

Total Health Travel Guide



Travel Guide

Managua, Nicaragua

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A Note From Total Health

Thank you for joining us in our work at Salud Total. As with any travel over-seas there is some risk involved in your trip, but there is also great reward. Working with people who have so little provides a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction that our current US medical system simply cannot offer. You are taking on a work that will reward you in ways you cannot imagine and will change you in unexpected ways. You will have the opportunity to live with a family in a place and culture that is completely different from your own. It is a rare opportunity to get to know people of a different country in a truly special way. There is so much to discover in Nicaragua, take the time to enjoy it.

Contact Information

Total Health

Phone (614) 398-1210

Email admin@totalhealth.org

Mail P.O. Box 424, Lewis Center, OH 43035

In Nicaragua (country code is 011 and area code is 504, yes they are 8 digit numbers)

Angel Amador home 2254-7941 cell 8677-8031

Walter Bonilla home 2278-5623 cell 8475-9715

Email angel.amador@igcla.com

Contacting home from Nicaragua

- Phones are available but it is very expensive, if you must call home please leave money to pay for the call.
- When the internet is working well, you may sometimes use our internet phone service for calls. Please check with your host family regarding availability. Please limit your time and be considerate of other who are waiting.
- Some host families have email. This is the best way to communicate. It is free and the timing of use is very flexible.

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Trip Planning Check List

- Total cost is \$750 plus plane ticket (usually about \$1600)
- Try to complete the application at least 6 months prior to planned trip
- \$50 application fee (non-refundable) is due with application
- Begin obtaining any immunizations needed (see “Immunizations” on page 9)
- Obtain a passport
- DO NOT PUT THIS ONE OFF!
- Allow 6 weeks for processing
- Required before we purchase a ticket!
- Send a copy of your passport to Total Health
- If you plan to raise support start immediately!
- See “Raising Support” page 10 for more information
- Cost of plane ticket is due three months prior to trip date
- Make sure plane tickets have same name as your passport
- Final amount due two months prior to trip date
- Pack
- See packing list on page 14
- Don’t forget your passport!
- Always call with any questions

Working with the Local Church

Salud Total (the clinic you will spend most of your time in) was created by Iglesia Gran Comision (Great Commission Church). They continue to own and run the clinic. We simply provide medical advice, personnel, supplies, and money. The members of this church play an integral role in the success of the clinic serving as hosts for medical team members, translators, and workers. They use this clinic not only as a way to serve the poor in their area, but also as a way to share their beliefs. Each patient seen in the clinic will also be seen by someone from the church who will share with him or her the fundamental beliefs of the church. **If you are not comfortable with this then please do not go.** You will not be asked to participate, but if your beliefs are the same as those of the local church you are welcome to share them. Please respect the beliefs and practices of the local church. Without these people, we would not be able to provide care in the area as effectively as we do today. Do not be surprised if they share their beliefs with you also. Please do not be offended or feel pressured to agree. For more information on the beliefs of the local church go to <http://english.igcla.com/statement-of-faith>.

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Cultural Do's and Don'ts

The families you will be staying with are part of an Evangelical Christian Church. They do not drink alcohol and you are requested to refrain from drinking alcohol while in Nicaragua. You are welcome to dress casually and shorts are fine. Shorts and pants are normal attire for women. Please be considerate of your surrounding and dress modestly. You will have the opportunity to attend their church services during the week. We strongly encourage you to attend church with your host family, but the final decision is entirely up to you. You may stay at home and rest if you would prefer. All host families pray before eating their meals. If you are eating with them please wait until everyone is served and a prayer is given. Nicaragua is currently politically stable, but is very poor and you can be a target due to your relative wealth. Do not carry large amounts of money. Do not go out without your host family. Do not take walks by yourself after dark. You are quite safe when with a local family, but unless you are fluent in Spanish and familiar with the area it is best to stay home with your host family in the evening.

Cultural confusion

When in Nicaragua you may sometimes see things that don't make sense to you from an American perspective. For example, while many of the families we stay with are very poor by American standards, many of them have someone come to their house periodically to help clean or cook. We normally associate these things with the rich. In Nicaragua, if you are working and have an income you are expected to hire the less fortunate so they will have an opportunity to earn at least some small amount of money. If you come across something that you don't understand or that seems inappropriate please save judgments until you know all the facts.

While working you may notice that a few patients are arriving in newer cars or are wearing nicer jewelry or even carrying a cell phone. Remember that these items do not always belong to them. They are often borrowed from friends and family members based on need. They also do not necessarily indicate wealth. Someone earning \$5000 or \$6000 may be required by his employer to carry a cell phone, but may still live a very modest life. Even if a patient does have a good income, we give care to anyone who comes, regardless of their income. But, we focus on giving care to those in greatest need and it is these people who make up the large majority of our patients.

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Travel tips

You will be given an e-ticket for your flights. Please keep this printed page with you throughout your trip. You simply take it to the ticket counter at the airport and you will be given your boarding pass there.

Your passport is very important...**DO NOT FORGET TO BRING IT TO THE AIRPORT.** Also remember that a US passport has significant value in many parts of the world so keep it safely stored in a secure location. After arriving at your host home place your passport in a secure location (in your suitcase at your host family's home) and keep a photocopy of your passport with you (this should be made before you leave).

Do not carry a large amount of cash. Money that you do carry should be placed in different locations with a small amount that you can access easily. If you were to be "held up" simply give the cash you have easily available. Do not argue with them. Most stores in Nicaragua accept Visa and Master Card. The street vendors obviously use cash only.

After you get through immigration, collect your luggage and proceed out the sliding glass doors. There will be someone waiting to meet you there unless other instructions were given to you before the trip.

They use the same type of electric power as in the US. No need for any converters, your electronics can simply plug in.

Safe water in Nicaragua

You will be provided with safe water throughout your trip. Never drink water from the faucet. You should also use bottled water when brushing your teeth. If you are at a restaurant do not drink anything that is not given to you in a bottle. There is plenty of water to drink at the clinic. It is given in two forms, individual bottles and from a water cooler. It is MUCH cheaper to buy the water for the cooler, so please start with an individual bottle, write your name on it, and refill it from the cooler throughout the week.

Eating in Nicaragua

Food prepared for you by your host family can be considered safe. If you eat out, you should eat only cooked foods. Fresh fruits and fresh vegetables are the primary vectors for disease transmission. Fruits that you peel yourself are fine to eat (such as bananas or oranges). Milk and cheese are fine if you are sure they are pasteurized. Those foods served by your host family will be safe. If you are not sure, just don't eat it. Your host family or interpreter can help you make good decisions regarding food. If you order a drink be sure to request no ice.

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Latino time

The people you will work with in Latin America are very relational and place a much higher value on time with you than keeping schedules on track. Do not be surprised if you get started late in the clinic. Simply be ready to go when the time comes and enjoy the time you have by getting to know the people more. Many Americans find it very frustrating to wait when there are patients to be seen. Don't worry; they are always taken care of. Also remember that in a third world country things don't always go as planned. Equipment, cars, buses, etc. break down frequently. Don't get rattled...just ask where you can help and jump in. Flexibility is a key to enjoying your trip. If the schedule needs to change to adapt to a certain situation your hosts will work it out with you.

Lab testing and x-rays

Lab facilities are very limited. There is a high quality microscope available. We are sometimes able to do urinalysis, finger stick glucose tests, and sometimes malaria testing at the clinic. Ultrasound, and blood work can be done but all require additional money and have a turn around time of 24 hours to a couple weeks depending on the test being ordered. Please be judicious with your ordering of tests since we have limited funds to operate the clinic with.

Culture and language barriers

Your interpreters will usually recognize cultural or language barriers to communication and take care of them for you, but occasionally what you are being told may seem odd. Please make sure you understand what the patient is really trying to say. For example, if a patient says they have a headache and pain in their brain they are trying to tell you they have both a frontal headache and an occipital headache. These simple misunderstandings are usually easily managed, but should be watched for.

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Immunizations for Nicaragua

This is a basic list of recommended immunizations based on CDC recommendations. Please check the CDC web site at www.cdc.gov to obtain an updated list and ensure your safety. It is your responsibility to ensure that you get the appropriate immunizations.

- Highly recommended
 - Hepatitis A
 - Typhoid
 - Tetanus
 - Malaria prophylaxis (chloroquine or doxycycline)
- Recommended for healthcare workers (or anyone who may be exposed to body fluids)
 - Hepatitis B

Common medical problems seen

Primary care medicine

Many of the problems you care for are straightforward primary care problems. You will see HTN, DM, back pain, overuse injuries, HA, etc. Please review the list of preferred medications prior to traveling so you will know what is available.

Tropical diseases

There are several tropical diseases that you may see while in Nicaragua. If you have questions on diagnosis or treatment please talk to Dr. Bonilla. He is very familiar with the diagnosis and treatment of these diseases. You may want to review the symptoms and treatment of the following diseases prior to traveling.

- Malaria
- Intestinal parasites
- Nematodes
- Tape Worms
- Giardia
- Skin infection
- Scabies
- Impetigo
- Fungal infections

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Filling out Immigration Forms

On the flight into Nicaragua you will be given forms to fill out declaring what you are bringing, etc. The first form is the Immigration form. These forms change from time to time, so you may see information below that doesn't apply to your form. That is ok, just fill out whatever sections they ask for. For questions about specific sections of this form see below:

- Apellidos is your last name, write your last name in the space given
- Nombres is your first name, write your first name in the space given
- Document number (or visa number or passport number) is your passport number, write it in the space given. At different times the form has changed here (using the above names), but they are looking for your passport number.
- Passport type is usually ORD (ordinary). Use this unless you are traveling with a government or military passport. If you don't know what type of passport you have, then you have an ordinary passport!
- Nationality, Occupation, Birth Date, Sex, Country of birth, and country of residence (where you currently live) should all be self explanatory. If you have trouble with these ask for help.
- Travel purpose is "Other". If asked just say "Medical Mission".
- Place of residence while in Nicaragua (or foreseen address or travel destination or anything similar) is Angel Amador's house at "La Colonia Altos de Nejapa, casa # 70, Managua, Nicaragua".
- Departure country is the country you just left (Usually USA)
- Destination country is "Nicaragua"
- Airline and flight number are on your ticket stub from your boarding pass, just look in your pocket...

The second form is the Customs Declaration Form. For questions about this form see below:

- Apellidos is your last name, write your last name in the space given.
- Nombres is your first name, write your first name in the space given.
- Document number (or visa number or passport number) is your passport number, write it in the space given. At different times the name here has
- changed, but they are looking for your passport number.
- If the form asks what travel document you are using check passport.

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- Country of residence is the country you live in (usually USA).
- Date of birth is self explanatory.
- Address in Nicaragua is Angel Amador's house at “La Colonia Altos de Nejapa, casa # 70, Managua, Nicaragua”.
- Number of relatives traveling with you is self explanatory. If you have no relatives traveling with you write 0.
- Number of checked bags is self explanatory.
- If asked if you are carrying plants, animals, or fresh food the answer should be no because you should not be carrying any of these things.
- When asked if you have been around farm animals the answer is usually no (unless you live or work on a farm).
- When asked if you are bringing goods valued over a certain amount the answer is no. We are not importing anything into the country.
- When asked if you are bringing goods subject to taxation the answer is no. We are bringing donated items to be given away so they are not subject to taxation.
- When asked to list items you are bringing into the country just write “personal items”. Personal items are usually valued at a couple hundred dollars. If you are transporting medicines also write “medicine for free clinic”. The value of the medicine is \$0 since they were donated and we are giving them away.

Once in the airport you will give your passport and these forms to an immigration officer. They will stamp your passport and staple a visa in your passport. Do not remove it! They will remove it when you leave the country

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Raising Support

Many people traveling on short-term mission or charitable trips raise funds for their trip through letter/telephone campaigns. Start by “name-storming”. Write down the name of anyone you can think of who may want to participate in your trip. Many people enjoy the opportunity to be a part of your work without actually making the trip. Don’t limit yourself on this list. Write down anyone you can think of: relatives, coworkers, bosses, neighbors, friends, old roommates, your dentist, etc. You can go back afterward and prioritize, but for now just get the names down. You should be able to come up with at least 50 names. After name-storming go back and prioritize the name as high, medium, or low. Do not count people out. You will be very surprised by who sends support and who doesn’t.

Step two is to write a fund raising letter. A sample is included at the end of the section. Remember that you are raising support for Total Health to send you on a trip. It must be clear that you are not raising the money for yourself. In your letter be sure to bring the reader up to date on what you are doing, educate the reader on the need, involve the reader by asking for a specific action, thank the reader for their support, and close the letter personally. Each letter should be addressed individually, do not send a form letter with a generic heading. Never apologize. Always give some specific amounts for giving (for example “please consider giving \$50, \$75, or \$100 dollars”). Follow up phone calls are very helpful. **BE SURE TO TRACK WHO YOU SENT LETTERS TO AND WHO SENT MONEY BACK!** You will need to send them thank you notes at the end of your trip. We strongly recommend that you send a letter summarizing your experience along with a couple pictures.

Be sure donation cards are filled out by each donor. A copy of the card is supplied in this Travel Guide. You may make copies of this and distribute them with your fund raising letter. If we do not have the needed information from your donors then we cannot send them the tax information they will need at the end of the year!

Donations should be sent to you. Mail your donations with their donation cards to Total health on a weekly basis. Send them to : Total Health, PO Box 424, Lewis Center, OH 43035.

It is vital that you include a disclaimer at the bottom of you letter. Since we are a non-profit organization and you are raising money for this organization there are certain rules we are required to follow. The disclaimer essentially says that if money is donated,

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Total Health gets to decide how it is used. That means that if you are unable to go or if the trip were canceled for some reason Total Health can use the money for future activity in any way it feels best to carry out its mission. The following should be included in your letter or placed at the bottom of your letter and referenced.

“Gifts to support humanitarian medical trips sponsored by Total Health are tax deductible. CHECKS MUST BE MADE OUT TO TOTAL HEALTH. The donor may list “medical mission” in the check memo along with the name of the medical personnel. Should the trip become over funded, Total Health will use the excess funds for continued medical care at Salud Total in a manner to be determined by Total Health. In the unlikely event that the trip is changed or canceled, or the traveler is unable to make the trip, Total Health will use the collected funds for continued medical care at Salud Total in a manner to be determined to Total Health.”

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Sample fund raising letter:

Date: (today's date)

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Smith,

Hello. Hope you are all doing well. We have been busy as usual but everyone is doing well. The kids have just finished their school year and are looking forward to summer. I am personally looking forward to this fall when I plan to join a medical mission trip to Nicaragua.

I have wanted to share my medical skills and talents with those that are less fortunate for many years. I now have an opportunity to travel to one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere and provide medical care. Nicaragua is a small country in Central America. It is very poor with the majority of people living in poverty. The average income of the families served is approximately \$700 per year per family!

Starting November 4 I will be leaving for a one week trip with a team from Total Health to work in a free clinic in Managua, Nicaragua. Total Health is a US based non-profit organization that supports the clinic in Managua. The cost for this trip is \$1600. I am investing my resources in this service project, but need to raise additional support to make this humanitarian service a reality. Please consider giving \$25, \$50, or \$100 to support this free medical care. Your gifts are completely tax deductible. Please refer to GIFTS below for more information. Since plane tickets must be purchased by August 4 your early response is much appreciated.

Thank you for your interest in supporting this humanitarian service.

Sincerely,

John Doe
1234 Loop Dr.
Columbus, OH 12345
614) 555-1234

GIFTS to support humanitarian trips sponsored by Total Health are tax deductible. CHECKS MUST BE MADE OUT TO TOTAL HEALTH. The donor may list "humanitarian medicine" in the check memo along with the name of the medical personnel. Should the trip become over funded, Total Health will use the excess funds for continued medical care at Salud Total in a manner to be determined by Total Health. In the unlikely event that the trip is changed or canceled, or the traveler is unable to make the trip, Total Health will use the collected funds for continued medical care at Salud Total in a manner to be determined to Total Health.

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Total Health Donation Card

Date: ____/____/____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone: (____) _____ - _____

Amount of donation: \$ _____

Total Health Donation Card

Date: ____/____/____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone: (____) _____ - _____

Amount of donation: \$ _____

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Travel Insurance Tips

We will purchase travel insurance for you. We use Insurance Services of America to purchase travel insurance through Seven Corners, Inc. You will get an email before your trip that has your insurance information on it. It is very important for you to print this and take it with you on the trip. It has all the insurance and contact information you would need if a problem would arise.

The following are some tips from Seven Corners for travelers using their insurance:

1. ID Cards: make sure your team prints a copy or two before they leave
2. Pre-certification: if anyone needs to be hospitalized, needs a CAT scan or MRI or requires surgery, then call the insurance company's number on the ID card
3. If an incident occurs while you are away from your home country, **treatment MUST begin in the foreign country** for you to be eligible to submit claims once back in the US.
4. Coverage for treatment of an illness or injury that occurred on your trip (see #3 above) is available for a **maximum of 90 days** after your return to the US. The amount of coverage is limited to the follow-up home country benefit maximum.

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Re-Entry

Coming home can sometimes be a surprisingly difficult process. While in Nicaragua most people are amazed but the kindness and generosity of those we serve. It is also very moving to experience a time in which we can simply serve others without the interruptions of our daily life at home. Those powerful experiences and emotions are often hard to express or understand after coming home. It is difficult to fully explain such a complex experience to our loved ones, but we feel the need to let it out. Many people even experience a short depression after returning home. There are a few things you can do to help your transition home to be a good one.

While in Nicaragua you should keep a journal. Take some time every day to write down your experiences and thoughts. Coming back to your journal after returning home helps you process your experiences and apply them to daily life.

When you first get home, don't try to tell your family and friends everything at once. Pick a couple special experiences that you can tell them about to let them know a bit of what happened. You should also plan a special time or meal with family and friends your first week back so you can tell you whole story. Everyone will be ready to give you their undivided attention and you can prevent repeating yourself.

Toward the end of your week start thinking about how you will apply your experiences to everyday life. Just because you are cleaning up after your kids or comforting a friend here in the US doesn't mean its not a significant service. Recognize that we all have opportunities every day to serve those around us, and while the everyday jobs are not glamorous, they are very powerful. Recognize the importance of them and enjoy the opportunity to serve where you live.

Finally, if you find that you are depressed or need to talk to someone give us a call. We have all shared your experience would love to talk to you.

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Packing List

<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Clothes<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Jeans/kakis (most prefer kakis and scrub tops at work)◇ Shorts◇ t-shirts◇ Underwear◇ Socks◇ Shoes (tennis shoes, sandals, hiking shoes)◇ Pajamas◇ Hat◇ Bandana◇ Bathing Suit◇ Sun glasses◇ Towel◇ Toiletries (in zip-lock bag)<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Toothbrush◇ Toothpaste◇ Deodorant◇ Shampoo◇ Razor/shaving cream◇ Vision supplies<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Eye glasses◇ Contact with supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Medical supplies for work<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Stethoscope◇ Otoscope (with supplies)◇ Flashlight◇ Personal medicines<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Pepto-bismol◇ Imodium◇ Ibuprofen◇ Meclizine◇ Cipro◇ Any medicines you regularly take◇ Miscellaneous<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ Passport◇ Airline tickets◇ Money◇ Photo ID◇ Credit card◇ Bible/books◇ Journal/pen◇ Camera◇ Sunscreen◇ Bug spray◇ Hand sanitizer◇ Gifts◇ snacks
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