

# Compañeros Inc

Take Yourself to New Places

Volun-Tourism & Service Learning in Nicaragua

## PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

### Part I: The Purpose and The People

- |                               |        |
|-------------------------------|--------|
| A. What This Trip Is About    | p. 2   |
| B. Roles & Responsibilities   | p. 2-3 |
| C. Good Groups Look Like This | p. 3   |
| D. Expectations               | p. 3-4 |

### Part II: Logistical Details

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| E. What to Bring                                   | p. 4   |
| F. Health Advice                                   | p. 5   |
| G. Safety Advice                                   | p. 5-6 |
| H. Emergency Contact Info<br>and Important Notices | p. 7   |

### Part III: Country Information

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| I. Service Project Profiles                               | p. 8-11    |
| J. About Nicaragua  | p. 11-17   |
| K. Do You Know Nicaragua?                                 | p. 17      |
| L. Maps of Nicaragua                                      | p. 18      |
| M. Spanish Phrases  | p. 19-20   |
| Participant Notes & Questions<br>Pre-Departure To Do List | Back cover |

## Part I: The Purpose and The People

### **A. WHAT THIS TRIP IS ABOUT**

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 the local and global community a better place. Grab–Give–Get–Go. Got it?

Operated along socially conscious, ethical principles of equality, respect, and mutual benefit, your participation in a Compañeros volun-tourism and service learning experience benefits yourself and others and promotes community development between North and Central Americans.

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 participation 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, environmentally sensitive practices, and reliable in-country logistics, your program fees provide you with friendly and professional guiding to reach our common 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**

**GONZALO DUARTE** is the founder and president of Compañeros Inc. Since 1993 he has organized and facilitated volun-tourism and service learning experiences for over 500 hundred participants in 8 countries. His work as an educator and social entrepreneur creates mutually beneficial volunteer service and cross-cultural learning opportunities for North and Central Americans.

A Canadian now living in Managua, Gonzalo and his staff will accompany you through an adventurous, safe, and beneficial experience from the moment you arrive at the airport until the time you depart.

**DALENA TAYLOR PONDLER** Originally from Pearl Lagoon on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua, Dalena spoke Creole and English most of her childhood and learned Spanish as teenager. Her natural leadership skills were cultivated among her Moravian church youth and young adult group, which gave her opportunities to travel through Latin American, the Caribbean, Europe, and Canada.

After graduating from Managua's UNICIT in 2006 with a degree in International Relations and Social Work, Dalena started working as a translator and program coordinator for Compañeros. She enjoys the service project partnerships and sharing Nicaraguan music and dancing!

**IVETTE FONSECA** A life-long resident of Managua, Ivette has a wide network of family, friends, and guesthouses with whom she has managed host family and accommodation services for 250+ North American participants since 2004. With a Master's in Sociology from Université de Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium and 20 years experience working with the Ministry of Education and Save the Children, Ivette is uniquely positioned to meet the needs of individuals and groups who are seeking to encounter the culture of Nicaragua and contribute to its social development.

With an avid interest in house design, Ivette manages all aspects of accommodation and hospitality services for Compañeros participants and looks forward to welcoming you!

## **C. GOOD GROUPS LOOK LIKE THIS**

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. EXPECTATIONS**

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

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

3. Your personal objectives for this volunteer experience are:

4. You are looking forward to:

5. You are apprehensive about:

## Part II: Logistical Details

### **E. 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. A photocopy of your passport stored in a place different than where you carry your passport. Leave a copy of your passport, itinerary, and contact info with the person you listed as an emergency contact on the trip registration form.

3. U\$100+ spending money. Use a waist belt to hold your cash, passport, and one other piece of photo identification. Bank cards and credit cards are accepted in a few places. Do not bring traveler's cheques or unnecessary pieces of ID (e.g. Social Insurance, Tim Horton, student, or transit cards, etc).

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 'n dry (with a bit of rain) weather.

1 pyjamas	5 underwear	5 socks
2+ casual pants	1+ work pants	2+ shorts/capris (no cut-offs)
1+ long sleeve shirt	5+ short-sleeve/t-shirts (no straps)	2+ skirt/sundress (modest)
1 swimsuit	1+ sandals or shoes	1 work shoes/boots (closed-toe)
1 work gloves	1 sunhat and sunglasses	1 beach towel
1 hairbrush	1 toothbrush/paste/floss	1 deodorant
1 soap/shampoo	1 shaving set/sanitary napkins	2+ zip-lock bags
1 water bottle	1 sunscreen and insect repellent	1 flashlight/headlamp
1 small laundry soap	1 roll of toilet paper/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 hotel room. Leaving North American stuff behind is part of the experience. Do not bring iPods, cell phones, expensive jewellery, precious keepsakes, electronics, or excessively packaged items. Travel with open hands. If no carry-on is allowed pack a small backpack to carry your water bottle, sunscreen, etc in each day.

## F. 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](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)  
Centre for Disease Control [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
World Health Organization [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)  
Lonely Planet Guide Books [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://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.  
~ 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.

## G. 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 in Canada 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".

**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.

Get enough sleep during the trip. Inform a leader as soon as you are not feeling well.

**Personal Attention:** Be aware of your right to feel safe and secure. Treat others as equals and expect to be treated as one yourself. Many women 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 simple Spanish will prevent many problems. Inform others if you are uncomfortable. A lot of foreigners come and go; be aware of the impression you leave behind.

**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:** 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.

**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 some where; wait until the middle or end. Ask yourself if you would rather capture and recall this moment through your lens or through your own eyes? Do not promise to send a copy of a photo if you cannot guarantee to follow through. 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 the hotel by nightfall. If possible, let someone in Canada know you're ok and contact the Embassy of Canada.

## H. EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Compañeros	Gonzalo Duarte	<a href="mailto:duarte@companeros.ca">duarte@companeros.ca</a>	011.505.8913.3761 (cell) 011.2255.0859 (home)
	Dalena Taylor	<a href="mailto:dalena@companeros.ca">dalena@companeros.ca</a>	011.505.8911.5186
	Ivette Fonseca	<a href="mailto:ivette@companeros.ca">ivette@companeros.ca</a>	011.505.8886.5910
Hotel El Almendro in Managua		<a href="http://www.hotelesalmendro.com">www.hotelesalmendro.com</a>	011.505.2270.1260
Hotel Los Pinos in Managua		<a href="http://www.hotelospinos.com">www.hotelospinos.com</a>	011.505.2270.0761
Hotel Las Mercedes in Managua		<a href="http://www.lasmercedes.com.ni">www.lasmercedes.com.ni</a>	011.505.2255.9910
Air Canada		<a href="http://www.aircanada.com">www.aircanada.com</a>	888.247.2262
American Airlines		<a href="http://www.aa.com">www.aa.com</a>	2255.9090 or 800.433.7300
Continental Airlines		<a href="http://www.continental.com">www.continental.com</a>	2278.7033 or 800.231.0856
Delta Airlines		<a href="http://www.delta.com">www.delta.com</a>	2254-8130 or 800.241.4141
Bell Canada Operator		<a href="http://www.infocanadadirect.com">www.infocanadadirect.com</a>	1.800.0168 or 1.800.555.1111
Embassy of Canada in Managua		<a href="mailto:mngua@dfait-maeci.gc.ca">mngua@dfait-maeci.gc.ca</a>	011.505.268.0433
DFAIT Emergency in Ottawa		<a href="http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca">www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca</a>	from Nicaragua 613.996.8885 from Canada 800.267.6788

### IMPORTANT NOTICES:

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

2. All participants are to leave a copy of this page of Emergency Contact Information along with a copy of their passport, 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](http://www.companeros.ca)

3. Upon arrival at Managua's international airport, you will be required to complete customs and immigration papers. Identify your local address on the forms as "Km 12.9 Carretera Masaya, Managua"

Be prepared individually with the exact amount to pay US\$5 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.

## Part III: Country Information

### **I. SERVICE PROJECT PROFILES**

The following four service project profiles are examples of the grassroots partnerships that Compañeros forms in Nicaragua. The context and details highlight the results-oriented approach and your essential role as a participant fundraiser, volunteer, and on-going supporter. See photos at [www.companeros.ca](http://www.companeros.ca)

#### **1. NAME: The Prescolar Arcoiris Renovation in Barrio Reparto Schick, Managua**

Prescolar Arcoiris is a community operated preschool and feeding program serving 60 children aged 1 to 6 years of age in one of Managua's most congested and impoverished barrios, called Reparto Schick located near Huembes Market.

Children receive food, attention, a semblance of daily structure, and some basic educational input from 2 teachers and a number of parents and volunteers. The centre is open Monday-Friday 7-11 am and 1-5pm. About 15 adolescents and adults attend basic education classes in the afternoon.

The solid building was constructed some years ago by Save the Children, but now requires updating. Casa Canadiense provides funds for the feeding program. The Ministry of Education stipends the two teachers approximately US\$25/month.

#### **Service Project - what work will volunteers do?**

Our service project would involve (1) constructing a wall to partition classrooms from one another; (2) replacing a section of zinc roofing; (3) installing a tile floor and cabinets in the kitchen/feeding program; (4) painting the entire place and decorating the bathroom; (5) building bookshelves and purchasing and reading children's books; (6) repairing and refurbishing students chairs and desks; (7) providing moral support and an infusion of care, recreation, and solidarity with the volunteers and two teachers who keep the place going with a minimum of resources.

#### **Benefits - who would benefit?**

At the invitation of community leader Doña Aura, we toured the site on and met students, teachers, cooks, and volunteers. The service project would primarily benefit them by: (1) defining two distinct classroom spaces; (2) keeping the students and floor dry; (3) creating a cleaner kitchen floor surface and some storage space; (4) brightening up the general decor and bathroom facilities; (5) equipping the preschool with a place for students to read and keep books; (6) maintaining the student's chairs and desks; (7) demonstrating support for the efforts of people who continue to work in adverse circumstances.

Secondary beneficiaries of this program include the 1 locally hired contractor and 1 skilled assistant who will direct the project; a number of local vendors from whom materials will be purchased; a group of 3 local women who will be contracted and trained to provide lunch for the volunteers; and, a local artist who will re-paint some faded children's murals on the walls.

#### **Budget - how much?**

US\$2000-\$5000 for locally hired labour (6 people in total), locally purchased materials, and on-site meals for the volunteer crew. Amount range depends on number of project elements undertaken, which is related to the number of volunteers and groups allocated to this project.

#### **Other Information**

Located in the centre-east side of Managua, approx 15 minutes drive away from the office of Compañeros Inc and participant's host families. This will be our first project with Prescolar Arcoiris.

#### **2. NAME: The Santa Julia Ramp Build in El Crucero**

Santa Julia is a rural, remote community located near the hilly town of El Crucero (home of former Nicaraguan President Arnoldo Aleman) located 13 km south of Managua on the Pan American highway. It has 287 inhabitants (children youth, adults).

90% of the working residents are farmers, cultivating and planting the land with basic grains, fruits, and vegetables in May of each year. Harvest is in July when some of these agricultural products are used for self-consumption and the rest taken to market outside the community.

The wealthier ranch owners nearby Santa Julia hire the farmers and their families during the months of November and December to pick coffee. These two months are the only period during the year in which they have a paid job; from January to April 70% are unemployed.

Every year the community faces difficulties, especially during the rainy season when it is impossible to move harvest out of the low-lying village due to soaked and eroding roads. Hauling 100 pound sacks of beans, rice, and produce uphill on the 3.5 km dirt road is not an easy task, but the people of Santa Julia have few alternatives to sell their goods.

#### **Service Project - what work will volunteers do?**

The entire project consists of building 7 ramplas ranging in size from 160 mts<sup>2</sup> to 354 mts<sup>2</sup>. "Ramplas" are like built-in steps on sections of the roadway that are particularly precarious. They help retain water and prevent landslides and make it easier for people or vehicles to move on a surface with traction.

Building the ramplas would include mixing a lot of concrete (cement, gravel), digging holes, and carrying water from the well in the village to the section of road being improved.

#### **Benefits - who would benefit?**

Doña Lola, our host, informed us having better or more accessible roads would improve the lives of all community members by: (1) allowing vehicles to take product out of the community and supplies to come in during the rainy season; (2) providing faster access for the sick and elderly who require transport to the hospital; (3) providing easier access between the village and the main road for teachers and students.

#### **Budget - how much?**

The cost of each rampla ranges from U\$1225 to U\$2350. The cost depends on the size and location of the rampla and the amount of labour and materials. It will take many groups to complete the entire project.

#### **Other Information**

Santa Julia used to be a ranch owned by Salvadora Debayle, mother of the despised dictator Anastasio Somoza. The parents and grandparents of Santa Julia used to work for her under inhumane conditions. After the revolution when the Somoza's fled the country, the ranch was divided between all the 58 families as compensation for all their years of work. In 1980 they were recognized as a bona fide community by the municipality of El Crucero.

In 2008 a community preschool was built by Casa Canadiense and a health center was added a year later by an NGO from Spain. It was not until 2009 that the municipal government gave Santa Julia electricity in response to the initiative and perseverance of local leaders.

### **3. NAME: The Andres Castro School Build in Haulover**

Andres Castro (named after a national hero – Batalla de San Jacinto) is a public elementary and high school located in Haulover, near Pearl Lagoon on the east coast of Nicaragua. It is run by the Ministry of Education (MINED) and serves 373 students from pre-school to Grade 6 and 185 students from grade 7-10. There is also an after-hours adult education program.

The school is open from Monday to Friday from 7am-5 pm. Adult education classes are on weekends. It has 8 classrooms that are used by elementary students (pre-school to Grade 4) during the morning (7am-12 noon). Grades 5-6 plus Grades 7-10 use the same 8 classrooms during the afternoon (12-5pm).

Providing educational opportunities to 558 students of widely varying ages and abilities with only 8 classrooms is difficult. The school requires room to grow in order to make education more convenient and attractive to youth. (Currently some high school students attend in Pearl Lagoon).

### **Service Project - what work will volunteers do?**

Our service project will involve constructing two classrooms (54' long x 20' wide):

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| (1) Assembling wood structure for the roof | (4) Moving LOTS of sand            |
| (2) Mixing cement                          | (5) Building 5 concrete walls      |
| (3) Helping clean school property          | (6) Building book shelves (maybe). |

### **Benefits - who would benefit?**

Mr Castelio, our host, explained more classrooms means less students per class and hence better quality of education. The service project would primarily benefit the Haulover community by:

- (1) Adding two more much-needed classrooms to their overall goal of adding 7.
- (2) Making more space for the growing high school population (increasing by 33 in 2010).

Secondary beneficiaries of this program include the 1 locally hired contractor and 1 skilled assistant who will direct the project; a number of local vendors from whom materials will be purchased; a group of 3 local women who will be contracted and trained to provide lunch for the volunteers.

Indirectly, the municipality of Pearl Lagoon (of which Haulover is part of) will benefit. At this moment The "Las Perlas Institute" located in Pearl Lagoon (15 minutes walk from Haulover) is the only complete secondary school in all of the 7 nearby communities. More space at Andres Castro School will relieve pressure on "Las Perlas Institute."

### **Budget - how much?**

US\$4000-\$7000 for locally hired labour (up to 6 people), locally purchased materials, and on-site meals for the volunteer crew. Amount range depends on number of project elements undertaken, which is related to the number of volunteers and groups allocated to this project.

This project is being undertaken in partnership with the municipal office and communal board, as well as the Peace & Hope Trust (in-kind contribution of US\$2475) [www.peaceandhope.org](http://www.peaceandhope.org)

### **Other Information**

A Casa Canadiense group from Robert F. Hall Secondary School in Brampton, ON built two classrooms here in 2009. After the Algonquin College CYW Program builds two more in 2010 we hope they or others will return and build the final two or three classrooms in 2011.

## **4. NAME: The Prescolar Las Palmitas Extension in Barrio Che Guevara, Managua**

Prescolar Las Palmitas is a community operated preschool and feeding program serving 120 children aged 1 to 6 years in one of Managua's most congested and impoverished neighbourhoods, called Barrio Che Guevara.

Children receive food, attention, a basic daily structure, and some elementary educational input from 2 teachers, who are paid \$ 20 per month for this job by the ministry of education. The centre is open Monday to Friday 7-11 am.

### **Service Project - what work will volunteers do?**

Our service project would involve (1) clearing land behind the existing preschool; (2) constructing walls; (3) mixing cement and pouring the floor; (4) painting the zinc roofing and installing it; (5) painting the entire building; (6) building a latrine; (7) providing moral support and an infusion of care, recreation, and solidarity with the local staff and volunteers who operate the preschool.

### **Benefits - who would benefit?**

At the invitation of community leader Doña Martha, we toured and met teachers and a volunteer project committee. The service project would primarily benefit them by:

- (1) Defining and creating space for 3 distinct classroom, one for each preschool level; (2) Keeping the students and floor dry, during rainy season when the roof leaks and the low walls leave students exposed;

(3) Brightening up the general décor; and, (4) Equipping the preschool with additional bathroom facilities.

Secondary beneficiaries of this program include the 1 locally hired contractor and 1 skilled assistant who will direct the project; a number of local vendors from whom materials will be purchased; a group of 3 local women who will be contracted and trained to provide lunch for the volunteers.

#### **Budget - how much?**

US\$3500-\$5000 for locally hired labour (6 people in total), locally purchased materials, and on-site meals for the volunteer crew. Amount range depends on number of project elements undertaken, which is related to the number of volunteers and groups allocated to this project.

#### **Other Information**

Located in the centre of Managua near the Huembes Market, approx 15 minutes drive away from the office of Compañeros Inc and participant's host families. We were first referred to this project in 2007, but have been unable to undertake it until this year.

## **J. ABOUT NICARAGUA**

**Random Info** [www.countryreports.org](http://www.countryreports.org)

- Cacao seeds, from which chocolate is made, were used as money by pre-Columbian cultures in Central America.
- 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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 Ortgea
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

¡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.

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!

Hail to thee

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

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 US\$1 billion in remittances, an increase from the US\$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.
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Agricultural Products:	Coffee, bananas, sugarcane, cotton, rice, corn, tobacco, sesame, soya, beans, beef, veal, pork, poultry, dairy products, tobacco.
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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%
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## 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...

## Greeting 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](http://www.companeros.ca)

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. DO YOU KNOW NICARAGUA?

History	What are 5 major events that have shaped Nicaragua since 1930? What’s the significance of: Augusto Sandino / Rise of the FSLN / 1972 Earthquake / July 19 1979 / Contras / Presidents since 1990
Politics	Who is the current president? What are 3 current issues? What is Nicaragua’s relationship like with other countries?
Economy	What’s the Nicaraguan currency called? US\$1 = ? In what kinds of jobs do Nicaraguans work? What are some of the reasons for extensive poverty? How has and how does a younger age structure affect the country?
Geography	Can you describe Nicaragua’s geography? How are the Pacific and Caribbean sides different?
Health	What kind of health services are available? To whom?
Education	What education is available to children, youth and adults?
Religion	What role do you think religion plays in the lives of Nicaraguans? What role does it play in yours?
Gender	What gender roles exist? What is machismo? How is it that Nicaragua has a strong feminist movement? What are the norms for young girls/guys who are dating?
Family	What stereotypes about Latin American families exist? What questions can you prepare for your host family? What will you share about your own family?
Dress	What types of clothing will you require for various occasions? What is / is not appropriate clothing for you on this trip? Why?
Food	What foods are popular? How will you deal with food you don’t like?
Leisure	What are some common forms of recreation?
Foreigners	As a foreigner visitor, how might you be perceived? What benefits and risks are there to being a foreigner? How will what you know about Nicaragua be important to you when you are there? How much do you really know about Canada and are able to share or present?

## L. MAPS OF NICARAGUA



## M. 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
I want pop	Quiero gaseosa
You want coffee	Tu quieres cafe
I am going my home	Yo voy a mi 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?	Como

How can I help?	Cómo puedo ayudar yo?
May I help you?	Le puedo ayudar yo?
Show me, please	Muéstrame, por favor
This / That	Este / Ese
I'm sorry, I made a mistake	Perdón, cometí un error
Be careful!	Tenga cuidado!
Help! / Help me, please	Socorro! / Ayúdeme, por favor
0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5	cero, uno, dos, tres, quatro, cinco,
6, 7, 8, 9, 10	sies, siete, ocho, nueve, diez
Construction foreman	Maestro de Obra
Work site / project	Trabaje el sitio / proyecto
Gloves	Los guantes
Soil	Tierra
Sand	Arena
Rocks	Piedras
Screen/Sieve	Cedazo
Blue Bucket	El balde azul
Green Roof	Techo verde
Yellow Window	Ventana amarillo
Red Wood	Madera rojo
White Door	Puerta blanco
Black Wall	Pared negro
Wheelbarrow	El caretillo
Wires	Los alambres
Pliers	La tenaza
Rebar	Varilla
Pick-axe	El pico
Shovel	La pala
Saw	La segueta
Electric Saw	La sierra electrica
Drill	El taladro
Hammer	El martino
Nails	Los clavos
Screwdriver	El destornillador
Screw	El tornillo
Ladder	La escalera
Tape measure	La cinta
Stake	Estaca
String	Cuerda
Level	Nivel

**Add your own useful words:**

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# Compañeros Inc

Take Yourself to New Places

Volun-Tourism & Service Learning in Nicaragua

**PARTICIPANT  
NOTES & QUESTIONS**

**PRE-DEPARTURE  
TO DO LIST**