walking through Customs.
 - If Customs asks about supply bags (rare), state: "*It is a donation to Central Presbyterian Church in Manaus.*"

5. Special Instructions & Contingencies

Checked Bag Fees

- **American Airlines (AA):** Charges apply unless a passenger has AA Frequent Flyer status. (Fees increase if over 50 lbs or for a second bag).
 - *AA Status Tip:* Status holders receive free checked bags and can often extend this benefit to others on the same locator number. Check status levels at [aa.com](https://www.aa.com) in advance and group these passengers together at check-in.
 - You can prepay bag fees on [aa.com](https://www.aa.com) to save time/money.
- **Copa Airlines:** Group locator numbers generally do not pay checked bag fees. Individual locator numbers should anticipate **\$50+ each way**.
 - *Tip:* Have someone on a group roster who isn't checking a bag carry a group supply bag.

Missed Flights or Severe Delays

- **Assign a Lead:** Send a capable, calm communicator to speak with check-in or gate agents on the group's behalf.
- **Notify Airlines:** Always notify the airline immediately if you miss a leg so your remaining flights aren't canceled as a "no-show." (*Note: AA and Copa are not liable for missed connections caused by delays on another carrier.*)
- **Notify the Team:** Post updates to the team WhatsApp thread so in-country Brazil staff know your new arrival time.

Key Contacts for Delays:

- **Daytime Contact:** Call Kelly King, 903-245-2815 or Chad Pratt, 479-619-9438
- **After-Hours Contact:** Call HighPoint Help Desk at **866-715-9763** (*have all locator numbers ready*)

Leader Mindset: Stay calm. Your team will mirror your reaction. Travel disruptions are common on mission trips—remind the team to look for what God is doing even during unexpected interruptions.

Rare Scenario: Arriving in Panama via a US Carrier (Not Copa)

- **At US Departure:** check bags through to **Manaus (MAO)** under code-share. Request this for *every* locator number. Always ask politely, as they are not strictly obligated to do so on separate tickets.
- **Language Support:** Check if a team member is fluent in Spanish to assist at check-in/security.
- **If Bags ARE NOT Checked Through:**
 1. Go through Immigration and Baggage Claim (takes a minimum of 2.5 hours).
 2. Have the **Customs Donation Note** printed inside each supply bag. See NOTE 1 below.
 3. Proceed to Copa check-in, then re-enter security with your passport and boarding pass.

Spanish Translations for Phones & Bags

Note 1: Panama Customs (Printed in Checked Bags)

Print and place this note inside each checked supply bag:

Spanish:

"Estos suministros no son para la reventa, sino que son donaciones para una misión a la gente del Río Amazonas en Brasil."

English Meaning:

"These supplies are not for resale, but are donations for a mission to the people of the Amazon River in Brazil."

Quick Team Code of Conduct Reminder

(Share this with the team prior to travel or on the bus from the airport to the boat.)

All team members agreed to the **AO Code of Conduct** upon applying. Our goal is to assist the Brazilian church without creating hindrances to their conservative values or our US partner churches.

1. **Substance Ban:** Abstain from all alcohol, tobacco, and vape products starting at the airport through the end of the trip.
2. **Relationships:** Romantic pursuits or public displays of affection (PDA) between single team members are prohibited during the trip.
3. **Occupancy:** Only **one person at a time** is allowed in hammocks, bathrooms, or showers.
4. **Media & Language:** No profanity or offensive music.
5. **Dress Code:** Full compliance with AO's dress code policy is required at all times.