



Ambassador Trek Nicaragua



buildOn in Nicaragua

In Nicaragua buildOn has constructed 75 schools to date in the departments of Matagalpa, Nueva Segovia, Madriz, Jinotega, Estelí and Chinandega. These areas of the northwestern part of Nicaragua are mostly mountainous and are known for their coffee production and their role in the revolution. Temperatures range from a high of 90 degrees during the day to a low of 50 degrees at night. Community members in this impact area are largely subsistence farmers.



Nicaraguan Customs

Food

Food, at its most boring, will consist of rice and beans, commonly stir-fried together as gallo pinto. At the other extreme, you may find yourself up against some grilled iguana. In between is stringy beef, all manner of tasty fruits, fried cheeses, and soups. Try them all, if for nothing more than the story you can tell later. If you aren't hungry or don't want



to try something, decline it with sensitivity, not with an "ugh"! Remember that this is the food that the community members will eat every day and call their own.

As food is valuable, you will find that people rarely leave uneaten portions on their plates. At the same time, your host family will likely give you huge portions. Try to avoid wasting by asking for less before you start eating. Practice some easy phrases with buildOn staff to communicate this.

Greetings

A simple "adios" or "buenos dias" or "buenas tardes" when passing someone on the road goes a long way. Don't just smile. Speak! When going to someone's house, it's polite to announce your presence at the outside gate before entering.

Language

Rural Nicaraguan Spanish can be very open, with curses and colorful language common for anyone. It's not necessarily a good example to follow. Be aware of what you are learning, and if you have any doubts about the meaning of a phrase that some community members are trying to teach you (especially if they are laughing a lot when you say it), check with the buildOn Spanish-speaking staff.

Being a guest

Your host family may feel more comfortable treating you as a guest, as a foreign "chele," rather than a part of the family. Some easy ways to make yourself feel at home are taking interest in the cooking, learning to do simple chores by yourself (drawing the well water for bathing), playing with the kids or helping them with homework, accompanying the father out to the fields, etc.

Male and female roles

Gender roles are traditionally defined in rural Nicaragua: Women cook and clean and men tend the fields. These roles play themselves out on the work site too, where, for

example, women tend to carry water and men hammer nails. Don't let this discourage you from doing your own thing.

Female volunteers may find large groups of same-age Nicaraguans paying them a lot of attention. On the dance floor, this attention can sometimes be suffocating. Take it in stride; nothing ill intentioned is meant by it. Still, don't feel obliged to return their interest.



Animals

Animals are beasts of burden in Nicaragua, not pets. Horses are for riding and dogs are for guarding the house. Animals are routinely and unacceptably mistreated. The house dog has probably never been petted and is more afraid of people than affectionate. Treat all house animals with more distance than you would in the US.

Dress

Even in the poorest and most rural communities, people will try to dress cleanly and nicely. When going to parties, church or visiting someone's house, they will wear a clean, tucked-in shirt, or a dress. Try to follow their lead. Stained and ripped clothing is fine for the work site, but clean and proper clothing at social occasions is polite.



Religion

Catholicism and Evangelical Protestantism are the two most common religions in Nicaragua. Be aware that Evangelicals follow a strict code of behavior that restricts things as innocent seeming as pants on women, dancing, and many kinds of music. There's no need for you to do as they do, but be respectful.

Misc

- Nicaraguans may try to tell you that taking baths in the afternoon will make you sick. If you want to take one, just do it.
- Baseball and cockfighting are the two national sports of Nicaragua. Playing one of these sports is a great way of getting involved in the community. The other is not.
- No rural trash collection means that fields and street are often used as trashcans. Don't follow this example. Instead, collect your trash to pack out of the community and, more importantly, avoid buying heavily packaged food and products that generate a lot of waste.

Medical Concerns in Nicaragua

Traveling in a developing country, like Nicaragua, means that there will be an increase in the chance of contracting mild sicknesses. Most of these sicknesses are due to change in diet and climate. In order to ensure that we have a safe trip to Nicaragua, buildOn plans to do the following:

- Discuss with you in detail all necessary precautions (e.g. what foods to avoid, how to purify water)
- Eat in safe restaurants and in safe homes
- Have copies of all medical forms and insurance plans on file both in the U.S. and in Nicaragua
- Establish regular contact between buildOn Staff in the US and in Nicaragua throughout the trip

For groups of 10 or more, buildOn will also provide an extensive medical kit and a WFR (Wilderness First Responder) trained Trek coordinator.

Malaria is a serious disease that is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected female *Anopheles* mosquito. Malaria symptoms will occur at least 7 to 9 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Symptoms may include fever and flu-like illness, including chills, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue. Individuals who have traveled to malaria-infected regions and have these symptoms should seek immediate medical attention.

Travelers leaving the United States should:

- Visit your health care provider 4-6 weeks before foreign travel for any necessary vaccinations and a prescription for an anti-malarial drug.
- Take your anti-malarial drug exactly on schedule without missing doses.
- Wear insect repellent to prevent mosquito and other insect bites. Your insect repellent should contain DEET as its active ingredient. To prevent malaria, wear insect repellent if out of doors between dusk and dawn when the mosquito that transmits malaria is biting.
- Wear long pants, long sleeves, and light colored clothing.
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net that has been dipped in permethrin insecticide.

Prevention:

Travelers to malaria-risk areas in Mexico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and certain countries in *Central America*, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe should take chloroquine as their antimalarial drug.

Chloroquine phosphate (brand name Aralen TM and generics)

**For more information about recommended anti-malarial drugs please consult your physician.*

Vaccinations

To ensure safe travel in Nicaragua, buildOn requires Trek participants to update routine vaccinations, and obtain all necessary, additional vaccinations required for travel in Central America. Please consult your physician to decide exactly which of the following vaccinations you will need.

Have your physician fill out the **Confidential Medical Form** and the **International Certificate of Vaccination** (the small, yellow booklet seen below).

CDC recommends the following vaccines (as appropriate for age)

- Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG).
- Hepatitis B.
- Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.
- Typhoid.
- Routine vaccines, as they are often called, such as for influenza, chickenpox, polio, measles/mumps/rubella (MMR), and diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT).

**PLEASE SEE YOUR DOCTOR 4-6 WEEKS BEFORE THE TREK
TO ALLOW FOR SHOTS TO TAKE EFFECT!!!!**

INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATE OF
VACCINATION
AS APPROVED BY
THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

CERTIFICAT INTERNATIONAL DE
VACCINATION
APPROUVÉ PAR
L'ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTÉ

TRAVELER'S NAME-NOM DU VOYAGEUR

ADDRESS-ADRESSE (Number-Numéro) (Street-Rue)

(City-Ville)

(County-Département) (State-Etat)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

PHS-731 (REV. 11-91)

Water on Trek

Drinking enough water to keep your body healthy and hydrated is the single greatest challenge on Trek. It is challenging both physically and mentally. It is hot, the water is warm, you might feel full, you might feel sick, etc. However, the consequences of dehydration can quickly lead to life threatening situations, so this issue becomes an absolutely critical part of the Trek experience.

“The water in your body, the fluid that keeps you alive and active, leaves you at an alarming rate. It is estimated that an average person at rest on a normal day loses between 2 and 3 liters of water. However, the fluid lost in perspiration during periods of strenuous activity can be as high as 2 liters per hour.” – The Wilderness First Responder

Signs and Symptoms of Dehydration:

- Headache
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Thirst
- Infrequent urination
- Disorientation
- Irritability
- Lethargy

As you can see, drinking water on Trek is no joke! You will be expected to drink 1 liter/hour on the worksite. At home dehydration is not life threatening. However, because of the extreme heat, physical exertion, remote location and lack of medical facilities, dehydration is absolutely life threatening on Trek!

Tips:

1. Purchase 2 sturdy **one-liter** water bottles (ex. Nalgene).



2. START PRACTICING NOW! Try to drink 1 liter of water in a one-hour period. It will be difficult; you might have to build up to it.
3. Monitor how much water you drink on an average day. This will help you realize how much more you need to drink during Trek.
4. If you are really good, try drinking room temperature water! Remember, you won't have any refrigeration on Trek so you might as well get used to it. ☺

Good Health Tips

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends travelers do the following to stay healthy while traveling.

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans and bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes.
- When brushing your teeth be sure to use filtered or iodine treated water.
- Boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.
- Wash fruits with soap and water before eating if you can't peel them.
- Take your Malaria prevention medication before, during, and AFTER travel.
- Protect yourself from insects by using repellents and mosquito nets.
- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, do not go barefoot (especially in the shower).
- Do not eat dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized (boiled).
- Don't handle animals (especially dogs and cats) to avoid bites and serious disease (including rabies).
- Do not swim in fresh water.
- Use sun block and sunglasses.
- Prescription medications - make sure you have enough to last during your trip, as well as a copy of the prescription(s).

Some Advice for Women

- Air travel, time changes, stress and heavy manual labor can bring on your period even if it's not time.
- You will not be able to purchase supplies in Nepal. Please bring everything you need for your monthly cycle with you.
- In the village, it will be okay to drop used supplies into the latrine – but please don't throw anything else (other than toilet paper) into the latrine. Keep in mind that the ladies in the village use cloth that they wash out and reuse so they have no waste.



Trek Packing List

Some things to keep in mind

- Clothes should be lightweight and fast drying
- Jeans do not fall into the above category
- You **will** be getting dirty every single day
- You **will** have the opportunity to wash your clothes
- Nighttime temperatures will be anywhere between 50 and 70 degrees
- We strongly recommend **against** purchasing new clothes and equipment for this trip!

On a Cultural Note

Nicaraguans who live in the rural part of the country dress and act more conservatively in accordance with religious and cultural traditions. We, as visitors, will respect the modest dress code.

- No strappy tank tops! (sleeveless is okay as long as shoulders are covered)
- All shoes on the worksite **MUST** be closed-toed!
- All pants (males and females) must be past the knees!
- All shirts must cover your stomach and undergarments at all times!

Whatever you pack you should be able to carry (not wheel) for ½ mile.

Carry-On Bag

- ❑ One form of I.D. other than your passport
- ❑ 1 **empty** 1 liter water bottle
- ❑ spending money
- ❑ malaria medication and any other prescription medications
- ❑ watch
- ❑ basic toiletries (toothbrush, feminine products, no liquids over 3 ounces)
- ❑ 1 set of clothes (in case your checked bag is lost)
- ❑ 1 lightweight jacket or long sleeve t-shirt (airplanes can be chilly)
- ❑ sunglasses
- ❑ reading material or a deck of cards for the plane or layover time in airport
- ❑ personal camera and replacement batteries



All liquids, gels and aerosols must be in three-ounce or smaller containers. Larger containers that are half-full or toothpaste tubes rolled up are not allowed. **Each container must be three ounces or smaller.**

All liquids, gels and aerosols must be placed in a single, quart-size, zip-top, clear plastic bag. Gallon size bags or bags that are not zip-top such as fold-over sandwich bags are not allowed.

Each traveler can use only one, quart-size, zip-top, clear plastic bag.

Each traveler must remove their quart-sized plastic, zip-top bag from their carry-on and place it in a bin or on the conveyor belt for X-ray screening. X-raying separately will allow TSA security officers to more easily examine the declared items.

Checked Bag for one week in the village

- ❑ 2 pairs of lightweight pants or capris for work (these will get very dirty!)
- ❑ 1-2 pairs of lightweight pants or capris for hanging out around the village
- ❑ 1 calf or ankle length skirt for hanging out (optional)
- ❑ 5 t-shirts
- ❑ 1 pair of warm sweatpants/pajama pants for sleeping
- ❑ sneakers or other close-toed shoes (for work)
- ❑ flip flops (for bathing)
- ❑ 3 pairs of socks
- ❑ 5 pairs of cotton underwear
- ❑ 2 bras (consider sports bras for work)
- ❑ work gloves
- ❑ hat, visor or bandana
- ❑ a gift for your host family (see guidelines)
- ❑ small towel (not a hand towel, but not a beach towel)
- ❑ sheet and blanket (or sleeping bag)
- ❑ sweatshirt (can be the one you wear on the plane)
- ❑ rain jacket
- ❑ toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, deodorant, shampoo, feminine products)
- ❑ sun block SPF 30 or higher
- ❑ insect repellent with at least 30% DEET (NO aerosol spray cans)
- ❑ 1 roll of toilet paper
- ❑ small pillow (optional – you can always role up a sweatshirt)
- ❑ 1 additional water bottle (1 liter)
- ❑ hand sanitizer or baby wipes (optional)
- ❑ small zip lock of powdered laundry detergent or laundry soap tablets
- ❑ 2-3 extra zip lock bags
- ❑ 2-3 extra plastic grocery bags for trash and dirty laundry
- ❑ alarm clock
- ❑ flashlight with extra batteries
- ❑ powdered Gatorade to flavor water

Remember, if you are buying new items to take on Trek (such as disposable cameras, toothpaste, or baby wipes), unwrap them before packing. The items will take up less space and, more importantly, you will have less trash to pack out of the village. We will not leave so much as a Crystal Light wrapper in the village.

Anything we bring in, comes out with us!

The exceptions to this rule are, of course, toilet paper and feminine products.

Host Family Gifts

It is appropriate to give your host family a small token of appreciation for their hospitality. Remember, the key is to keep it simple, NOT EXTRAVAGANT, and enjoyable by all members of the family. The best gifts are often things you can do with your host family.

Here are some ideas:

- A photo (or small album) of you and your family
- A picture book from the US
- Pencils, pens, erasers, notebooks, or paper
- Coloring books/crayons/markers
- Games to play with your host family (Jenga, jump rope, soccer ball, Uno)

- A small thermos
- Hair accessories (elastics, barrettes) or nail polish

DO NOT BRING

- Money
- Candy/food
- Technology – video games, electronic gadgets

The Art of Giving

At the beginning, during, and the end of trek, it is natural to want to give many of your possessions that you brought from home to your new family. However, it is important to remember that you will have already given something to every person in the community. The school and the commitment to education are a much larger and more valuable gift than anything else that you could bring from home or give from your bags. buildOn strives to keep the focus on building a community and building a school that will last for many generations. Although you may be tempted to leave everything behind, we ask that you help keep the focus on education too. It is also very important to remember that your families are not a dumping ground. This is not the place to leave behind things that you do not feel like carrying home- you can leave them at your hotel if you wish. If you do decide that you would like to give something special to your host family, please make sure that it is clean and that you present it to them. If you leave it behind without telling them, they will keep it set aside for you until you return for your items.

Absolutely, under NO CIRCUMSTANCES, can you leave money for anyone in your family or in the community. buildOn takes great pride in our method of working with the community and asking them to provide the unskilled labor necessary for the construction of a school. If any money is left for anyone, it may be confusing to other community members or even other villages throughout the country. Not only can this cause controversy and conflict within the village, it can also create more work for our international staff when past and future villages ask for money too. So please, be very careful in what you leave behind with your new families. buildOn appreciates your support of our mission which focuses on the importance of education to increase independence in the communities where we work.

Trek Nicaragua Itinerary

Day 1

Depart USA
Arrive in Managua
Travel to Esteli (2.5 hours)
Overnight in Esteli hotel

Day 2

Travel to community
Welcome & Covenant signing
First night with host families

Day 3

Break ground on the school
Work and cultural activity

Day 4 –5

Work on the construction of the school
Live with host families
Culture & education workshops
Group reflection
Field trip to other buildOn school site

Day 6

Leave the community
Shopping and travel back to Managua

Day 7

Depart for home

Visas

US citizens are not required to apply for a Visa to visit Nicaragua; simply purchase a \$10 Tourist Card (it helps to have exact change) at the airport when you arrive.

