



2015 Packing List: Nicaragua

In the spirit of living counter-culturally in JVC and with the goal of living simply in solidarity, we invite you to consider the packing list here (compiled with the input of JVs in the field), through the lens of the following questions:

- How is what I am bringing demonstrative of my intention to immerse fully into the local culture and live as they live?
- How is my approach to packing reflective of a commitment to being dependent on the resources locally available to purchase?
- How might what I bring debunk or reify negative stereotypes about U.S. Americans living, traveling, or working abroad? How can I learn what those are, generally, and in my particular host country?
- How might what I bring into the JV house affect security, perceptions of security, especially knowing that it is easy to observe when new, “green” JVs are arriving, how much luggage they are bringing, etc.?
**Also please note the baggage policy on page 18 of your handbook*
- What items may be more advisable to purchase in-country, after receiving local perspectives on what is most culturally appropriate? *e.g. volunteers in the past who have chosen to not purchase work clothes in the U.S., rather put their stipends towards having clothes or uniforms locally made or bought, have tended to be perceived as dressing more appropriately in the local culture, often find they receive more respect (from local students, co-workers, supervisors, etc.) initially from the local community by seeking out advice and reflecting this sensitivity to culture*
- What items may I perceive as necessary, though would be a privilege to have (not because of cost but because of access)?
- How might I consider adapting certain habits rather than looking to continue them? *e.g. bringing a 2-yr supply of contact lenses and solution to circumvent that they are not available; consider adjusting to glasses all or most of the time*
- How might the choices I make in items I bring have the potential to hinder (intentionally or not) my ability to bridge the gap of power and privilege between my co-workers, local neighbors, etc. and me? *To reinforce perceptions that foreigners think local resources and resourcefulness are ‘substandard’? e.g. bringing a year’s worth of teaching supplies to be able to carry out my job well – well intentioned and a positive effort towards a strong work ethic, though also begs the question of what does that mean for co-workers who reply on what the school can provide or not provide? Their perceptions of your resources? How they might perceive your openness (or lack thereof) to learn from their resourcefulness, accept their conditions as is, be willing to sacrifice to learn new approaches to teaching and/or understand their educational systems?*

We also encourage utilizing the 2014 handbook as a tool for reflection, here are a few sections that could be helpful in framing how you approach packing:

- Pg. 24-25 (Appendix A, section B. Simple Living)
- Pg. 16-17 (5.G. Living Simply with Technology)



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Packing List with JV input

Mosquitoes are prevalent in Nicaragua (though not so bad in Managua); and it's HOT and HUMID with an average yearly temperature of 80F. The rainy season lasts from Spring until early Fall. Days can be very warm, sunny, and often humid. There are, however, nights and (and trips to the mountains) when long sleeves and sweaters are necessary. To avoid bites from mosquitos and sand flies, long pants are recommended, especially after dark.

Based on suggestions of past volunteers, we offer a few packing suggestions. Use your own best judgment and ask your community for other ideas. We advise all JVs to pack light.

For work, it is important to note that you are expected to dress professionally. No sundresses, shorts, or sandals for work. You will have to practice your ironing skills. It can be an insult to the people you work with if you dress down for work.

Note: Pajarito Azul and El Recreo are a little more casual than the school settings. For the first two, good quality clothing without stains and holes are the basic requirements and chaco-style sandals are probably OK (no shorts); for the others, business casual is more appropriate.

WOMEN

- Pants, capris and skirts are all acceptable.
- Generally, women in Nica dress fashionably for Mass, weddings, funerals, and especially for holidays.
- Two nice `dress-up' outfits are recommended. It is nice to have a pair of jeans. Sundresses and shorts are OK for after work, traveling, retreat weekends, etc.
- A good supply of cotton underwear and socks is necessary.
- Sturdy sneakers (for casual) and 1-2 pairs of flats (for teaching/work), but one pair of `dress shoes' may be handy. Mud and gravel can wreak havoc on shoes. (Be sure to pack those sturdy, sensible ones that you've hidden in the back of your closet!)
- Hair items, such as bandannas, barrettes, brushes, combs, etc.

MEN

- Khaki-type, summer-weight long pants are generally the best to wear when teaching or working. Darker colors are easier to keep clean but lighter colors are cooler. Dockers are fine. Shorts and t-shirts are good for casual wear.
- Short sleeve dress/polo/tennis type shirts are good for work. Dress shirts will be good for formal occasions (weddings, funerals, etc.). Short sleeve cotton dress shirts maintain their form best and are the most comfortable in the heat.
- Bring a tie for formal occasions.
- Two long sleeve shirts should suffice for the cooler days along with a sweater or sweatshirt.
- In most cases, nice sneakers are OK for work, but bring a pair of nicer shoes
- Cotton is the best for underwear. Bring a lot of extra underwear and extra socks: they shred, de-thread and lose their elasticity easily because of strong detergents and hot, humid weather.



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WOMEN & MEN

- A good, light rain jacket is very useful.
- An umbrella (but you can buy a cheap one there too).
- A sweater or a sweatshirt is a must for cool evenings and trips to the mountains.
- A hat and sunglasses
- Sturdy clothes and not your favorite outfit that you'll cry over if it gets ruined. Hand washing clothes with a washboard is not made for delicate things.
- Some bath items such as shampoo, deodorant, razor blades, powder, tampons (they can be found in Nicaragua but are more expensive) but most of these can be purchased locally.
- Contact lens solution may **not** be available, and shipments from the U.S. are expensive and may not be reliable, so bring a supply or consider switching to glasses all or most of the time
- Any medicines you may take.
- Other items to consider: an extra pair of prescription glasses, a cheap watch, English/Spanish dictionary, 6 extra passport photos, needle and thread, bags or containers (zip lock), small gifts from the U.S., credit card (for emergencies).
- High unemployment has raised the incidence of petty theft so avoid bringing valuables or anything you would miss if it disappeared.
- Insect repellent (Avon Skin-So-Soft works well for many), aspirin, vitamins!, sunglasses, **sunscreen**, band-aids, anti-fungal powder, dental floss, chapstick, skin care items.
- A weekend travel bag/backpack is handy
- A reusable water bottle
- A pair of flip flops for the shower/around the house
- A few school/work supplies: pens (various colors), tape, magic markers, and scissors
- Alarm clock (battery type is best)
- Flashlight or headlamp (small & portable, perhaps plastic over metal to avoid rusting in the humidity)
- Guitar and music (if you're inclined)
- Camera (be careful with very expensive equipment) and film if applicable (expensive there).
- Extra batteries or rechargeable.
- A USB flash drive might be handy

DON'T FORGET:

- PASSPORT
- Prescription medicine
- Addresses of friends, U.S. stamps, and airmail envelopes - if you can find an air tight container to carry these it may help keep them from sticking or get envelopes that have adhesive seals so that they will not be susceptible to humidity.

A LITTLE ADVICE ON PACKING: Don't bring your entire medicine chest or wardrobe. Think tropical: hot and usually humid. The idea is simple lifestyle! **Contact your new community for advice before coming down; they may offer more advice or let you know of something needed for the house.**