

Orientation Guide: Work and Witness Teams

One of the exciting aspects of a mission trip is the chance to meet and work with Nicaraguan Christians. You will have the unique opportunity of getting to know and develop deep friendships with them and their families. You will experience a lifestyle and culture different from your own. No one can predict what to expect. You have nothing to fear because we know that God has promised to be with us and to supply all our needs. You need only to have a willing and obedient heart.

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION:

Begin to pray and enlist prayer warriors that will pray for you while you are traveling. Pray that your life will be a shining example of Christ's love. The forces of evil are strong in the villages: frequently the believers and missionaries are called the anti-Christ. People are taught to be afraid of anything or anyone different. Witchcraft and spirit worship is present in most communities. Pray for God's protection and that your life will shine out in the darkness around you.

Study the missionary journeys and evangelistic efforts of others in the Bible. Prepare yourself for seeing God at work

CONDUCT:

As ambassadors for Jesus we need to be sensitive to National culture, traditions, and customs, no matter how strange they may seem to us. We must be careful not to complain or make negative comments about National people, food, or customs. Our actions often speak louder than our words. When in doubt concerning the proper conduct, you should consult the missionary, the team leader, or the local pastor.

In the United States one of the tools we use to evangelize is the color beaded bracelets. We also wear crosses and other Christian jewelry. It has come to our attention that most Miskito people misunderstand these items. Many think the color beaded bracelets are a way of protecting one from the evil spirits. **Therefore we are asking all teams NOT to bring these beaded bracelets, crosses or other Christian jewelry to give away or use in evangelism.**



Central American Christians consider smoking and the use of alcoholic beverages inappropriate behavior. Without passing judgment, **we ask all volunteers to refrain from smoking (or any tobacco use)** and drinking alcohol while serving in volunteer missions in Nicaragua. Local Christians view smoking on the same level as drunkenness. This is a serious issue and those who cannot refrain from tobacco use are asked not to come. Those who smoke while in Nicaragua will be returned to the U.S. immediately. You would not want

anything to affect your Christian testimony or the mission's testimony. **As ambassadors for Jesus we need to be sensitive to Nicaragua culture, traditions, and customs**, no matter how strange they may seem to us. We must be careful not to complain or make negative comments about Nicaraguan people, food, or customs. Our actions often speak louder than our words. When in doubt concerning the proper conduct, you should consult the missionary, the team leader, or the local pastor.

Playing cards, dancing, and playing pool are all considered to be worldly activities and not appropriate Christian behavior. Please be cautious in your conversations [and do not bring cards nor play cards while in Nicaragua]

Because of the primitive conditions bathing and restroom practices are different than in the US. If you observe people bathing in the rivers or urinating by the side of the road, you should pretend not to notice.

Many people speak Creole English. This sometimes leads us to believe that we understand and are being understood. Remember words do not always mean the same in different cultures. We tend to think that since English is spoken our lifestyle would be understood. **Remember the Creole people do not live an U.S. lifestyle and will not understand various aspects of your life.**

RELATIONSHIPS WITH NATIONALS:

You will make friends this week with a variety of people. Your heart will be touched by the needs you see. Many people from the church will help the mission efforts. There will also be non-Christians interested in the church that will be helping. These relationships will be a very precious part of your experience. You will want to help those you met. We ask you NOT to give away your clothing or other items. A ball cap or other small item is an appropriate gift. But the massive giving of items to one or two people will cause jealousies among the people, which can lead to strife in the church. At the end of the week the team as a whole can leave any items with the church as a whole and the clothing or other items will be distributed to the needy as a ministry of the church.



You must be very cautious in how you say good-bye. A casual phrase used in the United States, "if you are ever in Texas (Georgia or what ever) come by and see me" is taken as an invitation and in this society a person doing the inviting also pays all the bills. So a casual phrase of "come see me sometime" may be interpreted to mean that you are inviting them and you will pay all expenses of a 2-3 month visit including the plane fares!

Nice phrases to end a week relationship are:

"God bless you and keep you"

"We will see each other again some day in heaven, and be able to talk freely with out the difficulties of language."

“I will see you next year when our team comes again until then stay strong in the faith”

Please, do NOT make promises of taking people to the United States. You do not know the U.S.

Immigration Laws and it is easier to make promises in the midst of a loving week relationship than to keep that promise after returning to your normal life and facing the bureaucracy and immigration laws.



Do not give out your address nor phone number unless you are truly willing to accept long-distance

collect phone calls at any hour and receive letters with request for personal financial assistance. In this society all request for assistance from any type of government or other agencies a letter is required. When you ask people to write you a letter it might be interpreted to mean you are telling them to write you a letter requesting financial assistance.

CHURCH SERVICES:

Most of our churches clap as they sing. In some churches all members pray out loud at the same time. All prayers, and scripture reading is done standing. Be prepared to follow the accepted routine of that church.

Offering plates are not passed from person to person. The usher will just hold it out in front of you. You may touch it to stabilize it but do not expect the usher to let go of it. Frequently, the offering is taken up in a bag sewed to a long pole. You may give in either dollars or Cordobas. Remember that what may seem a small gift for you will seem extremely large for most churches. It is certainly appropriate for you to give \$1 to \$10 as an offering. If you desire to make a large donation, speak to a missionary about the best way to handle it.

The Lord's Supper may be served while you are in Nicaragua. All baptized believers are invited to participate.

You may be asked to share a greeting from your home church or to give a word of testimony. The time of special music is usually a major part of the church service. Most of our national believers have very little cash money, singing is seen as an offering to the Lord. Most churches expect you as a group to sing a special. If there are individuals who feel comfortable singing a solo you will be welcomed to do so, musical ability is NOT a requirement or expected.

All team members are expected to attend all church services.

HEALTH PRECAUTIONS:

Each team member should be in good health If you are taking any special medications that might create an emergency situation, please let your team leader know before coming. There is no Medical care available in Puerto Cabezas or surrounding areas. It will take 2 to 3 days

before you can reach minimal health facility in Managua. Please make sure you are in good health before coming. The heat will take a toll on your physical abilities. You will be living in a camping situation and riding in backs of trucks long distances on excessively rough roads. If you have major back problems you might want to talk with someone that has been down before you consider coming

Bring any medication you will need with you in your carry-on. All volunteers should be in good physical condition. The Team Leader should be advised, before you leave, of any special medical needs you have. Qualified Christian doctors and hospital care are only available in Managua. Flights to Managua are available only once or twice a day. There are **NO** medical doctors or hospital care available to you in Puerto Cabezas or out lying areas. The International Mission Board provides insurance for volunteers at a reasonable cost. All volunteers are expected to purchase this insurance.

No vaccinations are required to enter neither Nicaragua nor Honduras. It is advisable to update tetanus and to take the typhoid series (2 injections). Hepatitis-A is common in Central America and it might be desirable to get a Gamoglobulin shot (check with your doctor) or vaccinations for hepatitis. It is not required that shots be registered on an official yellow shot form.

You will certainly need insect repellent. We can never guarantee when the mosquitoes are on the warpath. Proper use of insect repellent and sleeping under mosquito nets when mosquitoes are biting are considered to be sufficient to prevent **Malaria and Dengue Fever**. There is only one type of mosquito that carries Malaria and in order to get Malaria you must be bitten by that mosquito and that mosquito must also have Malaria and get enough Malaria that your body cannot fight it off. So use of repellent, sleeping under a mosquito net, and spraying clothing with Permethrin repellent is usually sufficient. The tropical medical guides recommend having treatment available if one begins having high fever. If the need arises for Malaria medications Viola Palmer has those available. (The most frequently used Malaria preventive medications do not really prevent Malaria but is a suppressant and only suppresses the symptoms of Malaria in order to be effective they must be followed up with a 14 day treatment of another medication upon return to the U. S.)

The most likely health problem you will encounter will be **traveler's diarrhea** caused by unfamiliar bacteria in the water and food. To minimize the risks do not drink any water or juices from unknown sources. Pure water will be provided. Please do *not* try to bring bottled water from the States to last your entire visit. Bottled water may be purchased locally and the team will be purifying water.

“Be careful what you eat and drink” is common advice to travelers, but very few truly understand its implications. Diarrhea affects an estimated 20% of all travelers. It may cause anything from embarrassment and inconvenience to misery and disruption of travel and plans. Contaminated food and drink are the most common sources of infections. Careful selection and preparation of food and drink offer the best protection. Your meals will be prepared with the best precautions. You may want to bring snacking items that you enjoy and would want to share with rest of the team (and with the missionaries!). Pure drinking water will be provided. **Do not drink from any source except ones marked drinking water.**

Remember the 5 P's of staying Healthy:

DRINK AND EAT ONLY

1. **PURIFIED** water.
2. **PASTEURIZED** products.
3. **PACKAGED** products.
4. **PIPING** hot drinks and foods
5. **PEELED** or **PREPARED** fruits and vegetables.

The safest and most effective treatment for traveler's diarrhea is Pepto Bismol, according to the Journal of Internal Medicine. Take it according to the package instructions. It has been found to be very effective if you take twice the amount the first 2 doses. Some people might want to take two tablets before every meal, as a preventive treatment. If after a day of large amounts of Pepto Bismol, you can then take Imodium, or Lomotil or similar medications. Even while taking medications for the diarrhea you should be drinking 10-12 glasses of liquid per day. Remember public restrooms rarely have toilet paper available. Carry your toilet paper with you.

The flip side of diarrhea is constipation. Because you are in an unusual situation you may not take the time necessary to prevent this problem. To prevent constipation, drink plenty of water and take the time necessary in the toilet. The same muscles of the intestines cause constipation and Pepto Bismol will work to help relieve constipation.

Use of antibiotics to prevent traveler's diarrhea is not recommended. If you feel a need to take an antibiotic to prevent traveler's diarrhea Doxycycline or Cipro taken once a day are the recommended drugs. Frequently antibiotics will **cause diarrhea**, up-set stomachs and sun sensitivity. (Trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (Bactrim and Septra) is not recommended due to resistance in this coastal area according to Travel Tropical Guides.) Missionary Nurse Viola Palmer has antibiotics available if the need arises.

Pepto-Bismol (Bismuth subsalicylate) is the recommended treatment for traveler's diarrhea when used following the instructions. Imodium AD and other similar products should not be used unless Pepto-Bismol has been used in high doses for at least twelve hours.

Pepto-Bismol has been shown to prevent diarrhea when taken at a dose of two tablets four times a day for a period of up to three weeks. Those with bleeding disorders or allergy to aspirin or already on aspirin therapy should not use Pepto Bismol as a prevention treatment.

Health Hints:

- **Wash hands** frequently (with soap) and keep hands (and anything else like pencils) out of your mouth.
- Do not drink after other people.
- **Don't pet animals** you do not know. Stay away from unvaccinated animals.
- **Use insect repellent** at night or anytime you feel bites.

- **Wear shoes when out of doors.** This includes the beach, use splash/surf shoes or tennis shoes.
- **Wear Sun block** when out in the sun for more than a few minutes. You will be closer to the Equator and sunburns happen quickly and at a deeper level than in the U.S.
- **Drink plenty of liquids** to prevent dehydration in the heat. The first sign of dehydration is a headache. So if you get a headache drink a full glass of liquid before taking something for headache.
- Shake your shoes out before putting them on in the mornings. This will shake out any unwanted critters.

If you become ill enough to need medical attention or in case of a serious injury, Viola Palmer, who is a registered nurse will care for you and we will seek out the best possible care.

CLOTHING:

Nicaragua and Honduras are warm and tropical. **Cool and comfortable clothing is a must.** You should dress modestly to provide a good Christian testimony. Nationals wear long shorts for relaxing and sporting activities. In public, men wear long pants. In urban areas, women will wear pants while working or for informal activities. For church services, dresses for women are required and long pants for men. **No ties** except for preachers and only for the church service (**No suits**). **A good pair of walking shoes will be your best friend.**

Acceptable clothing varies from culture to culture. In the U.S., women would never show their breast but would wear very short skirts or shorts. The Miskito women will breast-feed or bath without tops and would think nothing of showing their breast but would never show their thighs. So in order to have a good Christian witness we try to wear clothing appropriate for the culture. Short shorts, tank tops (both sexes), tops that show any part of the stomach, halters, and other suggestive clothing are not appropriate. Tight fitting shorts or pants are not appropriate because they show the shape of the thigh. Long full shorts, split skirts, and culottes are acceptable. (Ladies-- when traveling from Puerto Cabezas to wherever you will work it is nice to wear a dress because when there is no latrine a dress covers you when you have to squat.)

Puerto Cabezas is on the coast and you may have an opportunity to swim. Women should plan on swimming in shorts and shirts. Bring a pair of shorts for bathing in creeks. Shorts for men and women should be "walking length." Walking length is defined as reaching down to your hands when standing with arms down. Make modesty a priority with all clothing!

Due to the limited amount of water and detergent clothes washing will not be available except for stays over one week or when checked baggage is several days in arriving. Lightweight travel clothing made of rip-stop cotton and nylon is available in most camping or adventure sports stores. These are wonderful because they can be hand washed out and will dry over night. Several pants styles have zip off legs for converting them into shorts. They are cool and comfortable in the intense heat and roll up very small making them great for saving space.

MONEY:

You will need some money for souvenirs or snacks. Bring only US dollars in small bills (\$20, \$10, \$5, and \$1). Traveler's checks are not recommended because they are not accepted in Puerto Cabezas.



LUGGAGE:

On the International flight each person is allowed **two checked bags and one carry-on** (not including purse or camera bag, etc.) The carry-on must fit under a seat or in an overhead bin. **Carry at least one change of clothes and your medications in your carry-on.** There is a size limit on baggage; check with your airline. No piece may weigh more than 70 lbs. Frequently airlines will not accept cardboard boxes so place these in duffle bags or trucks. In most cases, each team member will be limited to one piece (62" or 55"). The additional piece will be used for team supplies.

On the flight from Managua to Puerto Cabezas each person will be allowed a total of 50 lbs. of luggage. Your carry on must be very small about the size of a large purse, backpack, or briefcase. Excess weight over the 50 lbs. will be charged overweight and may be on a later flight. Your checked luggage might **NOT** arrive with you in Puerto Cabezas. Therefore, **you must have in your hands (on your lap) your small carry-on with a change of clothes to work in and clothes for church and any personal items you will need for 2 days.** If you are traveling outside of Puerto Cabezas you may need items for 3 days.

TRAVEL and CONTACT INFORMATION:

No entry visa is required for US citizens to enter Nicaragua. Everyone must have a valid passport. You will pay **\$5.00 visa fee** as you arrive in customs and **\$25.00 airport tax** as you leave. You will be asked for an address when you come through customs in Nicaragua. You should tell them: **Mision Bautista, Puerto Cabezas**

Travel inside the Miskito areas is difficult. Plan to travel in the back of pick-up trucks over extremely rough roads. There will be an extreme amount of dust, mud and/or rain depending on if it is rainy or dry season. Most locations are 4-6 hours away. If your team is traveling into Honduras plan on 4 hours in the back of a truck in Nicaragua and then crossing the river in a dug-out canoe then 4 more hours in the back of a pick-up. Space is a premium. Pack as light as possible.



Direct-dial emergency number to leave with family in the US: 011-874-76-219-3977. This is a Satellite phone and cost will be close to \$3.00 per minute. The phone is not kept on at all times so they may have to make several calls to get through. An effort is made to turn the phone on each evening. The satellite phone is to be used for emergencies only. You will have NO way to call your family. Please do not promise them that you will call to let them know you made it safely

SECURITY PRECAUTIONS:

It is as safe to travel in Nicaragua as it is in the United States. Of course there are certain precautions to be taken. A potentially wonderful and rewarding experience can become disappointing for everyone if we don't follow some well proven, common-sense precautions for everyone's safety and the security of personal belongings.

1. Use the "**Buddy system**" and never go anywhere alone in an airport, hotel, streets around the church, or on the work site. Always tell the designated leader where you are going and when you expect to return.
2. Split up your money between a billfold or purse and other locations, e.g., money belt camera case or suitcase (carry-on only). Reduce the risk of being a pickpocket's victim by placing your wallet in a front pocket or a fanny pack carried in front. **Don't take or wear expensive wristwatches or other jewelry.** Be careful in crowds where people are likely to bump into you.

MENTAL PREPARATION:

1. DON'T expect to have a flush toilet.
2. DON'T expect to take a shower or tub bath every day. The water or facilities may not be easily available in all places. Don't expect hot water anywhere outside of the Mission Center.
3. DON'T expect to have beds like those in your home.
4. DO expect a simpler lifestyle, which focuses on the value of people and relationships.
5. DO expect that God will use this experience to cause you to re-evaluate your priorities and your relationship with Him.
6. DO expect that God will use you and the team to encourage Nicaraguan Christians, their families and their churches, and to share Jesus Christ with non-believers.

