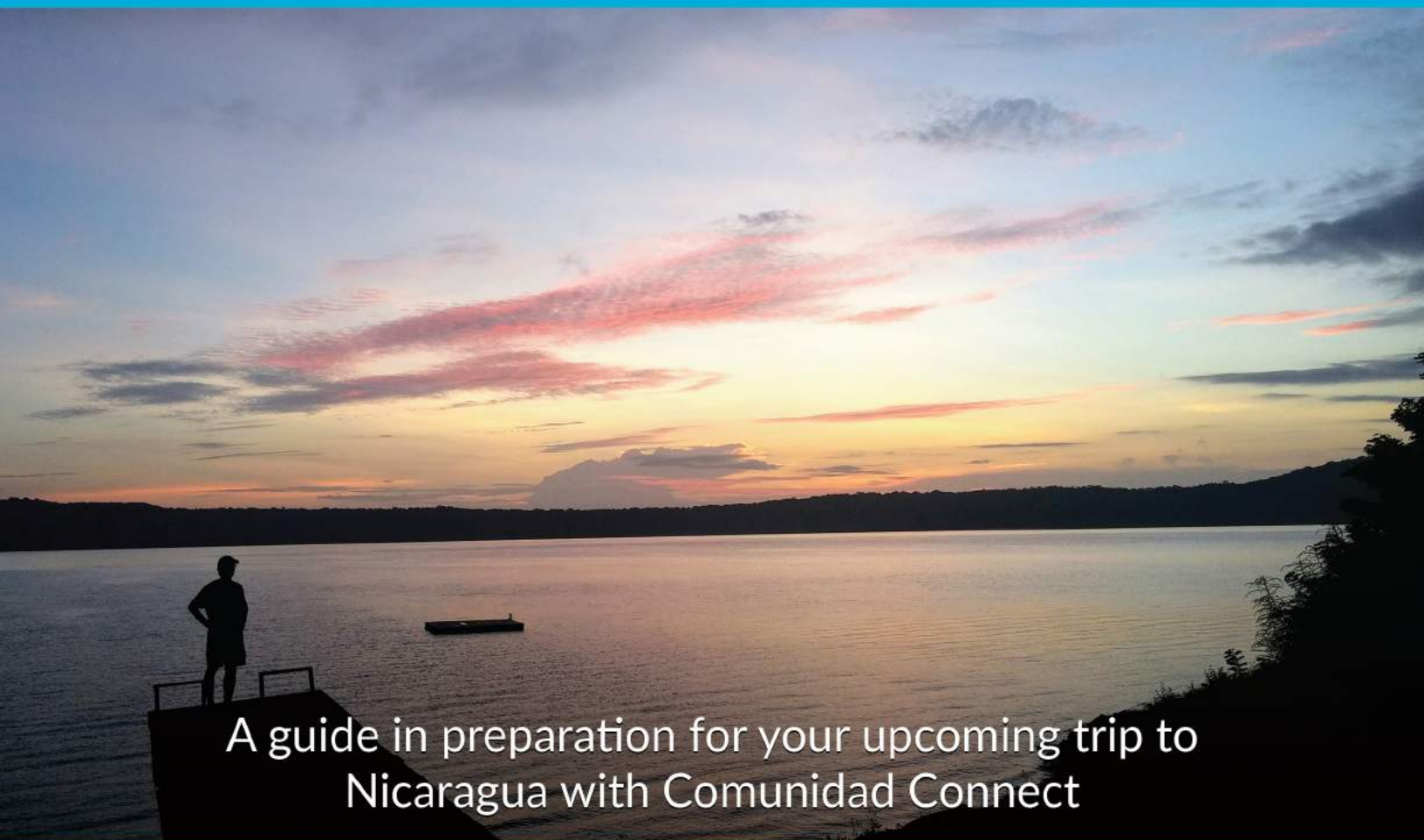




TRIP PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK



A guide in preparation for your upcoming trip to
Nicaragua with Comunidad Connect

info@comunidadconnect.org



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Connecting Communities That Care



Comunidad Connect is a non-profit social enterprise transforming community development in Nicaragua through service and cultural exchange.

Cultural Connections:

Our Cultural Connections program facilitates guided cultural exchange, study abroad, and group volunteer trips with academic institutions, medical professionals, communities of faith, and corporate partners. Hundreds volunteer with Comunidad Connect every year for experiences that combine service, education, cultural activities, and responsible tourism.

We work alongside local leaders in rural communities and believe that responsible and intentional tourism facilitated by our Cultural Connections program is a driving force for social change. It leverages external resources, local relationships, addresses current priorities, and stewards community assets.

For over 10 years, CC has improved access to primary and preventive health services for over 10,000 rural Nicaraguans through programming focused on clean water, dental health, improved household infrastructure, and special medical care for vulnerable families.

We are excited to work with your group on your upcoming trip. The warmth of its people, its natural beauty, and its safety make Nicaragua one of the best places to travel for a unique abroad experience. This pre-departure packet will provide you with everything you need to know before joining us on your Nicaraguan adventure.

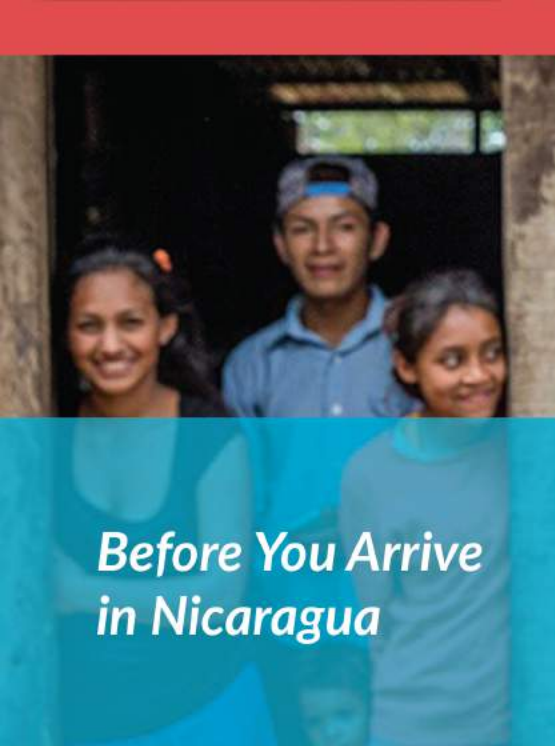
For more information, please contact your trip leader or reach us directly at: info@comunidadconnect.org



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Before You Arrive in Nicaragua



What to Turn In

Before your arrival to Nicaragua, please make sure you submit the following documents:*

- Pre-Departure Participant Info
- Media Permissions Waiver
- Liability and Risks Waiver
- Photocopy of Passport

*Forms completed through online registration process.

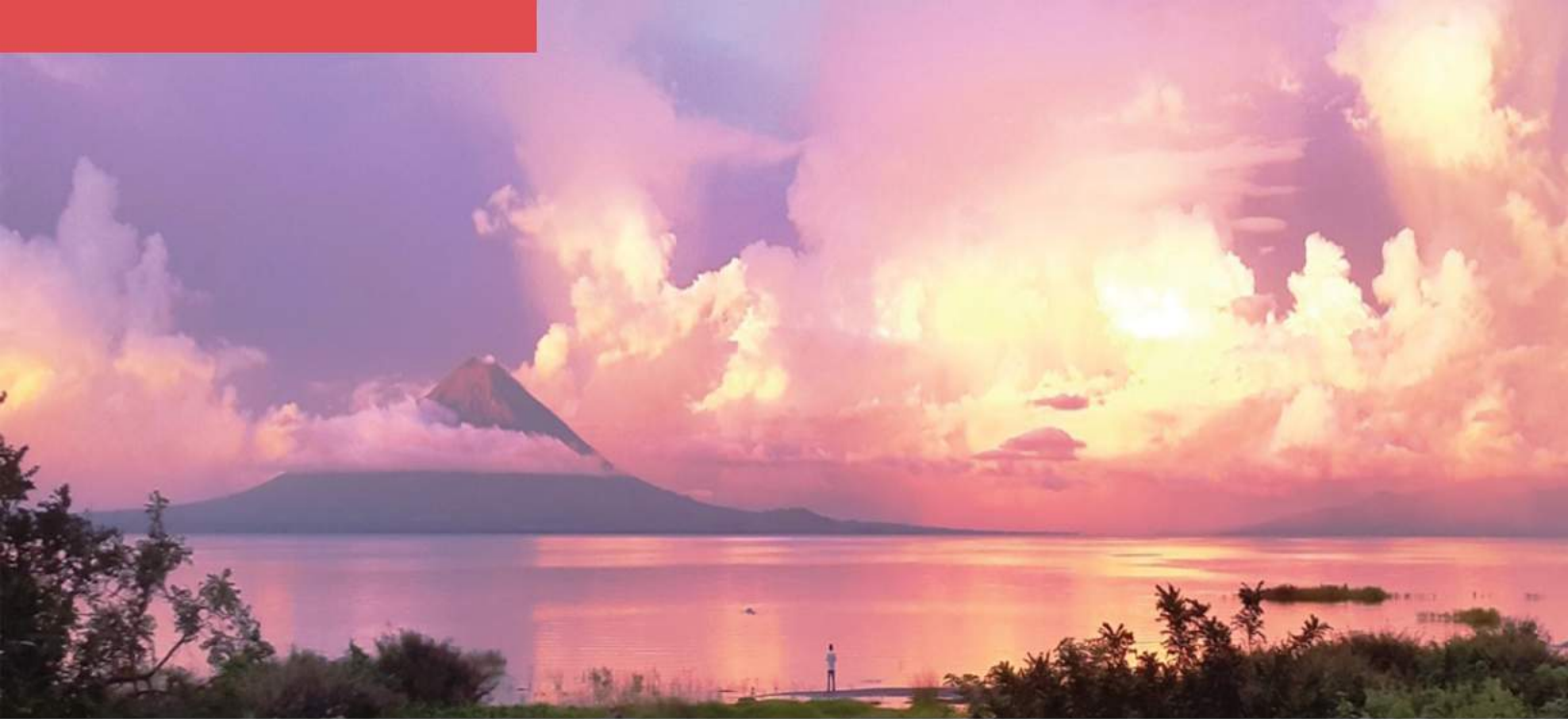
It is optional, though recommended, to enroll in the US Department of State's Safe Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) before any international travel. If you are interested, enroll here <https://step.state.gov/>

Tips to Have a Great Trip

Nicaragua is an amazing country with so much to offer. In order to make the trip a success for yourself and your group, please keep some things in mind.

- Bring your best self. Come with an open mind and positive attitude!
- Stay hydrated. Drink lots of water!
- Participate and ask questions. Community development is not a spectator sport
- Spanish is not required, but brush up on some simple phrases and greetings before your arrival
- Tell your CC guide and group leader if you are not feeling well. We cannot help you if we do not know
- Follow your group's and Comunidad Connect's policies, which are in place to ensure your health and safety





- Population: 6.18m
- GDP: 13.81bn USD
- Life Expectancy: 74.4yrs
- Main Industries / Exports: Textiles, Agriculture, Beef, Coffee, and Gold

About Nicaragua:

Nicaragua, nicknamed the land of lakes and volcanoes, is a truly a sight to behold. From the majestic rolling mountains of Jinotega, to the inviting beaches of San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua captures the hearts and imagination of all who visit. Known for their warm hospitality, rich cooking, and easy-going demeanor, Nicaraguans make strangers feel like family. The Emerald pacific coast remains a hidden gem for those searching for an authentic cultural experience, brilliant sunsets, and surreal beaches. While in the northern highlands, fertile, volcanic soil permit a myriad of agricultural products to flourish, including one of country's biggest exports, coffee. Those who travel to the country often leave profoundly changed and eager to return. Rich in tradition and mysticism, the soul of Nicaragua continues to ripple throughout the world with each inspired visitor.



However, a tumultuous history and stifled development has left the country as one of the poorest in the eastern hemisphere. In rural areas, poverty rates are especially high, where 50% of households live in extreme poverty. Of a population of nearly 6 million, about 800,000 Nicaraguans lack access to improved water sources. Through our Cultural Connections program, we work to alleviate poverty by involving communities in their own development and increasing the capacity of local organizations, while generating funds to continue social programs year-round.





Where We Work:

Los Robles is a community located in the municipality of Jinotega, approximately 20 kilometers from the center of the city. The community has around 2000 residents and 10 sectors (neighborhoods) each named after a deceased community leader or important farm. The majority of Robleños are farmers or day laborers in nearby farms. At the time of the coffee harvest, most of the family participate to earn an average income of \$5 per day, or less in some difficult cases. The community has two churches, a plaza / athletic field, health post, pre, primary and secondary schools, several farms, and a network of health volunteers, a.k.a brigadistas.



San Esteban is a small community about a 20 minute drive from Los Robles. It has a population of 450 people; most of whom work in agriculture, are day laborers or look after cattle farms. Limited in infrastructure, the community consists of a main dirt road, primary school, Catholic church, and community cemetery.



San Juan del Sur is a coastal town on the Pacific Ocean, in the Rivas department in southwest Nicaragua. The city is popular amongst surfers and is a vacation spot for many Nicaraguan families and foreign tourists. With a population of approximately 15,500, the local economy is largely focused on the fishing industry and promoting tourism. Year round warm weather, rich seafood, and authentic culture continue to attract visitors to this hidden gem of a city.



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Sample Packing List

Each Comunidad Connect experience is customized to your group's specific interests, so we can't provide a "one size fits all" packing list. However, we can provide this sample packing list and some general recommendations to keep in mind while you prepare your suitcase.

Nicaraguans generally wear pants instead of shorts, even in the summer. This is true for men and women. Wear what you are comfortable in, but also be respectful of the more conservative norms. We also recommend to not bring anything you could not stand to lose, get dirty, or damage.

All Regions

- Work clothes: long pants, jeans, t-shirts
- Closed-toed work shoes (tennis shoes or work boots)
- Casual footwear (sandals or tennis shoes)

- Casual & comfortable clothes for after the work day
- Sufficient undergarments, socks, etc
- Sleepwear
- Sunglasses or hat
- Flashlight
- Raincoat or poncho
- Small backpack for day excursions
- Water bottle

San Juan del Sur, Granada, Masaya

- Lightweight clothing
- Swimsuit
- Athletic clothes if working with sports groups

Jinotega/Sontule

- Light jacket or sweater for cool nights
- Rainboots during rainy season (June-January)

Clinical Groups

- Scrubs
- White Coat

- ID badge from university or hospital

Personal Care Items

- Toiletries
- Prescription medication: please keep in correctly labeled containers
- Prescription eyewear: glasses and/or contacts
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent

Optional

- Journal
- Leisure reading
- Camera and extra batteries
- Personal spending money: US dollars are widely accepted in Nicaragua if not worn, ripped, or written on
- Donations for community partners

Documents

- Passport
- Photocopy of passport
- Important medical documents
- One crisp \$10 bill not written on to pay for your tourist card upon entering Nicaragua





Health and Safety

We take our volunteers health and safety very seriously. Below are our general recommendations for before and during your trip to ensure you have a safe and enjoyable time in Nicaragua!

Comunidad Connect provides purified water and always has a basic first kit on hand. Check out our complete Health and Safety Plan for more detailed recommendations.

Pre- Trip

- 1 | Talk to your doctor about recommended health measures for international travel.
- 2 | Fill prescriptions for any regular medications you will need in Nicaragua.
- 3 | Check the CDC website for the most up-to-date preventative health information and advice for Nicaragua.

During Your Trip

- 1 | Continue taking prescribed medications as necessary.
- 2 | Wear mosquito spray to prevent vector - borne illnesses.
- 3 | Apply and reapply sunscreen - the sun is very strong!
- 4 | Stay hydrated - drink lots of water to prevent dehydration.
- 5 | Do not touch or play with any animals.
- 6 | Use the buddy system when walking, especially after dark.



Frequently Asked Questions



Is Nicaragua Safe?

Nicaragua is considered to be the safest country in Latin America. Western Nicaragua, where our trips take place, is especially safe.

Do I need to speak Spanish?

Spanish is not required to join a trip. There will be an interpreter for the group at all times. However, we recommend you brush up on your vocabulary because you will be able to immerse yourself in the projects and communities more through Spanish.

Can I receive community service hours?

Yes. We can certify any community service hours completed as part of your itinerary. You must provide us with the appropriate form to complete.

What's the weather like?

Nicaragua has a tropical climate with both a rainy and dry season. During the dry season, there is virtually no rain. Expect rain once or twice a day during the rainy season. Temperatures range from the low-70s to the high-90s for most of the year, with colder evening temperatures in the north.

Fundraise with Us!

Many of our trip participants fundraise as a way to help cover their trip costs, raise money for the projects they will be working on, and to further support Comunidad Connect's ongoing initiatives in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. There are many ways to fundraise, from bake sales and campus events, to online birthday fundraisers on Facebook. We offer our trip participants an easy option to fundraise using our crowdfunding platform. This allows you to set up your own personal page that you can share with your friends and family and to spread the word about Comunidad Connect's work in the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua. When your supporters donate on your page, it is automatically applied to your account, and we will send them a receipt and thank you. Contact info@comunidadconnect.org to start your fundraising page.





Connect With Us



Join the movement before your trip by connecting with us on social media!

Like us on Facebook and follow us on Instagram and Twitter to check out awesome photos and updates of the work we are doing in rural Nicaragua. We encourage you to share your experience with friends, family and colleagues after your trip. Be sure to tag us and use our hashtag [#connectnicaragua!](#)



@CC_Nica



/ComunidadConnect



@ComunidadConnect



www.comunidadconnect.org

[#ConnectNicaragua](#) [#ConnectDR](#)

Interested in sharing your experience with Comunidad Connect during and after your trip?

Contact us at info@comunidadconnect.org to share photos and videos with our marketing team or become a guest blogger!



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Additional Information

Suggested Reading and Video:

- *The Country Under My Skin: A Memoir of Love and War*, Gioconda Belli
- *Sandino's Daughters: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in the Struggle*, Margaret Randall
- *Blood of Brothers*, Stephen Kinzer
- *The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey*, Salman Rushdie
- *Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca and the Nicaraguan Revolution*, Matilde Zimmermann
- *Toxic Charity*, Robert Lupton
- *Hoping to Help*, Judith Lasker
- Four-part Documentary: Nicaragua: *An Unfinished Revolution*

Trip Guidelines

- If at the end of your trip you have items you would like to leave as a donation, our in-country staff will collect the items to be distributed as necessary to our community partners.
- Do not give individual gifts or tips to community and staff members, as we want everyone to be treated equally and fairly.
- The consumption of alcoholic beverages is permitted for participants 21 years and older only during recreational activities, never during service work or during cultural activities in the host community. Please discuss this with your trip leader in more detail.

The use of illegal drugs is not tolerated. Individuals found to be using or in possession of illegal drugs will be asked to return home immediately at their own expense.

- On occasions in rural communities, volunteers may have the opportunity to ride in the truck bed. Please consult your trip leader and CC guide to see if and when this is allowed.
- Remember you are an ambassador for your institution and country, so we ask that you be on your best behavior in the community and during recreational activities.





Contact Information

General Inquiries:

Don't hesitate to send us an email at info@comunidadconnect.org with any questions.

Emergency Contacts:

U.S. Jon Thompson, CEO

Phone Number: (404) 444 9147

United States Embassy in Managua:

Address: Kilometer 5 1/2 (5.5) Carretera Sur, in Managua, Nicaragua.

Telephone: +011 505-2252-7100

Hours: 7am-4:30 pm

Consular Section phone: +(505) 2252-7888

After hours Embassy Telephone:

+(505) 2252 - 7100 option 1

+(505) 8768 - 7100 option 1



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