



PARTICIPANT PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE 2013

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Part I: The Purpose and The People

A. YOUR COMPAÑEROS EXPERIENCE

This trip is about **4 Gs**. You are a younger person or an older person; on your own or part of a group; a student or a professional; a rural, suburban, or urban creature; a left, right, or centre citizen; a believer, non-believer, or questioner. All of you realistic, yet still reaching. Reaching out because the world **Grabs** your attention and you want to **Give** in practical and progressive ways. Reaching out because you know connecting with others will **Get** you new knowledge, skills, and values that inspire you uniquely to **Go** and continue making your local and global community a better place. Grab–Give–Get–Go. Got it?

As a legally registered social enterprise, Compañeros Inc collects funds from **private** sources to execute projects for **public** benefit. Fees from Compañeros participants and contributors facilitate cross-cultural learning programs and infrastructure, health, and education projects in Barrio Grenada, Managua. It is accountable to stakeholders and laws governing commercial and civic activity in Canada and Nicaragua.

By designing service projects with local leaders and community partners, employing local trades people, purchasing local materials, hiring and training local staff, living with host families, meeting with local artists, activists, and humanitarian agencies, and enjoying beautiful tourist destinations, your personal participation and project fees recognizes, involves, and enriches the lives of Nicaraguans committed to improving their own country.

As a participant you demonstrate a better way of serving, learning, and traveling. With helpful preparation resources, thoughtful trip itineraries, culturally sensitive practices, and reliable in-country logistics, your program fees provide you with friendly and professional guiding to reach our shared goals:

- ❖ To FUNDRAISE and see your efforts result in actions that improve the lives of other people.
- ❖ To WORK on a grassroots service project alongside community members, volunteers, and skilled trades people employed by your fundraising support.
- ❖ To MEET inspiring individuals who have overcome adversity to become agents of positive change in their communities.
- ❖ To VISIT local agencies and organizations promoting fair political, economic, and social rights for children, youth, and families.
- ❖ To LEARN about yourself and others in a dynamic cross-cultural experience that stimulates academic and career prospects and further volunteer involvement.
- ❖ To LIVE in comfortable host families/hotels, eat healthy fresh food, and travel with a fun group.
- ❖ To ENJOY Nicaragua's beauty – hiking volcano trails, walking warm beaches, climbing tree-top canopy tours, practicing Spanish, visiting markets, meeting artisans, and more!

B. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Your role as the participant is to participate! You're here to serve, to learn, to enjoy a trip that you've probably been planning for some time. Your responsibility is to prepare physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially. You probably also need to fundraise (publically or privately). But, as importantly, you need to raise your awareness of Spanish and of Nicaragua. Your experience as a participant will be enhanced if you know a bit about the political, economic, social reality here before you arrive.

Our role as your in-country organization is to give you resources, to organize your program logistics, to facilitate involvement in development projects, and to connect you to people and places in Nicaragua with purpose, challenge, fun, mutual benefit, and safety at the centre of our practices.

Together, with your active preparation and participation and our program and project planning, we become Compañeros in the effort to create mutually beneficial volunteer service and cross-cultural learning experiences in Nicaragua.

C. WHAT DO GOOD PARTICIPANT GROUPS LOOK LIKE?

Everyone participates

... not just talkers, fast thinkers, extroverts

Time and space is given

... for experiences, feelings, thoughts and words to grow, be expressed, and changed

People support one another

... by listening attentively, by asking open-ended, clarifying questions,
by sometimes not saying anything and letting silence speak

Members actively resist distractions

... by not holding side conversations, by keeping eyes and hands focused,
so others will listen when it's your turn

Participants speak up on essential matters

... so your boundaries, your limits, your position on issues is clear,
so your beliefs are recognized and included

Opposing viewpoints co-exist

... differences of opinion are not seen as conflicts to be stifled or resolved

People are able to accurately represent other points of view

... even when you disagree and they are not your own, fairness prevails

Participants respectfully challenge predominant viewpoints

... so we avoid easy "group think" and be sure to think for ourselves
and gain the courage to express a new or minority point of view

Members refrain from gossip, backbiting, complaining

... because it means you don't have the courage to address people openly
and constructively and nothing damages a group more quickly

Problems are considered solve-able

... with time, space, respect, unity, creativity, leadership,
and care for the greatest good and safety of the group

Agreements are seen as a collection of strengths in the given circumstances

... not an assumption that everyone feels or thinks the same,
but that what we have together is more than what we don't have individually

D. PREPARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS

1. What are your expectations of yourself and others while traveling together?

2. What do you expect of Compañeros? What is it expecting from you?

3. What are your personal objectives for this experience?

4. What are you looking forward to doing? Apprehensive about?

Part II: Logistical Details

E. TRIED & TRUE FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Food | 1. Bake Sales
2. Chocolate, Fruit, or Cheese Sales
3. Compañeros Coffee Sales |
| Services | 4. Bottle Drives
5. Garage Sales
6. Gift Wrapping
7. Car Washes and House Cleaning
8. Snow Shoveling, Grass-Cutting, Leaf-Raking
9. Combined participant / public Spanish Lessons |
| Events | 10. Theme Dinners with Silent Auctions and 50/50 Raffles
11. Coffee & Dessert Movie, Concert or Talent Nights
12. Guest Speaker or Skill-Exchange Workshops
13. Tournaments (indoor soccer, floor hockey, golf, etc.)
14. Local "Celebrity" Challenges |
| External | 15. Benefactor, Sponsor, or Shareholder Investment
16. Grant and Foundation Applications |

Please note: It is important to be clear and transparent about the purpose of all your fundraising activities. Are you raising funds to offset your PROGRAM expenses such as your flight, insurance, transportation, accommodation, meals, excursions, and program coordination?

Or are you raising funds for the community PROJECT expenses such as hiring local labour, purchasing and transporting materials, renting equipment, feeding work crews, and project coordination?

Either or both of those purposes are fine; the more clearly you express your goals and purposes, the more people will trust and support you accordingly.

Compañeros Inc is a private social enterprise intentionally leveraging private funds for public benefit. It is not a registered charity and cannot issue tax-deductible receipts. See our financial reports at www.companeros.ca

Your Expenses	Program	= \$
	Flight & Insurance	= \$
	Personal	= \$
	Project	= \$
		<hr/>
	TOTAL	= \$

Your Fundraising Goal? = \$ **Methods?**

Your Group Fundraising Goal? = \$ **Methods?**

Your Fundraising Checklist:

F. WHAT TO BRING

1. A well prepared, ready-to-serve-and-learn, body, mind, and spirit. Do not underestimate the value of starting the trip with a rested body, open mind and positive spirit. 7 days before departure start wrapping up details at home and work and start gearing up to go physically and mentally.
2. A passport valid 6 months beyond your return date and one other piece of photo ID. A photocopy of your passport and ID stored in a luggage place different than where you carry your passport. Leave unnecessary ID and wallet/purse items at home.
3. US\$200+ cash spending money. Have US\$100 of it in an unsealed envelope with your name and the amount written on it ready for a money changer who will meet your group on the first day. ATM and Credit Cards may be used in some places. Do not bring traveler's cheques or Canadian dollars.
4. One piece of clearly-labeled checked luggage containing a one week cycle of multi-functional clothing that is easy to pack, comfortable, washable, and suitable for mostly hot, dry, and occasionally wet weather.

1 pyjamas	5 underwear	5 pairs of socks
1 dress pant	2+ casual or work pants	2+ shorts / capris (no cut-offs)
1 dress shirt	5+ short-sleeve / t-shirts (no straps)	2+ skirt / sundress (modest)
1 pair dress shoes	1 pair casual shoes or sandals	1 pair closed toe work shoes
1 leather work gloves	1 sunhat and 1 sunglasses	1 beach towel
1 hairbrush	1 toothbrush / paste / floss	1 deodorant
1 soap / 1 shampoo	1 shaving set / sanitary napkins	2+ zip-lock bags
1 water bottle	1 sunscreen / 1insect repellent	1 flashlight/headlamp
1 small laundry soap	1 roll of toilet paper / 1 hand-sanitizer	1 Spanish phrase book

Optional items: camera, pen, journal, musical instrument, personal comfort object, ear plugs, watch/alarm

To share: school supplies, toys, arts & crafts, photos from home, maple syrup, Canadian music, humour!

Travel lightly!

You must carry your own bag. There is limited room in the plane, bus, and lodgings. Leaving North American stuff behind is part of the experience. Do not bring iPods, cell phones, expensive jewelry, precious keepsakes, electronics, or excessively packaged items. Travel with open hands. Bring a small backpack to carry your own water bottle, sunscreen, etc. in each day.

Your Own What to Bring Checklist:

G. HEALTH ADVICE

It is the responsibility of each participant to seek out, learn, and make decisions about important matters of health and international travel before departure. Visit a qualified health care professional or a travel clinic to learn about risk factors specific to a short-term, urban-home, dry-season visit to Nicaragua.

Diseases from **food, water, and people** are: Diarrhea / Cholera / Hepatitis A, B, C / Typhoid / Tetanus

Diseases from **mosquitoes** are: Dengue Fever / Malaria / Yellow Fever.

There are no mandatory immunizations.

With knowledge and precaution, your chances of being infected can be significantly reduced.

Educate yourself : Health Canada www.hc-sc.gc.ca
Centre for Disease Control www.cdc.gov
World Health Organization www.who.int
Lonely Planet Guide Books www.lonelyplanet.com

Want to maximize your chances of staying healthy?

- In Body... ~ Start the trip with a week of proper sleep, diet and exercise behind you. Adjust your sleep habits to go to bed and get up earlier in preparation for Nicaraguan patterns.
~ Wash your hands frequently and keep your hands away from your mouth at all times.
~ Drink water constantly and eat foods that are easy on your digestive system.
~ Protect your skin from insects, small cuts, and sunburn.
~ Bring acidophilus, garlic, and charcoal capsules and oil of oregano tincture to prevent a/o treat digestive and stomach ailments. Bring alcohol swabs, band-aids, Advil, Tylenol, Cipro (antibiotic) to prevent a/o treat inflammation and infections.
~ Remember your personal medications, epi-pens, inhalers, glasses, etc.
- In Mind... ~ Read the pre-departure and in-country information.
~ Learn some Spanish before you go and start using it upon arrival, mistakes and all.
~ 2 eyes + 2 ears + 1 mouth = look and listen twice as much as you talk.
~ Sometimes we will hurry up and wait; be patient. That's what hammocks are for, si?
- In Spirit... ~ Connect with group members and local people to encounter the culture softly.
~ Expect to encounter poverty and poignancy and to have your senses challenged.
~ Take time to reflect on what you are thinking, feeling, and sensing and to re-charge.
~ Practice your way of staying centred – sleep, music, journal, read, draw, play, etc.
~ Remember, it's not all about you.

Your Own Health Care Checklist:

H. SAFETY ADVICE

Attitude: Come with an attitude of desiring to serve and learn about yourself and other people and places. Be gentle with yourself and others in the group, including the leaders and local people. This is an intense experience with various physical and emotional ups and downs that different people digest in different ways and times. Reserve judgment and accept things as they come. Expect the unexpected. Blessed are the flexible, they shall not be bent out of shape. You'll be back to your routines at home soon enough.

Water: Avoid tap water, condensation on bottled drinks, frozen drinks, ice cubes, too much sugary pop. Stay hydrated, especially in hot weather and at high altitudes. Carry a water bottle and drink enough to maintain clear or light coloured urine. Wash your bottle with warm water and soap every day.

Food: The food prepared for you at the host family/hotel, service project site, and in restaurants will be prepared carefully, but it is impossible to guarantee the safety of every meal – and all it takes is a microscopic bacteria to get really sick. Staying in your hotel room with an upset stomach and the runs is not fun, so be cautious without being paranoid. Eat simply – rice, beans, meat, veggies, fruits. Do not lick your fingers or eat with your hands. Do not under or over eat. Do not eat street food. Avoid fast fried food and too much dairy. Eat a combination of foods to maintain regular bowel movements to avoid constipation and crankiness. Ice and juices made with bottled water are ok. Otherwise, a general rule of thumb is “Boil it, Cook it, Peel it, or Forget it”. Inform a group leader if you do not feel well.

Personal Hygiene: This is a very good time to remember all the things you learned as a child. Wash your hands before you eat. Wash your hands after you use the toilet. Don't bite your nails. No spitting. Use a kleenex. Keep your hands out of your mouth and everybody else's. Do not pet or cuddle animals.

Carry a small quantity of personal supplies: toilet paper, handy-wipes, band-aids, etc. Be prepared to use basic bathroom facilities. Don't expect hot water. Be careful when you use a shower with an electrical water heater – don't tamper with the wires and such, you could be electrocuted.

Unwanted Attention: Many travelers report that it is wise to ignore and not acknowledge comments, whistles, sounds, come-ons, etc. and to keep walking. Look for quick, decisive and non-confrontational ways out of uncomfortable situations.

No one should go anywhere alone. Travel in 2s or 3s. Making an effort to learn Spanish will prevent some problems. Inform others if you are uncomfortable. A lot of foreigners come and go; be aware of the impression you leave behind. Treat others as equals and expect to be treated as one yourself.

Property: Keep an eye on your possessions at all possible times. If your heart would be broken if you lost it, don't bring it (the possession, that is; do bring your heart). If you don't bring your favourite things then you're more likely to have your hands free and your eyes and mind open to new ways of seeing non-material things and moments of awe and insight. Less is more.

Host Family/Hotel: Host families/hotels are chosen carefully. Participants stay in pairs in host families either sharing a room with 2 beds or in their own room. Group leaders are sometimes assigned to a host family alone. Hotel rooms are shared. Requests for a single room will require a supplemental fee.

Keep your passport, money, and items of interest hidden in your luggage or in a safe box in your room. Do not advertise where you are staying or bring strangers back. Safeguard all keys.

Traffic: On sidewalks and roadways watch out for open sewers, potholes, uneven pavement, broken glass, dangling wires, etc. Always watch where you are going and be careful. Look before you leap. Exercise extreme caution in and around traffic of all shapes, sizes, and directions. Don't look both ways, look all ways. Look out for others. Minimize distractions while in traffic. Do not drive after sunset.

Crime: Recognize that you are a rich North American and that through no fault of your birthplace in geopolitical history, you are economically richer than 90% of the people you will meet in Nicaragua. This fact makes you a target. Do not provide temptation. Do not go anywhere alone day or night without a partner and/or the group and the explicit permission and knowledge of one of the group leaders. Avoid the use of taxis. Do not be alarmed if at times we have an off-duty policeman or security guard from the community accompany our group, sometimes it helps local relations.

H. SAFETY ADVICE (continued)

Service Project: Do not bring valuables to the project site. Wear closed-toed footwear and appropriate work clothes, gloves, and sun protection. Be careful in new circumstances. Move yourself and materials slowly. Keep work areas clean and safe. Do not strain yourself. Share the limited number of tools and tasks. Enjoy the work process for the contact it gives you with other people, not only the final product. Observe the knowledge, skills and resourcefulness of local leaders and supervisors.

Homesickness/Culture Shock: Let yourself love where you are and let yourself miss where you came from. Homesickness is normal and reflects a legitimate need for familiar surroundings and relationships. Culture shock is normal and is a sign of your body and mind getting challenged to view the world in new ways. These feelings come and go; getting more involved helps. Isolating yourself makes it worse. Find a balanced way to look at the positive and negative aspects of all situations. Look for good.

Photography: Use discretion. Ask permission. Be polite. Do not start taking photos upon arrival somewhere; wait until the middle or end. Ask yourself if you would rather capture and recall this moment through your lenses or through your own eyes? Do not promise to send a copy of a photo if you cannot guarantee to follow through without Companeros' help. Sometimes it is appropriate to pay to take a photo. Keep your camera in your pocket/knapsack when you are not using it.

Natural Disaster: In the event of an emergency (e.g. earthquake), take care of yourself, take care of others, and re-assemble outside our office or your host family/hotel by nightfall. If possible, let someone in Canada know you're ok and contact the Embassy of Canada.

Your Own Safety Checklist:

I. EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Compañeros	Gonzalo Duarte	duarte@companeros.ca	011.505.8883.0505 (cell) 011.505.2277.2419 (office)
	Dalena Taylor	dalena@companeros.ca	011.505.8673.1985 (cell) 011.505.8911.5186 (cell) 011.505.2277.2419 (office)
	Office Address:	Shell Plaza El Sol, 3 c. al sur, 2 c. arriba, 1½ c. al sur Casa #180, VII Etapa, Los Robles, Managua, Nicaragua.	
Air Canada		www.aircanada.com	888.247.2262
American Airlines		www.aa.com	2255.9090 or 800.433.7300
United Airlines		www.continental.com	2278.7033 or 800.231.0856
Delta Airlines		www.delta.com	2254-8130 or 800.241.4141
Embassy of Canada in Managua		mngua@dfait-maeci.gc.ca	011.505.2268.0433
DFAIT Emergency in Ottawa		www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca	from Nicaragua 613.996.8885 from Canada 800.267.6788

IMPORTANT ARRIVAL INSTRUCTIONS:

1. All Canadian participants are responsible for registering their travels with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade before their date of departure. This may be done individually or as a group.

To register with DFAIT copy and paste this URL into your browser:

https://www.voyage2.gc.ca/Registration_inscription/Register_Inscrire/Login_ouvrir-une-session-eng.aspx?fwd=true&hash=p0V4sJhYtXNnDsAOImpW8w6161

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad may monitor the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at <http://travel.state.gov>, where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Alerts, and Travel Warnings can be found. You may register your travels individually or as a group.

2. All participants are to have a **photocopy of their own passport photo page in their possession** and to **leave a copy** of this page of Emergency Contact Information along with a copy of their passport and one piece of photo ID, flight information, and itinerary with the person listed as an emergency contact on their trip registration form.

An itinerary for your specific trip can be downloaded and printed from www.companeros.ca

3. Before your plane lands at Managua's international airport, you will be required to complete customs and immigration papers. Identify your local address on the forms as **"#180 VII Etapa, Los Robles, Managua"**

Be prepared individually with the exact amount to pay **US\$10 cash** for a Tourist card. Make sure you get an entry stamp in your passport and keep all papers you are given until you exit the country.

4. Nicaraguan currency is called Cordobas (NIO). US\$1.00 = 24 Cordobas. **Have US\$100 of your spending money in an unsealed envelope with your name and the amount (e.g. "Jane Smith \$100" written on it** ready for a money changer who will meet our group on the first day.

Part III: Country Information

J. TRIVIA ABOUT NICARAGUA

- Cacao seeds, from which chocolate is made, were used as money by pre-Columbian cultures.
- Nicaragua is named for one of its original inhabitants, Chief Nicarao, who ruled part of the area at the time the Spanish arrived in Central America.
- Nicaragua has one of the lowest voting ages in the world: 16 year olds can vote in Nicaraguan elections, and have been able to since the 1979 revolution.
- In the early 1980s, about 81,000 volunteer teachers were trained and sent all over the country. Many people who had never before had access to education learned to read and write.
- Volcán Masaya is an important national park. It is home to Crater Santiago, the only Central American crater where you can see molten lava. Even though the crater emits strong sulphuric fumes, green parakeets nest and roost on its walls.
- The only freshwater sharks in the world live in Lake Nicaragua. They are thought to be the descendants of saltwater sharks that were trapped there when the lake separated from the ocean, and that evolved to survive in a freshwater environment.
- In 1993, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception was built in Managua to replace the old cathedral, which had been damaged by the 1972 earthquake. Funding for the new cathedral was largely provided by the American pizza franchise owner of Domino's.
- Ernesto Cardenal and Carlos Mejía Godoy composed the well-known Nicaraguan Misa Campesina or Peasant Mass. This popular mass draws on the ideas of liberation theology, which views religion in Latin America from the perspective of the poor and the oppressed.
- According to a well-known Nicaraguan proverb, "a shrimp that sleeps will be taken away by the tide," which means that if you don't take action in your life, you will be left behind. Another popular expression is that someone is as "fresh as a lettuce," meaning that the person is living life as it comes and not concerned about the future.
- "Everyone's a poet in Nicaragua" - or almost everyone. You can find poets everywhere from remote mountain villages to government offices in Managua.
- Official language is Spanish, but Miskito, Garafuna, Creole and other languages common on Caribbean side of country where the population prefers to be called Costeños.

Geography

The largest of the Central American republics, Nicaragua borders Costa Rica to the south and Honduras to the north. It covers 80,000 sq mi / 130,000 sq kms. including the region's largest fresh water lakes — Lake Nicaragua and Lake Managua which total 3,500 sq mi / 5600 sq kms. The country is divided into three geographic sections: the drier Pacific coastal plain to the west with its low mountain ranges near the sea; the wetter and cooler mountainous extension of the Central American highlands which runs from northwest to southeast across the middle of the country; and the hot and humid flat Atlantic lowlands along the east coast.

Most of the population is located in western Nicaragua on the fertile lowland Pacific Plains which surround the lakes and extend north to the Gulf of Fonseca. This region is the political and commercial heart of the country. Lake Managua and Lake Nicaragua dominate the map of this area, and a series of young

volcanoes, many still active, dot the coastal plain paralleling the Central American highlands. The tallest volcanoes reach 6000 feet / 2000 metres and many are visible from Managua.

The mountain highland provinces of Matagalpa and Jinotega, northeast of the volcanoes and lakes, are more sparsely populated and Nicaragua's major coffee-producing areas. The easternmost section of the highlands receives the warm, wet Caribbean winds and is mainly sparsely settled rain forest, with a few operating gold mines near the town of Bonanza. Canadian mining company practices are contentious.

Eastern Nicaragua, with one-third of the total national territory which is an area about the size of El Salvador, has about 10% of the population and is tropical rain forests and pineflats. The region, largely ignored by the Spanish, was a British protectorate until 1860. Even today, many of the people along the Atlantic coast prefer to speak English.

Nicaragua offers appealing landscapes from the primitive Caribbean island beauty of Corn Island, to the lovely lake views near the colonial city of Granada, to the stark beauty of the semi-active volcano located between Managua and Masaya. Volcanic Lakes Xiloa and Apoyo, near Managua, are excellent for swimming and day sailing, and provide relief from the heat. Pacific Ocean beaches are nearby, and the cooler rainforest mountains of Esteli and Matagalpa are just a few hours drive away.

Managua never fully recovered from the 1972 earthquake, in which the entire city centre was destroyed, and suffered further neglect through the 1980s. Today, it remains mostly deserted, with visible earthquake ruins. Managua is now a widely scattered collection of neighborhoods that rim an empty hub, with no centrally located business or shopping district. However, the area near Metro Centro mall and the Carretera Masaya highway appear to be becoming the city's new focal point.

Quick Geographic Facts:

Located at 13' N, 85' W in Central America, bordering the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean (coastline 565 mi/910 kms) between Costa Rica (border 195 mi/309 kms) and Honduras (border 620 mi/992 kms)

Total area is similar to New York state at 80,416 sq mi / 129,494 sq km with 92% land, 8% fresh water.

Extensive Atlantic coastal plains rising to central interior mountains; narrow Pacific coastal plain interrupted by volcanoes. High is Mt Mogoton 2,438 m / Low is Pacific Ocean 0 m

Natural resources: gold, silver, copper, zinc, wood, fish, coffee, sugar, meat (beef, pork, chicken, seafood)

Natural hazards: destructive earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides; hurricanes

Environmental issues: global warming, deforestation; soil erosion; water pollution

History

Throughout its history Nicaragua has suffered from political instability, civil war, poverty, foreign intervention, and natural disasters. Governments since colonial times have been unable to bring stability and sustainable economic growth. Personal and foreign exploitative interests have generally prevailed over the national interests, and foreign intervention in Nicaraguan political and economic affairs, first by Spain and then by the United States, has resulted in various forms of populist and nationalist reactions.

The legacy of the past can be seen today in the attitudes toward foreign influence. Although the upper and middle classes tend to emulate North American life-styles and be supportive of United States policies, the Nicaraguan poor are highly suspicious of the culture and political intentions of the United States.

In the early 16th century, Spanish conquistadores entered Nicaragua. The pre-Columbian Indian civilization was almost completely wiped out by diseases, enslavement and deportation. Independence from Spain was declared in 1821 and the country became an independent republic in 1838.

Since pre-colonial times, Nicaragua's fertile Pacific coast has attracted settlers, thus concentrating most of the population in the western part of the country. The Caribbean coast, however, because of its proximity to the West Indies, historically has been the site of immigration from black and indigenous groups from the Caribbean and from British settlers and pirates. The resulting diverse ethnic groups that today inhabit the Caribbean coast have for centuries resisted central governments and demanded political autonomy.

During most of the twentieth century, Nicaragua has suffered under dictatorial regimes. From the 1930s until 1979, the Somoza family controlled the government, the military, and an ever expanding sector of the Nicaraguan economy. On July 19, 1979, Somoza rule came to an end after the triumph of an insurrection movement led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional - FSLN). However, the predominance of the FSLN led to the development of a different kind of authoritarian regime that still lasts today.

During the 1980s, Nicaragua was the center of Cold War confrontation in the Western Hemisphere, with the former Soviet Union and Cuba providing assistance to the Sandinista government, and the United States illegally supporting anti-government forces known as the Contras. A regional peace initiative brought an end to civil war in the late 1980s. The Sandinistas lost in the 1990 elections, and a new government headed by President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro was installed in April 1990.

1979-1990 Frente Sandinista Liberacion Nacional (FSLN) under President Daniel Ortega

1990-1997 National Opposition Union under President Violetta Chamorro

1997-2002 Liberal Party under President Arnoldo Alemán

2002-2007 Alliance for the Republic under President Enrique Bolanos

2007-Present FSLN under President Daniel Ortega

National Flag

Three equal horizontal bands of blue white, and blue with the national coat of arms centered in the white band; the coat of arms features a triangle encircled by the words REPUBLICA DE NICARAGUA on the top and AMERICA CENTRAL on the bottom.

The coat of arms of Nicaragua is a triangle in which there are five mountains, representing the five countries of Central America, a rainbow representing peace, and a red cap of the style worn by revolutionaries in the French Revolution, which symbolizes freedom



National Anthem

¡Salve a ti, Nicaragua! En tu suelo
ya no ruge la voz del cañón,
ni se tiñe con sangre de hermanos
tu glorioso pendón bicolor.

Hail to thee, Nicaragua!
the voice of the cannon no longer roars on
your soil, nor does the blood of brothers stain
Your glorious bicolour flag

Brille hermosa la paz en tu cielo,
nada empañe tu gloria inmortal,
¡que el trabajo es tu digno laurel
y el honor es tu enseña triunfal!

Peace shines beautiful in your sky
nothing dims your immortal glory
for work is what earns your laurels
And honour is your triumphal ensign

Religion

60% Catholic, 20% Protestant-Evangelical, 5% Moravian/Other, 15% non-religious

Moravian and Episcopal communities are concentrated on the Atlantic coast, while Catholic and evangelical churches dominate the Pacific and central regions. Non-Christian communities such as Jewish, Muslims, or Baha'is are small.

Evangelical churches are growing rapidly, particularly in poor or remote areas. In 1980 the Assemblies of God had 80 churches and fewer than 5,000 members, but according to Church leader Saturnino Cerrato, as of April 2006 there were more than 860 churches and 200,000 baptized members.

Anecdotal evidence points to proportionally higher church attendance among members of the new evangelical churches than in Catholic and traditional Protestant churches. In poorer neighborhoods, the small evangelical churches are active most evenings.

There is no official state religion; however, the Catholic Church enjoys a close relationship with the government. It is the most politically active religious group and has significant political influence. Catholic Church leaders routinely meet with senior government officials. Religion is not taught in public schools, but private religious schools operate in the country. The government provides financial support to a number of Catholic primary and secondary schools by paying teacher salaries.

The historical position of the Church is such that most religiously affiliated monuments, memorials, and holidays are Catholic-related. However, the dominance of the Catholic Church does not inhibit the religious freedom of others.

Population

Nicaragua has almost 6 million people made up of approximately 69% Mestizos and 17% White. The remainder of the Nicaraguan population is 9% black and 5% Amerindian. The Pacific, central and northern regions are where 4 million people live, with only 750,000 people along the Caribbean. It is estimated that over 1 million Nicaraguans live outside the country in other parts of Central and North America.

The age structure is weighted toward youth. 35% are under 14, another 60% are aged 15-64. The median is 21, meaning half the population is below, half above that age. These demographics have serious health, education, employment, financial, and service implications on both the public and private sectors.

Economy

Nicaragua, one of the hemisphere's poorest countries, faces low per capita income, massive unemployment, and huge external debt. Distribution of income is one of the most unequal on the globe. Natural disaster, foreign debt; transnational exploitation; concentration of wealth; corruption; under-employment; access to education, health care, housing, water, etc are all issues and causes of poverty.

While the country has made progress toward macro-economic stability over the past few years, Nicaragua will continue to be dependent on international aid and debt relief. Approximately 1000 local, national, and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operate in Nicaragua providing an array of political, economic, social, religious, and cultural services that fill the gap left by governments at all levels.

A combination of internal obstacles (e.g. lack of technology, training, tradition) and external factors (e.g. limitations placed on the government by the International Monetary Fund or “free”, not fair, trade agreements) conspires to maintain a status quo of impoverishment for many citizens.

Remittances from Nicaraguans working outside of the country represent about 15% of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 2008 Nicaragua received close to U\$1 billion in remittances, an increase from the U\$750,000,000 received in 2007, according to the World Bank.

Per capita income approx: \$2400/year
Population below Poverty Line: 48.0%
Labor Force: 3 million children, youth, and adults
Labor Force by Occupation: Services 43%; Agriculture 42%; Industry 15%
Unemployment Rate: 20% plus 20% underemployment

Industries: Food and beverage processing, machinery and metal products, textiles, clothing, leather and footwear, wood and furniture, cement, mining.

Agricultural Products: Coffee, bananas, sugarcane, cotton, rice, corn, tobacco, sesame, soya, beans, beef, veal, pork, poultry, dairy products, tobacco.

Basic Salaries per month: Doctor in public hospital = \$500 Teacher in public school = \$200
Reports state more than 50% of population live on less than \$5/day
Income brackets: Low 80%, Middle 15%, High 5%

Health Care

Nicaraguans depend on a three-tier health system that reflects the fundamental inequalities in Nicaraguan society. The upper class uses private health care, often going abroad for specialized treatment. A relatively privileged minority of salaried workers in government and industry are served by the Nicaraguan Social Security Institute (INSS). These workers and their families compose about 10% of the population, but the institute devours 40% of the national health care budget.

The remainder of the population, approaching 90%, is poorly served at public facilities that are typically mismanaged, inadequately staffed, and under-equipped. Health care services are concentrated in the larger cities, and rural areas are largely un-served.

Education

A large reduction of the illiteracy rate took place during the 1980 literacy campaign wherein secondary school students voluntarily took on the role of teachers. The campaign was highly successful and literacy increased from 47% to 87%. The Ministry of Education then made further efforts to increase the literacy of the country by setting up Popular Education Cooperatives whereby residents of poor communities could gather together in the evenings and make use of materials supplied by the Ministry to try and develop basic reading and mathematical skills. While these self-education classes were designed mainly for adults, many children who were struggling to get into overcrowded schools also made use of it.

Through the 1990s reduced spending on education in Nicaragua resulted in many adolescents being forced into the labour market and literacy rates have dropped to 67%. However, there is hope on the horizon as Nicaragua’s large number of young people are becoming increasingly more interested in receiving a better education. Both elementary and high school education are now mandatory and free. The most recent Nicaraguan government is increasing funding to improve the education available at all levels, although significant obstacles still exist.

Recreation

Children enjoy a type of hopscotch called rayuela, games of hide and seek, and playing with a trompo (a toy like a top with a string) or a skipping rope. Many women and girls enjoy playing volleyball and basketball, and some play soccer and baseball as well. Men and boys participate in baseball, soccer, basketball, volleyball and boxing. Other pastimes include games like checkers and, for children, marbles.

Baseball is popular from the sandlot to the several professional level. The 40,000 person capacity stadium in Managua is named after Nicaraguan hero, and former Montreal Expo, Denis Martinez.

Many people go to the beach for their holidays during the dry season, which lasts from about December to May. Beaches are especially busy during Semana Santa (Holy Week) just before Easter, which is a popular vacation time. People also enjoy camping in the mountains, as well as swimming in lagoons.

Food

Beans and rice are eaten with most meals. Typical dishes include gallo pinto (beans and rice), tortillas (corn flour), nacatamales (meat and vegetables, with spices) and baho (meat, vegetables, and plantain). Chicken, pork, beef, fish, and seafood are enjoyed, but expensive. Vegetables and fruits are plentiful and cheap. Water, juice, pop, milk, beer, wine, and rum are consumed. Eating is complemented with pleasant conversation. Both hands (not elbows) should remain on or above the table at all times. The main meal is eaten at midday. Buen provecho = Bon appetit and is wished to others at the beginning of sharing a meal.

Visitors are always welcome, hospitality informal. Dinner guests may take small gifts to the hosts. Arriving anytime within an hour or more of the stated start time is ok. "Come at 7" could mean 7:59 ish ish...

Greetings and Gestures

When meeting another person for the first time, Nicaraguans smile and shake hands. Complete attention is given to the person being greeted. Men greet each other with a hearty handshake, and close friends hug and pat each other on the back. Between female, the usual greeting is a kiss on the cheek and gentle hug. Males and females often extend a kiss on one cheek upon arriving and again at departing.

Saying hello and goodbye to everyone in the room whether you know them or not is considered proper practice; failing to do so may be a slight insult. Address older men formally as "Don" and older women as "Doña" and use the grammatical form usted, not tu or vos, as a sign of respect.

Most gestures common in Western countries are also recognized in Nicaragua. However, a fist with the thumb positioned between the index and middle fingers is vulgar. The shaking of an index finger is a way of saying "No". One hand up is a common signal for "Wait."

Pointing is done not with a finger (rude), but with a cupped hand gesture. Two index fingers crossing usually has to do with money – either something needs to be paid, is expensive, or needs to be negotiated.

Nicaraguans have expressive faces, especially eyes and lips. Quickly pursed lips mean "What did you say?" Watch a person's lips for the direction to which they are pointing. Have fun.

For more information about Nicaragua:

See Participant Resources at www.companeros.ca

Visit www.countryreports.org

Purchase a travel guide by Lonely Planet or Rough Guide

Search the internet for the latest news stories

Talk with others who have been to Nicaragua

K. HOST CULTURE QUESTIONS Adapted from the International Centre, Queen's University

History

1. Generally outline the country a history - the major areas and events.
2. Name the national heroes and heroines. Explain why they are considered heroes/heroines.
3. What is the history of this country's relationship with Canada?
4. What are the national holidays? Can you, as a foreigner, participate?

Politics

1. What is the current political structure of the country?
2. Who are the major current leaders?
3. Is military service compulsory? If so, for whom and for how long?

Religion

1. What is/are the dominant religion(s)?
2. Is there an official state religion? Which one?
3. What are the sacred writings of the dominant religions?

Female / Male Relationships

1. Are there separate societal roles for men and women? If so, what are they?
2. What are the rules/norms for "romantic" relationships in this country? Do young people date? If so, do they date in groups, in couples? Do they need a chaperon? Are such relationships formal or informal? Can unmarried women and men have a "romantic" relationship? What is the norm regarding premarital sex? Is it acceptable to hold hands, touch or kiss in public?
3. What are the rules/norms for female/male friendships? In what types of social activities do young women and men participate together?

Family

1. What is the common form of marriage ceremony and celebration?
2. What are the attitudes toward divorce? Family planning? Contraception? Abortion?
3. What is seen as the ideal family size? Is the typical family nuclear or extended?
4. What is the legal voting age? (marriage, driving a car)? Are there differences for women/men?

Social etiquette

1. What are the special privileges of age or sex?
2. When is one expected to present or accept gifts? What kinds of gifts?
3. How do people greet each other and how do they take leave of one another? Are there differences based on social status, age, sex?

Dress

1. Is there a customary attire for women, men, children? Is there a traditional or indigenous style of dress? If so, describe it. Who wears it and when?
2. What is the appropriate dress for you as a foreigner in this country?
3. Are there special dress customs you should know about? i.e. taking off one's shoes in certain places? What types of clothing might be taboo?
4. What types of clothing must you have for various occasions you might encounter?

Food

1. What foods are most popular? How are they prepared?
2. How and with what utensils, if any, do people eat? (manners, customs, etc.)
3. Are there taboo foods that are not considered edible or not permitted for traditional or religious reasons?

Leisure

1. What are the favourite leisure activities of adults, of young people?
2. What are the favourite sports? Is there a national sport?
3. How available are television and radio?

Health

1. What kind of health services are available? Where are they located?
2. Are there common home remedies for minor ailments? What are the attitudes toward folk medicine? Is it commonly practised?
3. Is the water potable?
4. Which immunizations are required to enter the country? Which are advisable?

Values

1. What things are taboo to do in this country? Which things are taboo to talk about in common conversation?
2. What type of moral code is followed? (Christian, Islamic Confucian?) How does this moral code influence attitudes toward drinking alcohol, drug-taking, gambling, pre-marital or extra-marital sex? How does this differ from what you are used to?

Education

1. Is education free? Compulsory to what age? Available to all?
2. In schools, are children segregated by age, sex, race, caste, class?
3. What kinds of schools are considered best: public, private, religious?
4. What style of teaching prevails in schools? (rote learning; importance of exams; lecture...)
5. Describe the university system and how it differs from Canada. What is the school year calendar? Is there tuition? What is the grading system like?

Daily life

1. Are prices asked for merchandise for sale fixed or is one expected to bargain? How is bargaining conducted?
2. Is it okay to touch merchandise for sale? Does touching indicate desire to buy?
3. When does the normal work or school day begin and end? Is there a siesta time?
4. What is the customary time to visit friends?
5. What is the currency? What is the current value to the dollar? Is it stable? Will you be permitted to carry it out of the country?

On being a foreigner in this country

1. How will your financial position and social status compare with the majority of people living in this country?
2. Do these people generally "like" Canadians? Other foreigners?
3. When you go, must you register with city officials? The police? The Canadian embassy?
4. Do you need visas to enter the country? Alien registration for longer stays? What regulations apply to you as a foreigner?
5. Will you need visas to travel to neighbouring countries?
6. What should you do if you find yourself in legal trouble?
7. Are there special laws governing the activities of foreigners that you should know about?

Your Questions for Compañeros staff?

for your Host family?

for co-workers at the project site?

about Nicaragua?

How will you and your group share Canada's culture?

L. SPANISH PHRASES

Hi	Hola
Pleased to meet you	Mucho gusto
Good morning	Buenas dias
Good afternoon	Buenas tardes
Good evening	Buenas noche
See you soon	Hasta pronto
See you later	Hasta luego
Well then...	Entonces...
Ok, let's go / Ok, let's do it	Va pues / Dale pues
Bye	Adiós
God bless you	Dios te bendiga (blessing) or Salud (sneezing)
Yes / No / Maybe	Si / No / Talvez
Please / Thank you	Por favor / Gracias
You're welcome	De nada
Excuse me (to pass)	Con permiso
Excuse me (to be forgiven)	Disculpe
How are you?	Como esta?
Good, thanks	Bien, gracias
And you?	Y usted?
My name is...	Mi nombre... / Me llamo...
What is your name?	Como te llamas?
Where are you from?	De donde?
I am Canadian/American	Soy Canadiense / Americano
Could you repeat that?	Mande? / Un otro vez?
More slowly, please	Mas lento, por favor [or Despacio]
I [don't] understand	[No] Entiendo
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner	Desayuno / Almuerzo / Cena
Bon appetit!	Buen provecho!
Delicious	Delicioso/a
More / Less	Mas / Menos
Do you have another?	Tiene otro?
How much does that cost?	Cuanto cuesta?
I'm not feeling well	Yo no me siento bien
Where's the bathroom?	Donde esta el baño?
Straight / right / left	Derecho / a la derecha / a la izquierda
At the end on the right/left	Tope mano derecha / izquierda
Far, to the end, deep	Profundo
I have water	Tengo agua
You have juice	Tu tienes jugo
You want coffee?	Tu quieres café?
We are going home	Vamos a nuestra casa
Neighbourhood	Barrio
House	Casa
Room	Cuatro
Kitchen / cook	Cocina / cocinera
Who?	Quien?
Where?	Donde?
When?	Cuando?
Why?	Por que?
What?	Que?
Which?	Cual?

How?
How can I help?
May I help you?
Show me, please
This / That
I'm sorry, I made a mistake
Be careful!
Help! / Help me, please

Como
Cómo puedo ayudar yo?
Le puedo ayudar yo?
Muéstreme, por favor
Este / Ese
Perdón, cometí un error
Tenga cuidado!
Socorro! / Ayúdeme, por favor

0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
6, 7, 8, 9, 10

ceros, uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco,
seis, siete, ocho, nueve, diez

Construction foreman
Work site / project
Gloves
Soil
Sand
Rocks
Screen/Sieve
Blue Bucket
Green Roof
Yellow Window
Red Wood
White Door
Black Wall
Wheelbarrow
Wires
Pliers
Rebar
Pick-axe
Shovel
Saw
Electric Saw
Drill
Hammer
Nails
Screwdriver
Screw
Ladder
Tape measure
Stake
String
Level

Maestro de Obra
Trabaje el sitio / proyecto
Los guantes
Tierra
Arena
Piedras
Cedazo
El balde azul
Techo verde
Ventana amarillo
Madera rojo
Puerta blanco
Pared negro
El caretillo
Los alambres
La tenaza
Varilla
El pico
La pala
La segueta
La sierra electrica
El taladro
El martino
Los clavos
El destornillador
El tornillo
La escalera
La cinta
Estaca
Cuerda
Nivel

Your Own Useful Words:

M. KEEPING A JOURNAL Adapted from the International Centre, Queen's University

Reasons for keeping a journal

- record your expectations and goals; note your observations and reflections
- list addresses and references; use as a diary to record your daily itinerary and feelings
- draw, write poetry, song lyrics, doodle; make to do lists; submit it for academic credit

4 Approaches from J. Daniel Hess, *The Whole World Guide to Culture Learning*

- description -- to describe, define, delineate, reveal, picture, show, list, trace, outline
- narrative -- to narrate, tell a story, give an account, report an action
- exposition -- to analyse, detail, explain, explicate, interpret
- argumentation -- to argue, test, evaluate

Helpful Hints: provide a context, be specific, tell stories, quote people,
what do you want to remember when you read it in 5 years?

Questions before leaving...

- What do I want to get out of the experience? Why am I going?
- How will I make friends, learn the language, manage the food and climate?
- What/who will I miss while I am away?
- What is culture anyway?
- How would I describe Canada? Canadians? Myself as a Canadian?
- How comfortable am I talking with people from my host culture?

While in the host country...

- What are my initial reactions? Are my reactions different from others?
- What do I like the most about this culture? The least? Why?
- What type of experience engages me most? Isolates me most?
- What interaction was the most confusing of the past week? Most stressful?
- How effectively did I deal with these confusing and stressful situations?
- Who was most helpful to me this past week? How did that happen?
- What are my most important insights about my cultural adjustment over this past week?
- What am I doing to meet people from the host culture?
- Am I being viewed as an individual, as a Canadian, as a foreigner? How does this feel?
- What were my goals before leaving? Have they changed?
- What can I do here that I cannot do at home? What can't I do here? How do I know these things?

Upon returning...

- What did I learn about the host culture? About myself?
- How can I apply what I learned to my life back in Canada?
- Who will listen to my stories? Who could I seek out to share the experience with?
- Do I think of Canada differently now that I have returned? What do I like the most about my home culture? The least?
- What advice would I give to those who are leaving tomorrow for my host culture? How did I learn these things?

Your Own Journaling Questions:

Compañeros Inc
NICARAGUA



**PARTICIPANT
NOTES & QUESTIONS**

**PRE-DEPARTURE
TO DO LIST**