



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT *WORLD WATER CORPS* TRAVEL TO NICARAGUA (April 2008)**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

This document contains comments and observations of past ***World Water Corps*** volunteers. The goal of providing this information to you is to make you fully aware of what to expect during your trip so that you may prepare in a way that will ensure you enjoy your participation to the fullest. Based on comments from previous volunteers, we understand that it is not the challenging and unexpected situations encountered during the trip that made some volunteers uncomfortable, but the lack of foreknowledge of the daily situations. Lack of awareness produces poor planning and poor planning leads to unpleasant results. Thus by providing this information, we hope to minimize the possibility of any unpleasant experiences during your upcoming adventure as a ***World Water Corps*** volunteer.

It has been our experience that as a volunteer, the level of satisfaction or frustration you gain from this trip, will be directly related to your willingness and flexibility to plan, work and coordinate with all Water For People and non Water For People team members. Your expertise combined with the understanding of the social, cultural and economic situation of our in-country partners will result in a great team and a rewarding experience.

Finally, always remember that as a ***World Water Corps*** volunteer, you are Water For People's eyes in the field and your observations, comments and recommendations are the only way this program will continue to grow and maximize our resources as we seek to obtain sustainable results throughout the less developed world.

### **TRAVEL & TRANSPORTATION**

#### **How can I get to Nicaragua?**

American, Continental, Delta, Copa, and Taca Airlines fly multiple times each day to Managua from Miami, Houston, and Atlanta. There are also daily flights from each country in Central America to Managua.

#### **Is public transportation available?**

In Nicaragua, buses and minibuses are the main forms of transportation between cities and towns. Buses can be picked up at stations or en route. In Managua, taxis are available for transportation from the airport and around the city. Within the town of Wiwilí (location of the Water For People/El Porvenir—Nicaragua office), destinations are within

walking distance. Public transportation is available in the form of buses and trucks to other towns within the municipality of Wiwilí. To travel south from Wiwilí, buses run each day to Jinotega and Managua.

**What is required to enter/exit the country?**

A visa is not currently required (as of January 2008) to enter Nicaragua. There is a \$5.00 entry fee and a \$32.00 exit fee that visitors must pay at the airport in U.S. dollars. Currently there are no vaccination requirements. Please check the U.S. Department of State website for updated entry requirements, including fees, visas and vaccinations.

**MONEY**

**What is the local currency and can I use U.S. dollars?**

The currency in Nicaragua is the Cordoba. One U.S. dollar is equivalent to approximately 19.7 Cordobas (April 2008). For most everyday purchases at stores, restaurants, and street vendors, visitors should expect to use Cordobas. In Wiwilí, visitors should be prepared to use only Cordobas. There are no money exchange banks or ATMs in Wiwilí, so visitors need to exchange dollars or use ATMs in Managua or Jinotega prior to arriving in Wiwilí. Dollars are accepted at most hotels in Managua and are often preferred, but the rates are typically listed in Cordobas. Remember to alert your bank or credit card provider that you will be traveling in Central America.

**Will it be possible to use an ATM, Traveler' Checks, or credit cards in Nicaragua?**

ATMs are available in most large cities/towns in Nicaragua, however there are no ATMs or banks for money exchange in Wiwilí, where **World Water Corps** volunteers will be staying. Credit cards are accepted at most hotels and some restaurants in Managua but should not be relied upon. Travelers' checks are not accepted in most hotels and they have not been used by past **World Water Corps** volunteers.

**FOOD AND LODGING**

**What are typical accommodations?**

The hotels and lodges where **World Water Corps** volunteers have stayed ranged from \$3 to \$9 per night in Wiwilí to \$40 per night in Managua. In Wiwilí, **World Water Corps** volunteers should be prepared for cramped and rustic conditions. Hotel rooms have private toilets and showers, however, no hot water is available and the standard of cleanliness is low. Typical rooms are equipped with a pillow, a sheet, a fan and a television set. Volunteers are encouraged to bring their own sheets, towels, and mosquito nets. Rates for double-occupancy are adjusted upward and the value varies depending on the hotel. Volunteers may also spend nights in small communities that do not have hotels, flush toilets, or reliable drinking water. In such cases, **World Water Corps** teams have stayed in churches, private homes, and clinics. Hammocks or tents are recommended.

**Is tap water safe to drink?**

Tap water is not reliable in Nicaragua and it is best not to drink it. Bottled water is widely available at grocery stores, gas stations, hotel dining rooms, etc.

**What types of food and drink are available in Nicaragua?**

Typical beverages include bottled water, soda, beer, and coffee, although there are local drinks available as well. Typical Nicaraguan food consists of beans, tortillas, rice,

cheese, plantains, and meat, or eggs. There is very little variety in food in Wiwilí. In Managua, there are many “gringo” restaurants.

#### **Are local utilities reliable?**

In the town of Wiwilí there is electricity and running water. The January 2008 mapping team experienced no problems with water. Electricity went out every night for approximately five minutes. Volunteers should bring converters for laptop computers as many outlets only have room for two prongs and do not accept the third grounding prong. The 2008 mapping team used headlamps extensively at night for data entry or personal activities because most buildings do not have adequate light at night for these activities. Electricity is not available in many smaller communities in the Wiwilí municipality.

#### **Is the Internet service available?**

Some hotels in Managua offer an internet café or even wireless service. However, many places do not. Internet cafes are plentiful in large towns and tourist cities. In Wiwilí there is one internet café across the river, however past **World Water Corps** volunteers did not have time to use it.

### **CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT**

#### **How do Nicaraguans greet each other and visitors?**

Spanish is the official language and is widely spoken in most cities, towns, and villages. In villages along the Rio Coco however, only Moskito is spoken. It is expected that **World Water Corps** volunteers traveling to Nicaragua will speak Spanish, but in the unlikely event they do not, here are some useful greetings in Spanish: Hola (hello), ¿Como esta? (How are you?), Estoy bien (I am fine), Gracias (thank you).

#### **How do people dress?**

Nicaraguans dress similarly to North Americans.

### **TRIP PREPARATION AND PACKING SUGGESTIONS**

#### **What immunizations are recommended?**

**World Water Corps** volunteers are encouraged to check with their doctors or a travel clinic before traveling to Nicaragua. No immunizations are required.

#### **How can I protect myself from malaria?**

Visitors to Nicaragua should consult with their doctor and use their discretion regarding malaria prophylaxis.

#### **How should I prepare for the weather?**

**World Water Corps** volunteers in Nicaragua should be prepared for hot and humid weather. Volunteers should wear clothes that are comfortable for long drives and hikes. Hiking boots and tall rubbers boots are strongly recommended, as well as long-sleeve shirts and pants made of light material to protect you from biting bugs. Rain jackets and a fleece should be sufficient for rainy or chilly weather. A lightweight blanket or sleeping bag would be useful as well.

### **What specific supplies might be useful?**

Past **World Water Corps** volunteers have found the following items useful:

- Shower shoes/flip flops
- Walking shoes with good traction
- Hiking boots
- Rubber Boots
- Raincoat
- Tent or hammock
- Sleeping bag and ground pad
- Travel alarm clock or watch
- Sunscreen
- First aid kit, including Band-Aids, Imodium, Tylenol, and a thermometer
- A few easy-to-transport, high-energy snacks for long days in the field
- Detergent for washing items in bathroom sink, although laundry is sometimes available for a fee at hotels/lodges
- Backpack or other bag to carry supplies (water, camera, papers, etc.) in the field
- Computer flash drives
- Anything required to survive very long layovers and flights

### **What supplies have past volunteers found unnecessary?**

Past **World Water Corps** volunteers have found the following items to be unnecessary (although requirements may be different for different people traveling under various circumstances):

- Iodine tablets or water filters (because of the availability of bottled water), unless you will be sleeping in small communities

## **MAPPING AND MONITORING ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Who will our team work with?**

Mapping and monitoring volunteers will work in teams that typically include one or two volunteers, a driver, a translator, and one or two representatives from local partner organizations or local government.

### **How will we get to the projects and villages?**

Private cars and drivers will transport volunteers to Wiwilí and to the accessible communities within the municipality. Length of drives may be up to five hours. Many communities are accessible only by foot or horseback. Hikes can range from 20 minutes to all day or multiple days. There are also communities along the Rio Coco that are only accessible by boat. If necessary, Water For People/El Porvenir will hire local boats for river travel.

### **What is a typical day like?**

Each day of the assignment teams will visit one or more communities, depending on accessibility. Teams will conduct activities as described in the protocol. While in the field, there are not many places to get food so teams should always carry snacks. Working in the field can be tiring and the weather may be hot, sunny, and humid. Very muddy conditions can be expected throughout much of the year, which can make hiking very fatiguing. Some communities are along a road and require no hiking while other can only be reached by hiking (in a few instances, several days) or by boat (in a few instances,

several days). Volunteers should be prepared to protect themselves from the sun and drink lots of water. Teams will enter data on laptop computers in the evening or on a designated "data entry day."

**Where will I go to the bathroom?**

Many of the places where we will visit do not have sanitary facilities. You may find a rudimentary toilet, but be prepared to use open fields, if necessary. In the hotel in Wiwilí there are flush toilets, however some of the smaller towns only have latrines. Past volunteers have recommended having your own toilet paper with you at all times and a bag to put the garbage in for later disposal. Bringing hand wipes or gel cleaner is recommended.

**Will Water For People provide supplies for the assignment?**

Yes, Water For People in Nicaragua will provide the necessary forms, writing implements, clipboards, digital cameras (for official pictures), laptops, and other supplies required to complete the assignment. However, volunteers may be asked if they can bring some additional digital cameras or laptops if there are not enough to equip the whole team.