

# HANDBOOK: JINOTEGA, NICARAGUA

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## A NOTE ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

There are several resources available through the Office of Global Health (OGH) to assist with travel abroad, including the *International Programs for Students Handbook*. This handbook specifically addresses travel to Jinotega and includes all the information you might need for a successful trip.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

Nicaragua is a developing country which faces many economic and political challenges. Infrastructure is very basic and access to resources is limited. Clinics and hospitals are sparsely supplied and the standard of care differs from that in the U.S. Some of these differences stem from a lack of education while some are due to the limited resources. As such, you will experience situations very different from what you may be used to and you should be prepared for a very resource poor country with high levels of poverty and poverty related illnesses.

Participants should be prepared for:

- Limited availability of electricity in the clinics
- Limited availability of clean water and poor sanitary conditions
- Clinics without restroom facilities that require the use of an outhouse
- Water that is not potable
  - Do not drink the water or use it for brushing your teeth or shaving.
  - **Please note: clean drinking water will always be available and accessible.**

To get a better idea of what to expect, you can view photos and videos from previous trips at the following links:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/ordinarymatters/sets/72157635068680949/>

<http://sonmedia.ttuhs.edu/moore/nicaragua/january14/>

## ABOUT OUR PARTNER ORGANIZATION

Mision Para Cristo (MPC) is a faith based organization. While there is no pressure to attend the church services at the mission, there is prayer and references to God's work in Jinotega. If this is an issue for you, please discuss it with the faculty leading the trip or the Office of Global Health. Students of all faith traditions are welcome to participate in this international program. Regardless of your faith background, this is an excellent opportunity to evaluate your beliefs about the role of faith/religion in health care.

Benny Baker is the director of MPC. Benny, along with his wife Donna and the rest of the MPC team, arranges all the in-country logistics for our Nicaragua international programs. Mision Para Cristo assures precautions are made for the safety of all participants during their trip including food preparation, transportation, and housing.

For more information about MPC and the services they provide in Jinotega, please visit their web site:

<http://www.misionparacristo.com/>

## MONEY & FINANCES

**Program cost → See deadlines and due dates on the last page of the handbook!!!**

- \$625 (paid to MPC)
  - Room and board while in Nicaragua
  - All meals while in Nicaragua
  - Interpreters
  - MPC staff assisting with the trip
  - In-country transportation
  - Support for MPC services provided to the Jinotega community
- Airfare
- Supply fee (amount determined by faculty leaders)
  - NOTE: for some programs the airfare and/or supply fee may be added to the cost to MPC. If that is the case, one lump sum payment will be made to Mision Para Cristo.

### **Additional costs while in Nicaragua**

- \$10 visa fee paid in Managua. Must be a new, crisp \$10 bill. Please have this easily accessible.
- \$25 zip line fee (optional)
- \$5 fee for site seeing at volcano
- Spending & souvenir money
  - We recommend no more than \$100-\$200, depending on the number of gifts you want to purchase
  - There is a convenience store down the block from the mission and other shops (coffee shop, ice cream shop) available in Jinotega.
- Meals from the U.S. to Managua (2-3 depending on flight times)
- Meals from Managua to U.S. (2-3 depending on flight times)

NOTE: Take only small bills (\$10s, \$5s, & \$1s). The smaller the better.

NOTE: The currency of Nicaragua is the Cordoba. However, you **DO NOT** need to convert currency while in Nicaragua. U.S. dollars are widely accepted. More than likely the change you receive will be cordobas. **See note above about small bills.**

## ROOM & BOARD

### **MPC facility**

- The mission accommodations may not be what you expect. They are very nice by Nicaraguan standards but may not be exactly what you're expecting. It's more of a "summer camp dorms" atmosphere than a hotel atmosphere.
- The mission is a gated facility that is locked securely at night.
- All rooms will be locked during the day.
- The availability of electricity and water are sometimes an issue. **You must be prepared for this.**
- You may or may not have hot water...again, please be prepared.
- There will be one bathroom per room, so be prepared to share.
- **DO NOT flush toilet paper down any toilets in Nicaragua.**
- The mission provides sheets and a light blanket, a pillow with pillow case, a towel, and a hand towel.

- If you need more bedding or prefer your own towels and pillow, you are welcome to bring them.
- The electrical plugs are the same as in the U.S. **No converter is necessary.**
  - The mission does not have a lot of 3-pronged electrical sockets. An adapter might be useful.
- Wi-Fi is available at the mission.
  - This will allow you to check e-mail or use Skype, Face Time, etc. to communicate with home.

## Meals

- You will eat breakfast and dinner at the mission. Before you leave for the day you will make a sack lunch.
- See below for typical meals
  - Typical breakfast:
    - Main dish (i.e., cheesy eggs)
    - Fruit
    - Breakfast cereal (i.e., fruit loops or frosted flakes)
    - Juice, milk, coffee
      - If there is a particular condiment you like with your coffee you may need to bring it.
  - Typical lunch:
    - Sandwich (pb&j or ham & cheese—as many as you want)
    - 1 small bag of chips
    - 1 cookie or crackers
  - Typical dinner:
    - Main dish (i.e., chicken casserole, grilled chicken, OR beef tacos)
    - Fruit or vegetable (i.e. watermelon, cantaloupe, OR squash)
    - Side dish (i.e., corn or mashed potatoes)
- If you have special dietary needs, let MPC know in advance.
- Having a few snacks to supplement meals is a good idea (i.e., protein bars, trail mix, crackers, etc.)

## LANGUAGE TIPS & SUGGESTIONS

Learn as much Spanish as you can. The more Spanish you know the more you'll be able to do, the more helpful you'll be, the more you'll be able to float around and plug yourself in, and the more independence you'll have. (There are translators but there may be a limited number of them.)

Even beginner or non-Spanish speakers can learn a few phrases that don't require a response that can come in handy in the clinics. For example, phrases like:

- Come with me
- Sit here
- Under your tongue
- Point to where it hurts
- I'm going to take your pressure
- There will be a tight squeeze

Other options that may help strengthen your Spanish speaking skills:

- Apps like MediBabble that can be easily accessed from your phone
- Medical Spanish resources available through OGH (contact OGH for additional information)
- Taking a Spanish-English dictionary with you so that you can learn words and phrases to help you communicate better

You will have translators with you anytime you leave the mission, so do not let your lack of Spanish be a barrier to going on the trip. You will pick up phrases as the days go on, and you will be more comfortable with the small amount of Spanish you may know.

## THINGS TO PACK

**NOTE: Anything you do not want to take back to the U.S. at the end of the trip can be donated to MPC.**

- Clothes
  - Regarding clothing: No shorts can be worn outside the mission. Keep in mind that you are a representative of TTUHSC. Avoid packing clothes that are revealing (short shorts, tank tops, spaghetti straps, etc.)
  - Light weight rain jacket
  - Sweater for chilly nights
  - Scrubs are best for clinic use.
  - Comfortable clothes that you can wear at the mission
  - Comfortable close-toed shoes that provide good support for the clinic and walking around Jinotega
    - Also consider water-proof shoes or 2 pairs of shoes (in case one gets soaked from the rain/mud)
  - Females who plan to attend the church services should pack a skirt.
  - Hat—it may come in handy on rainy and sunny days...and days you don't want to mess with your hair...
  - Bathing suit. There is a pool at the hotel in Managua. Feel free to enjoy.
- A laundry bag for dirty clothes
- Sunglasses
- Wristwatch
- Flashlight – the electricity can go off
- Gatorade packets (essential for the heat)
- Roll of toilet paper or travel size packages of tissue for use outside the mission
- Hand sanitizer
- Wet wipes
- Travel-size first aid kit (Band-Aids, Neosporin, itch cream, Benadryl, Tylenol, Dramamine, etc.)
- Medication for headaches, muscle aches, motion sickness—as applicable
  - MOST OF THE TRAVEL WILL BE DONE IN BUSES OR TRUCKS. IF YOU ARE EASILY PRONE TO MOTION SICKNESS, BE PREPARED!
- Fanny pouch and/or neck lanyard. The neck lanyard is helpful for holding your passport, money, and other small items. The fanny pouch is great for larger items (hand sanitizer, notepad & pen, etc.)

- Backpack (handy for day trips)
- Water bottle with non-exposed mouth piece (to prevent dirty hands all over the mouthpiece)
- Toiletries
- Shower shoes
- Travel-sized bottle of Febreze for dirty clothes and freshening the bathroom
- Artificial sweeteners (if there is something in particular you like with your coffee)
- EARPLUGS! (They will be your best friend. It is extremely noisy in Jinotega and the Mision is directly across the street from a bus terminal.)
- Eye mask (in case you want to rest and your roommates don't)
- Insect repellent (spray, cream, or wipes) **with DEET**
- Medical supplies to consider packing
  - Stethoscope
  - Blood pressure cuff
  - Otoscope
  - Thermometer & covers
    - NOTE: any personal equipment taken abroad should be LABELED!!!! Be sure to pack extra batteries if needed.
- Optional items
  - Camera
    - Charger
    - Memory cards
  - Multiple pens
  - Journal or notebook
  - Fun things to use to entertain the kids (bubbles, balloons, stickers, etc.—please avoid candy...this defeats the mission of Teethsavers!)

**Please DO NOT pack anything that has monetary or sentimental value.**

## TRAVEL TO NICARAGUA

### Luggage

- You are allowed one piece of checked luggage, one carry-on bag, and one small personal item.
  - Checked luggage can be no bigger than 62 linear inches (length + width + height) and 50 pounds.
  - **Please note:** you may be requested to check an additional piece of luggage for supplies.
- You will receive luggage tags. Please put these on every piece checked luggage. They are available for your carry on and personal item by request.
  - NOTE: The first person through the customs line will begin gathering the group's luggage. The luggage tags make the luggage easily identifiable.

### Immigration and Customs Paperwork

- You will be given immigration & customs forms on the flight to Managua
  - You are in Nicaragua for tourism.
  - Your local address is: (also see the back of your wallet card and/or your luggage tag)
    - Mision Para Cristo

- Jinotega
  - 404-8936-4538
- You have nothing to declare coming into Nicaragua.
- First stop after getting off the plane is immigration. You will hand the immigration official your forms (immigration and customs), passport, and \$10.
  - Make sure to bring a crisp, clean \$10 bill (no tears/markings)
- If something happens to your flight to Houston (delayed and/or you miss your flight to Managua), don't panic. We will help you get to Managua.
  - NOTE: it's very, very helpful to exchange phone numbers and have the faculty's phone number in case this happens.

### GENERAL (BUT IMPORTANT NOTES)

- **Professionalism**
  - As with any international travel (or trips with a large number of people) FLEXIBILITY IS KEY!
  - You will make mistakes, other people will make mistakes. Be generous and forgiving and use this as an opportunity to practice professionalism and hone your communication skills.
  - There is a lot of hurry up and wait...and a lot of figuring it out as you go along...that is just the nature of these types of trips. All the more reason to practice flexibility and professionalism.
- **Purpose & Vision**
  - There may be times when the work feels overwhelming and you wonder if what we're doing matters or makes a difference. **Trust that the small things can make a difference.** Irrigating someone's ears so that he/she can hear better can change someone's life. Providing someone with a pair of reading glasses can make all the difference in the world. You will see a whole lot of nothing (aches and pains you can't do anything about), but then there will be a handful of people that can be helped by our services and that has to be what you choose to focus on.
  - Our goal is to slowly change the lives of the people of Jinotega. This will take time. Each trip is a small piece of a greater whole.
  - One of our goals is that the MPC clinic will be viewed as the model clinic for Jinotega in cleanliness, in skill and education level, in the services they provide to the community. Again, this will take time and every group has something beneficial to add to this goal.
- Practice taking vitals and be prepared to take a lot of them.
- Be prepared for the smells. The poverty is extreme and with that comes a lack of sanitation/cleanliness.
- STAY HYDRATED!!!
- Keep your passport locked in your room or **ON** you at all times (not just with you).
  - **DO NOT leave your passport in a vehicle or backpack.**
- A note about hair and makeup: Be practical/realistic. Prepare for the bare minimum. Do what is easy and not time consuming. Depending on the time of year, you may sweat a lot anyway.
- Use this time as a break from technology. There is no TV. Your phone may or may not have service . Take advantage of this time to UNPLUG.

- It's not necessary to purchase a special international plan for phone calls or text messaging unless you just cannot live without these things.
- **You do NOT have the right of way when crossing the street in Nicaragua!**
- **Photography etiquette**
  - Be respectful when taking photographs. Ask for permission to take photos of people (especially children) in the clinic and on the streets. Be extremely careful photographing patients in the hospital. Just because the hospital gives you permission to take photos of the patients doesn't mean you should. There are more relaxed guidelines in Nicaragua, but that doesn't mean we should act unethically. Act with integrity and **always strive to uphold the dignity of others.**
- Out of respect for our partner organization (MPC) **this is an alcohol free trip.** MPC has requested that no one drink at the mission or while under their care (that includes outside the mission and at the hotel in Managua).
- Don't be afraid to enjoy your host country. Have fun. You can enjoy your host country and be safe at the same time. The two aren't mutually exclusive. With that in mind, be very respectful of MPC's rules and regulations.

## CHECKLIST

**See deadlines and due dates on the following page!**

- Obtain passport
  - If you already have a passport, please check the expiration date. Passports must be valid for a minimum of 6 months beyond the date you enter Nicaragua.
- Make payment to MPC
- Purchase airfare
- Obtain recommended vaccinations/immunizations (there are no REQUIRED immunizations)
  - Hep A
  - Hep B
  - Tetanus
    - Malaria prophylaxis are NOT necessary.
- Obtain insurance
  - This will be done through OGH using the TTU System provider, HTH Worldwide.
- Complete the on-line pre-departure modules
- Complete the emergency and liability forms
  - Forms will be given to OGH at the pre-departure meeting. Students not located at the Lubbock campus will e-mail, fax, or mail forms to OGH.
- Attend the pre-departure orientation
- Set up your account on the HTH Worldwide web site
- Contact your bank about any debit or credit cards you will be taking with you