

Packing for Nicaragua

Clothing: It will be hot. Cotton clothes are most comfortable. You don't have to pack a change of clothes for each day. Local women at the worksite will be happy to earn a little money doing your laundry, daily if you wish, and it will be very, very clean, though it's not the delicate cycle.

Work clothes: Long pants, long-sleeved cotton shirts, T-shirts, sturdy shoes or boots, cotton socks, sunhat or bandana, work gloves. You may wear shorts if you wish but for working long pants are probably better protection.

Clothes for other occasions: Lightweight slacks or skirts, shirts and blouses, bathing suit, flip flops. Sleepwear for sleeping in a room with other people. If you are traveling during the rainy season (May through November), bring a poncho.

Special equipment: Flashlight and extra batteries (sometimes the power goes out), camera and film, sunscreen, insect repellent, sunglasses. If you are a light sleeper, bring a pair of earplugs, especially if you are sharing a room with another workcamper (some have been known to snore). Also, at night in a Nicaraguan town, dogs bark, roosters crow, and pigs squeal - buses start running early, too. Many workcampers have brought a daypack to carry to the worksite each day, for their water bottle, camera, sunscreen, hand sanitizer, and other personal items. A clip-on reading light is handy if you like to read at night, as your hotel room will probably have one light bulb in the middle of the ceiling.

Bedding: The modest hotels in which you will stay will provide pillows, and sheets, and El Porvenir will provide mosquito nets. Some hotels will provide a towel but you might be glad if you brought your own, especially if your group goes to a beach or lake for swimming. Bring your own washcloth.

Water: Bring a water bottle. Purified water is available at all times.

Food: El Porvenir will make sure that the meals eaten at the worksite are prepared under healthy conditions and include vegetables. Many of your meals will be eaten in restaurants. We are able to provide a vegetarian option, but not vegan. Vegetarians who like rice and beans a lot will have no problem. If you drink tea, you might want to bring a supply of teabags. Some workcamp participants have brought granola bars, trail mix, peanut butter, etc. for quick snacks.

Medications, health precautions: Bring all prescription medication you may need. If you are sensitive to insect bites, bring your prescription "bee sting kit." Bring whatever over-the-counter medications you might want (Tylenol, Pepto Bismol, etc) as these are available in Managua but not necessarily everywhere we will go. We also recommend

that you obtain and bring a prescription intestinal antibiotic such as Septra or Bactrim, in case, despite all precautions, you have an encounter with Nicaraguan microbes. You should consider getting all your shots up to date. A currently valid tetanus shot is absolutely required. We strongly recommend that you visit an **international travel clinic** if there is one near you. Ask your doctor or the travel clinic about these and other preventive measures. We also recommend that you bring a little bottle of antibacterial hand sanitizer, available in drug stores in the U.S., to carry in your purse or daypack at all times. There will be a first aid kit at the worksite. We will take every precaution to keep you healthy, and our staff will ensure that you receive medical attention promptly if you should need it while you are in Nicaragua.

Money belt: Like all countries, Nicaragua has thieves. We recommend a money belt, which you can tie around your waist under your clothes and zips shut. Or you may wish to sew an extra pocket inside your trousers or skirt which opens at the waist in front. Fanny packs are not recommended as they are very vulnerable to being snatched. Although credit cards are increasingly used in Managua and other cities, we recommend that you bring your basic spending money in cash, in bills no larger than \$50. We will assist you in changing dollars to cordobas whenever you need to do so. Please do not bring Traveler's Checks! They are useless in Nicaragua! There are now a few ATMs in Managua and other bigger cities, from which you can sometimes get cordobas with major US bank ATM cards (Visa debit card ATMs are more available than Mastercard). But don't count on them working when you need them.

Tools: El Porvenir will provide all tools needed for construction. You are welcome to bring your own work gloves.

How to Pack: Three cardinal rules for packing.

1. **Pack Light.** We will all fit into the back of a four-wheel drive truck with the luggage. Is it too heavy for you to carry? Take some of that stuff out.
2. **Pack a good carry-on.** Luggage may get lost. Think of what you most need if your suitcase didn't get there (medications, toothbrush, etc) until three days after you get there, then put all of that into your carry-on. Some workcampers bring everything carry-on.
3. **Your luggage should be waterproof.** If your trip is during the rainy season, May through November, your suitcase may get rained on - though if it looks like rain, we put a tarp over the luggage. Bring waterproof luggage if traveling during those months, pack all of your clothing in large plastic bags inside the suitcase, or bring a plastic bag large enough to enclose your entire suitcase.

What Not to Pack

Individual gifts for people in the community where you will work.

Why not? El Porvenir works with communities. We do not carry out any projects for individuals. We respond to the request of an entire community for help with drinking water, sanitation, and reforestation. The community as a whole carries out the project together, and the community as a whole benefits. The fee you pay to participate in the workgroup will pay for the materials of construction for the community's water or sanitation project, and this donation is your gift to the community. We have had unhappy after-effects of individual gifts made by work group members to specific children or adults. Such gifts may cause jealousy and dissention in the community whose unity we are committed to support. Some work groups have made a gift of sports equipment such as a volleyball and net, or baseballs, gloves and bats, to the entire community, and these gifts are very welcome and positive. We hope that you understand why we ask you not to bring candy, pencils, toys, clothing, etc, for individuals. Some workcampers have asked if they can leave their clothes as a donation. We appreciate the desire to share which prompts these requests but we do not have a means of equitably distributing clothing in our villages and we seek to keep our relationship with the villages one of partnership between equals, not charity. Some people have asked if they can bring school supplies. The answer is yes, and they will be very welcome, but only if you can provide enough for every child in the village, for example, if the village has 35 elementary school children, then 35 pencils, 35 boxes of crayons, etc. School supplies are readily available for purchase in Nicaragua at less cost than in the U.S. but their cost is beyond the means of most of the families you will be meeting.