



Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions:

What currency is used in Nicaragua? Should I bring cash (USD\$ or local currency)?

The main currency in Nicaragua is the Nicaraguan córdoba, but U.S. dollars (USD \$) are also widely accepted. Please check online for the latest exchange rate to the USD \$. Most hotels, restaurants, shops, etc. accept credit cards as well.

It is generally a good idea to have some cash on you (in either or both currency). ATMs are available at the airport and at banks throughout the country, if you prefer to have local currency. There are also money exchange operators at the airport, but the exchange rate is never as favorable as the ATM machines. Please be aware that if you pay in USD \$, merchants will give you any change in córdoba.

What is the tipping policy in Nicaragua?

Tipping in Nicaragua does not follow the same practice as U.S. culture. A nominal tip is usually given, though many restaurants and other vendors automatically add a 10% or 15% service charge. Of course, you can always leave more, if you like. If in doubt, the general advice is to leave a 10% tip.

Do I need a visa to enter Nicaragua?

For U.S. citizens, a tourist visa is given on arrival at the airport. The charge for this fee is USD \$10. Make sure to bring cash (in USD \$) for this purpose, specifically new bills without any tears or marks.

For other nationalities, please check with your country's embassy for specific visa entry requirements.

What is the COVID protocol to enter and exit the country? *(updated as of June 28, 2022)*

Entry:

- Travelers who are fully vaccinated (for at least 14 days prior to travel) can now enter Nicaragua by simply showing your physical COVID vaccination card at airport check-in and upon arrival at the airport in Managua.
- For travelers who are not fully vaccinated, you must still present a negative COVID RT-PCR test to the airline (Avianca) prior to your departure in order to enter Nicaragua. This information is then submitted in advance to the Nicaraguan authorities who will then prepare an approved passenger manifest for each flight. Thus, your test results are a requirement of both the airline and the Nicaraguan government.
 - Due to very restrictive time constraints, you must get a RT-PCR test that guarantees to return your results to you within a 24-hour period.
 - Your COVID RT-PCR test must be taken no more than 72 hours before your scheduled time of arrival in Nicaragua and your results sent to the

airline no later than 36 hours before your scheduled flight departure time. Please adhere to this timeline carefully!

- Due to strict Nicaraguan government requirements, your COVID test results must be printed on a lab / company letterhead and / or stamped or sealed by the lab or testing company.

Exit:

- A COVID test is no longer needed for reentry to the United States for citizens of the United States. If you are traveling from another country, please check with your country's embassy or central health authority for specific information on reentry requirements.

Which vaccinations are required to enter Nicaragua?

Yellow fever vaccination is required if entering Nicaragua from a yellow fever infected country (please check the CDC website for updated guidelines). If this applies to you, you will need to have the physical vaccination card to present as proof either at flight check-in or upon entry at the airport.

According to current CDC recommendations, the following vaccines are *recommended* when travelling to Nicaragua, but it is your personal responsibility to discuss with a doctor or travel clinic to decide what is best for you:

- Routine vaccinations
- COVID-19
- Typhoid
- Hepatitis A and B
- Measles
- Rabies
- Yellow Fever (*mandatory if you come from or have visited a country that is at risk of yellow fever infection)
- Malaria medicine (*in certain parts of the country)

Are there mosquitoes in Nicaragua?

Yes. The CDC currently advises that the following regions in particular have a risk of transmission of malaria or other mosquito-born illnesses:

- Región Autónoma Atlántico Norte (RAAN) and Región Autónoma Atlántico Sur (RAAS)
- Rare cases in the departments of Boaco, Chinandega, Estelí, Jinotega, León, Matagalpa, and Nueva Segovia
- No malaria transmission in Managua (the capital)

At Vera Eco-Resort, mosquitoes are uncommon, but they are present. Prevention is the best strategy for minimizing risk of bites. Many guests find it unnecessary to use bug repellent, but you may wish to bring some just in case. If so, we recommend that you bring repellent made from natural products, as we do not use any harsh synthetic chemicals on our property. If you do decide to bring bug repellent with Deet, please do not bring anything stronger than 35%, as it can be damaging to both the environment and your own skin / health.

Is the country easy to navigate for people with disabilities?

People with mobility issues may have a hard time navigating Nicaragua because of uneven roads and paths, and a lack of sidewalks, ramps, or disability access in general. This is also the case for people with visual impairment. People who are deaf or hard of hearing may face challenges as well, as proficiency in Nicaraguan Sign Language or other sign languages is not widespread.

When designing Vera Eco-Resort and Escuela Vera Angelita, however, we strived to create a campus that was accessible for those with mobility issues. We have ramp access connecting all the main buildings of the school and eco-resort. The farm area is accessible through electric golf carts.

We will always do our best to make the proper accommodations for all of our guests, so if you have special considerations that we should be aware of, please let us know in advance how best we can ensure a smooth and enjoyable experience for you.

How does cell phone service work in Nicaragua?

Before departure, speak with your phone service provider directly to inquire about international service options, if you wish to use your phone in Nicaragua. While cell phone service is quite ubiquitous in most urban centers in the country, you may have a harder time finding a signal while driving or in rural areas.

As an alternative option, we highly recommend downloading WhatsApp on your phone and using that platform for text and phone calls (to other WhatsApp users). All you need is to be connected to a wifi network for it to work.

What weather should I expect in Nicaragua?

The country is generally hot all year long because of its position close to the Equator. However, Matagalpa is in the mountainous north and is generally much cooler than the capital, beaches, or most other parts of the country. Vera Eco-Resort is at an even higher elevation than Matagalpa and is a sort of micro-climate that is typically a few degrees cooler than the city.

Mid-November to mid-May is the “dry season”, which typically sees warmer temperatures and less precipitation. The later in the season, the higher the temperatures typically, with March and April typically being the warmest months. The wet season runs from mid-May through mid-November and sees cooler temperatures and much more frequent rains. There is typically a 3-4 week lull in the rains from mid-July thru mid- August, which is called the “*canicula*”, though the exact timing varies from year to year.

In general, at Vera Eco-Resort, you can expect temperatures in the 60s – 90s during the dry season and 50s – 70s during the wet season, though please keep in mind that these are averages only. Please also note that it rains frequently at Vera Eco-Resort throughout the year, though rains are markedly heavier and more frequent during the rainy season.

What type of electric plugs is used in Nicaragua?

Nicaragua uses the same plugs as in the US. You do not need to bring an electrical adaptor.

What else is there to do and see in Nicaragua?

Nicaragua has a lot to offer! Popular places to visit include the charming colonial town of Granada, which is located on the shores of Lake Nicaragua. The northern city of Leon also features a lot of charming architecture and history, and the city of Chinandega is home to the Flor de Caña rum factory. Ometepe Island, located in Lake Nicaragua, is a stunning landscape surrounding 2 volcanoes – one active, one dormant. Most visitors to Nicaragua visit the beaches on the Pacific side of the country, especially the southern town of San Juan del Sur. Popoyo is another great beach area, if you are looking for a relaxing time. On the other side of the country, the Corn Islands (Big Corn & Little Corn) also offer breathtaking ocean views and a totally different cultural experience.

Travel:

Is Nicaragua a safe country for tourists?

Nicaragua is known as the safest country in Central America, even more so than Costa Rica. Nicaragua does not have the gangs, drug trade or violent crime that most other nations in the region experience regularly. Of course, be mindful of pickpockets and other petty criminals when you walk around, especially in Managua.

Vera Eco-Resort is also probably one of the safest and most well-protected properties in the country. We have over 90 security cameras watching over the grounds that are recording at all times, and we have an entire team of security professionals on guard 24/7 (typically 6 or 7 guards at any given time). We always keep at least one guard stationed at the guest villas specifically, keeping a close eye on everything and ensuring the safety of our visitors and their property.

Do most people speak English?

Most people do not speak English fluently, but most local merchants who work in the tourism sector will be able to understand you if you speak simply. Workers in international stores and hotels will have a higher level of fluency.

What are the best times to visit?

Any time of year is possible, though heavy rains can limit outdoor activities. The months of November through May feature warmer temperatures and less rain, and there is a 3-4 week lull in the rains every year from mid-July through mid-August. Please keep in mind that Vera Eco-Resort is located in the mountains in a 'cloud forest' and rain is frequent all year.

Are there specific times of the year that we should plan on traveling to Nicaragua for cultural activities?

- From January 5-18, the city of Matagalpa organizes "Dariana Day" to honor Ruben Dario. The festival boasts a poetry competition, floats, cultural art performances.
- During the second week of February, Granada holds the International Poetry Festival, which gathers more than 150 poets from all over the world.
- Managua holds a Youth and Music Festival the second weekend of February.
- Granada has a Folklore, Gastronomy, and Handicraft festival the third weekend of March.

- On March 24, Managua holds a very popular Joy for Life Carnival, where people from all over the country gather to choose a “Queen of the Fiesta.”
- On June 9 and 10, the Isla de Ometepe celebrates UNESCO’s presence in the country. Local artisans showcase their work while Nicaraguan music and food are presented.
- September 15 is Nicaraguan Independence Day.
- November 2 is All Souls Day.
- At the end of November, Playa Del Sur organizes the Latin America Surf Competition. The event lasts for a week and showcase the best surfers of Central and South America.
- On December 7, all over the country at 6pm, thousands of people go on the streets and pay homage to the Virgin Mary.

Is Nicaragua safe for LGBTQ+ travelers?

Though the country is very religious, same sex relationships were decriminalized in 2008. In the capital, there are quite a few gay bars. In rural areas, LGBTQ+ tourists may want to use discretion, as tolerance for same sex relationships is not as high as in big cities.

Is Nicaragua a family-friendly destination?

Yes! Nicaragua is typically very safe and has a lot of activities on offer that would be enjoyable for guests of all ages.

What is the food like in Nicaragua?

Some typical Nicaraguan dishes includes *gallo pinto* (a mix of rice, beans, and onions fried together), *maduro* (fried plantains), *nacatamales* (a version of the Mexican tamales, often made with pork or potatoes), *guerilla* (sweet baby corn discs often served with cheese or butter), *caballo ballo* (a mixed platter of grilled meats & vegetables), and *quesillos* (a street food which consists of a tortilla wrapped around white cheese & pickled onions and topped with cream). Given its climate, the country also produces a wide range of delicious, tropical fruits. Coffee culture is strong throughout the country, as well. Nicaragua produces some of the best rum in the world too.

What else is there to see and do in Matagalpa?

The mountains around Matagalpa (and in the northern part of the country in general) produce some truly stunning landscapes. Hiking and other outdoor adventures like kayaking provide a great way to experience nature. The city itself has some lovely churches and cathedrals, town plazas / squares, chocolate factory & chocolate shop, coffee shops, restaurants, etc. There is a waterfall nearby called Cascada Blanca that is a popular spot as well. We can help you arrange a day trip outside of the resort if you desire.

[Vera Angelita School:](#)

As a donor visiting my sponsored student, what gifts can I bring?

As one of our generous student sponsors, we know you may be eager to connect with your sponsored student directly, which is why we are enabling virtual exchanges, a standard mail service, and in-person visits. While we are so grateful for all the excitement and generosity of our sponsors in wanting to give gifts to your sponsored students, we have specific guidelines that we would now like to share with you in order to ensure that

all students feel equally loved and supported throughout their academic and personal journey at Escuela Vera Angelita.

While every student at EVA will have a sponsor, every student-sponsor relationship is different. Some sponsors are very engaged, while others prefer to keep a lower profile. There is no right answer regarding how involved you would like to be as a sponsor – it is entirely your choice, whether you choose to be very actively involved or not at all. We recognize, however, that these different dynamics may create an imbalance amongst student sentiment, the effects of which we wish to minimize out of fairness and respect to all.

As such, we do not permit individual gifts of any kind. Individual gifts can quickly lead to jealousy, resentment, disappointment, and hurt feelings amongst the other students. Please send all the letters and photos you want, but please no individual gifts. Our students already know that their respective sponsors are giving them the greatest gift of all – the life-changing opportunity of a high-quality education at no cost to them or their families!

However, gifts from sponsors are most certainly welcome if they can 1) be used and enjoyed by all, or 2) if enough individual gifts are brought to give to all of our current students. Some examples of gifts that are always useful include the following:

- Books! Our beautiful library is in high demand for both English and Spanish books. Fun pre-teen stories in particular are popular and help to stimulate the desire to read, especially if they are in Spanish.
- Art supplies
- Craft supplies & activities
- Sports equipment
- Recreational materials (games, puzzles, etc.)
- Personal care items (hairbrushes, toothbrushes, hair ties, etc.)
- Teaching materials

We keep an updated **Amazon Wishlist** ([CLICK HERE](#)) with all of our current most pressing needs. If you feel so inclined, please feel free to buy items off this list and/or be inspired by its contents. You can ship items directly to us (*Visions Global Empowerment, 18800 Von Karman Avenue, Suite A, Irvine, CA 92612*), if you like. Or if you are planning to visit us in Nicaragua, we encourage you to bring any gifts / donated items with you.

If you are unable to visit our campus and are still hoping to create a special connection with your sponsored students, we still highly recommend sharing correspondence with them! We are setting up mailboxes for each Student Villa, and the girls will be thrilled to receive any letters from friends from abroad! This is also a great way to have a conversation with them without having to master Spanish.

You can find our full gifts policy & donor communications guidelines [HERE](#).

What should I pack / bring with me?

Please refer to our packing list for details and advice on what to bring (“Visions - Nicaragua / Vera Eco-Resort - PACKING LIST.pdf”), which is available on our website [HERE](#).

What is EVA's mission?

The school's mission is to inspire and prepare young Nicaraguan women to realize their own aspirations. We endeavor to enable them in leading independent, healthy, goal-driven and meaningful lives and to develop their academic, personal and professional leadership abilities for active participation in the modern world.

Why is EVA a girls-only school?

For many youth from rural and impoverished communities facing many hardships, the dream of pursuing higher education feels unattainable. And to be female on top of that adds a whole new level of socio-cultural stressors. The reality is that girl children throughout the world are unable to access education, employment, and much more in the same way that their male counterparts are. However, it is exactly those young women who are able to move forward in their education and obtain a degree and/or professional training who have the greatest potential for breaking the cycle of poverty in their communities. As Visions is an organization focused on serving society's most marginalized, our intent is to focus on serving young women – both because they face much greater hardships and because they have the greatest potential to transform their communities.

Why is EVA a boarding school?

Ample research has shown that the optimal environment for a child to learn is one in which the education is structured around the ideas of choice, collaboration, exploration, self-expression, and investigation. In a traditional school setting, however, implementation of such ideals is difficult to attain, as students are often looking at the clock and shuffling from one scheduled class/assignment to the next. Thus, to them, school becomes a chore – something they have to do, not something they want to do. Instruction becomes regimented, and individual attention to students' particular interests and strengths becomes diminished.

To the contrary, in a boarding school setting, the entire day is treated as a learning opportunity. The stress of having to transport children to and from the campus each day disappears, saving everyone involved a lot of wasted time, energy, and stress. Additionally, there is greater freedom to structure a schedule in which students learn and are able to transcend the boundaries of the classroom and of the clock. Psychologically, students feel more free and open, enabling them to be more engaged overall.

Practically, there is also more time to work with the students. When time is not a factor, everything can be treated as a potential learning and personal development opportunity. Rather than working with students only in a traditional classroom setting, you are able to integrate more supplementary educational opportunities such as sports, the arts, everyday life skills, etc.

Furthermore, in a day school, students go home each day to very different environments. In many cases, parents are not engaged in their child's education or put pressures on them to manage various household chores, family responsibilities, etc. – all of which takes away from their potential to distance themselves from these distractions and truly focus on their education. Rather than being able to interact with their peers or read a

book or work on a classroom assignment, students who attend day schools are often forced to do other activities at home.

Many homes in underdeveloped areas also do not have regular electricity, and many parents do not provide (or are not able to provide) adequate nutrition, clothing, or other support. In our experience, many of the children with whom we work also experience or witness regular violence at home. A whole host of external (social, cultural, economic, etc.) factors can put incredible stress on youth, often resulting in youth dropping out of school early, not giving their education adequate attention, and not pursuing their personal academic or professional goals.

With a boarding school, all of these unnecessary stressors and obstacles can be eliminated. A standard regimen can be established for all children, ensuring uniformity and enabling students to focus on what is most important – their education and overall personal development. For students from communities with high rates of poverty or other hardship, the benefits of a boarding school model are even more pronounced. These students as a whole become better educated, more well-rounded, and better prepared for realizing their goals. And in turn, many such students return to their communities to share their experiences and to highlight the importance of taking one's education seriously, as well as to support other similarly situated youth. Over time, entire communities benefit and can be transformed, perpetuating a cycle of a higher degree of education and more prosperous communities.

What type of activities can we do with the students and when can we interact with them?

As a guest / volunteer, you can join the students in their after-school activities from about 4-6pm during weekdays and throughout the day on Saturday & Sunday. These activities vary by day and by student. Alternatively, you can propose an activity that you might like to lead with the students (either the whole group or smaller groups), such as teaching origami, music, a different language, etc. or giving a talk on your career or a hobby. Let us know what your skills and interests are, and we will work with you to create a schedule that is meaningful for you and for our students!

[Vera Eco-Resort:](#)

What is included in the price?

Vera Eco-Resort is an all-inclusive facility. Our pricing includes transportation from and to the Managua airport, accommodations, all meals, drinking water, and onsite activities, including gym access, horseback riding, hiking, farm tours, and service activities.

What is not included in the price?

- Spa services / massages (\$50/hour)
- Room service (prices on menu)
- Alcoholic beverages
- Offsite activities
- Roundtrip international airfare
- Visa entry fee (\$10/person)
- COVID test to return to the U.S. or other country

What can I expect from the time I arrive until the time I depart?

Please check our website (www.VeraEcoResort.com) for a full list of current activities and amenities.

What type of food can we expect to eat?

All of your meals are included with your all-inclusive stay and are served at our Dining Hall. We serve only vegetarian and vegan healthy cuisine, using mainly ingredients grown from our own gardens. We do not use any chemicals to treat our food or coffee, so everything we grow is 100% organic. For those goods we have to source, we always aim to source products that are organic, sustainably raised and healthy.

Do you take people's food allergies into consideration?

Yes, absolutely! Our application includes questions about food allergies, and our cooks will be made aware of specific allergies and diet restrictions when preparing food for our guests.

Is the dining hall accessible for people with disabilities?

Yes, it is accessible through a series of brick pathways that connect with the guest villas.

Can Vera Eco-Resort guests interact with the students?

Yes, all guests are welcome to engage in activities with our students and are encouraged to engage in community service activities offsite.

How far in advance should we book our trip?

As early as possible so that we can plan your itinerary successfully. Ideally, no less than 6 weeks ahead of your scheduled departure would be the recommendation.