



A Typical Missions Trip to Nicaragua

Every short term missions team is unique, and your experiences will vary. The purpose of this document is to provide you with some guidance about what to expect during your time in Nicaragua, and to make you more comfortable as you travel to this beautiful country that is so different from the US.

Preparing for your trip

Passports and Visas

You will need a valid passport with a minimum of 6 months left until expiration. You will not need to obtain a visa prior to entering Nicaragua for stays of 30 days or less.

Vaccinations

It is suggested that you be current with certain shots—Hepatitis A and B, Typhoid and Tetanus at minimum. Although malaria is not a high risk on the western side of the country, some people also prefer to take medication to prevent malaria. Many people have adverse reactions to malaria medication so you need to assess the risks carefully. You can access the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website at www.cdc.gov/travel to determine their current recommendations for vaccinations in Nicaragua.

You can obtain vaccines through your doctor, health clinics at airports, the travel clinic at your local hospital or through your local health department.

Packing

Nicaragua has a tropical climate with warm temperatures year round. The average high temperature throughout the year is between 87 and 91 degrees Fahrenheit, and the average low temperature is between 69 and 73 degrees. From November to April is the dry season in western Nicaragua, when rainfall is very sparse and it can become very dusty in Jinotepe. The rainy season is from May to October, and you can expect rain any day. In the evenings it can become cool so you may want to pack a light jacket.

Plan to wear long pants or jeans during most of the trip. In Latin American cultures, shorts are rarely worn in public. Short sleeve shirts are acceptable. If it is too hot for you to be comfortable in jeans, knee-length shorts are acceptable during the day, at the project site and in the community.

For construction knee-length shorts and light short sleeve t-shirts are permissible for men and women. Jeans are still preferred, as they are more culturally acceptable and help protect your legs. But shorts are acceptable, if it is simply too hot to be comfortable in jeans.

For both men and women clothing should be modest, with nothing too tight or sleeveless. No two-piece bathing suits; it is best to wear shorts over the bottom of the swim suit.



Clothes worn during the day will become sweaty and dirty, and stains sometimes do not come out after the trip, so bring inexpensive casual clothes which you don't mind being ruined. Laundry can be done during the trip, so don't over pack.

Do not bring anything with you unless you are comfortable with the possibility of returning home without it. Personal belongings are frequently lost, stolen, or damaged during travel to less-developed countries. Therefore, as a general rule, leave expensive items and sentimental items at home. Do not bring anything that is not replaceable.

Electrical outlets and voltage at Jinotepe are same as in the US so you do not need adapters or transformers to use your electrical appliances.

Most teams like to bring a second suitcase to bring sports equipment, craft materials and clothing for the children. Please check with your airline for weight and quantity of checked bags and carryon luggage allowed. Each airline's requirements are different and the rules change frequently.

Travel to Nicaragua

While the length of teams' stay in Nicaragua varies, most stay for 8-10 days. Plan to fly into Augusto C. Sandino International Airport in Managua. Upon arrival, follow the signs to baggage claim and immigration. Before you pick up your luggage you will go through immigration and passport control, where a customs agent will ask to see your passport and will issue a short term visa. You will have to pay for the visa at this time—US citizens do not need to obtain a visa in advance, but you need \$5.00 in US currency with you.

After receiving your visa (keep the visa in your passport until you leave the country), proceed to baggage claim. When everyone in your group has their bags, follow the signs to the exit doors—an officer may ask to see your baggage claim checks and compare them to the luggage tags.

Teams will be met by an Arms of Love representative—look for someone just outside the door holding a sign with your church or group name, or the name of your group leader. The representative will take you to your bus or van where you will load your luggage and depart for Jinotepe, which is about a 1 ½ hour drive from the airport.

Language

Spanish is the language of Nicaragua. In the airport, hotels and in some shops in the country many people speak some English. Some of the children speak a little English and will enjoy practicing their language skills with you. The staff members at Jinotepe generally do not speak English, so if no one on your team speaks Spanish you may want to consider hiring an interpreter. Arrangements can be made for a local interpreter at a cost of approximately \$30 per day.

Your stay in Jinotepe

Once you arrive at the Jinotepe team house, you will be assigned rooms and be given a short explanation of the following day's plans.



Your first full day at Arms of Love is usually a low-key day. You will wake up around 7:30, with breakfast served at about 8:30. At about 9:30 the team will meet with our local representative who will go over some logistics and give a brief history of Arms of Love in Nicaragua. After that the team will be led on a tour of the property. On the remaining days, wake-up and breakfast are at 7:30 and 8:30 respectively and the work project starts after that.

A word about time in Jinotepe: as is true in much of Latin America, Nicaraguans (Nicas for short) have a view of time that is different from a typical North American. You notice that we refer to approximate times throughout this document—that's because Nicas are more relaxed about exactly when things are done. You will find few clocks in the compound, and a delightfully slower pace prevails. We encourage you to slow down, adjust your expectations about promptness and enjoy time with the children and workers. It's a very healthy approach to time!

Lunch will be at about 12:30. After lunch there will be some down time to rest. Many people use this time to take a nap, do some reading, or relax. Feel free to check with the staff and if it doesn't conflict with any planned activities you may spend time with the kids and help them with homework, assist in the care of the smaller children, or just play.

The children have a schedule which needs to be respected. When school is in session the older children get up very early in the morning and leave for school before 8:00. Your team will usually join the younger children and the staff for breakfast.

Sunday's schedule includes attending/serving at a local church and preparing for the week's ministry. Monday through Saturday, each team will engage in work projects, spending time with the children, etc. depending on the skills of the team members, needs at the compound (for repairs, construction, maintenance and so on), and available funding. Supplies and funding for the week's ministry are provided by the team.

Communication

The children's home in Jinotepe is about 2 kilometers from town, in a rural area. Cell phones from the US may work, depending on the carrier and type of handset, but rates are usually very high—\$2.00-3.00 per minute or more. You may be able to purchase a sim card locally for your handset and take advantage of lower rates, but again this varies by carrier and equipment.

Internet access is not available at the Arms of Love compound, but there are several Internet cafes in town with very low cost access to the Internet and e-mail.

Many teams will incorporate some sightseeing into their trip. Some sites that teams have visited include Masaya Volcano National Park (about 30 minutes from Managua), Lake Nicaragua, and the Managua zip-line over the lagoon of an inactive volcano. Shopping for local crafts at Masaya or Managua might also be included in the day's events. In most cases teams incorporate sightseeing into their final day in Nicaragua, after leaving Jinotepe.

Arms of Love staff cannot arrange sightseeing trips for you, but may be able to arrange transportation to and from Jinotepe and places you want to visit. Transportation from Jinotepe to Managua for your return is provided.

Departure

Because most flights back to the US depart in the morning, teams should plan to spend their last night in Nicaragua in Managua. Hotel options include the Camino Real which is three minutes from the airport and offers a continental breakfast and transportation to the airport as part of their package of \$89¹ + 15% taxes per night for a double room. The web site for the Camino Real Hotel is www.caminoreal.com.ni/ingles/index.html. The Best Western Las Mercedes Hotel is directly across the street from the airport and offers a rate of \$90¹ + 15% taxes per night. You can easily walk across the street to the airport for your flight. The web site for the Best Western Hotel is: www.lasmercedes.com.ni/english/index.htm.

The airport in Managua is small and modern. When you enter the airport you should be able to easily locate your airline's ticket counter. As a general rule, you should plan to arrive at the airport at least two hours prior to your flight so you can check in, go through passport control and security and board your flight. There are several shops and restaurants in the airport for last minute shopping or to get a meal before takeoff.

¹ Rates are approximate. Be sure to check with the hotel for current rates and availability.