

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN EAU CLAIRE

Study Abroad

Faculty-Led Immersion



**WOMEN'S LIVES AND EXPERIENCES IN
NICARAGUA**

WINTERIM 2018

Program Guide

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CONGRATULATIONS on being accepted to the UW-Eau Claire study abroad program "Women's Lives & Experiences in Nicaragua" during Winterim 2018. Living and studying in a foreign culture is both an exciting and a challenging experience. Past participants of study abroad report that the many advantages of international study include:

Building upon foreign language skills
Gaining new perspectives on a chosen academic field
Increasing understanding of different cultures
Enhancing personal development
Developing different perspectives on U.S. culture
Gaining self-confidence and independence
Learning skills for the future international job market

It is up to you to determine how you can best benefit from these possible advantages. This is your adventure! This program guide is to be used together with the Faculty-Led Study Abroad Handbook. The Handbook has information that is valid for all faculty-led immersion programs. This guide will provide you with specific information for the Women's Lives and Experiences in Nicaragua program. It is designed to complement the Handbook, study abroad orientation and your individual pre-departure preparations.

Please realize that, although this guide contains all of the information available at the time of printing, it is impossible for any single resource to answer all of your questions. We strongly encourage you to contact your faculty leaders, the Intercultural Immersions staff, and past program participants who have studied in Nicaragua with your specific questions. You should also make use of the additional written and web resources listed towards the end of this guide.

Basic questions only you can answer include:

- 1) What are YOUR goals for this experience? Common objectives of students studying abroad include advancement in future profession; desire to gain fluency in a second language; wish to expand personal and academic horizons; need for a change; wish to challenge oneself with immersion in a new culture.
- 2) Given the way the program is set up, how can you best prepare to meet your goals? For example, if one of your goals is truly being immersed in local culture, yet you are going with a group of UW-Eau Claire students, how can you ensure that you do not spend too much time with other U.S. Americans?

The information in this guide was current at the time of printing, but changes may occur at any time.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Program

The Nicaragua program for Winterim 2018 is led by Dr. Analisa DeGrave (Languages) and Dr. Theresa Kemp (English).

The objective of this program is to give students a vision of the social struggle for women's rights in Nicaragua, but more importantly, the struggle of women to claim their place in the development of the country and take action to promote freedom and sexual diversity. Students get the opportunity to meet women who had and continue to have important roles in Nicaraguan history, the revolution, the economy, social movements, and those who have suffered under the Nicaraguan patriarchal system. Talking with them about their societal roles and taking field trips to see different ways that women live will help you understand feminism in the context of a developing country and to become a more engaged citizen in the world community.

Academic field trips will introduce you to a few of the many faces of Nicaragua. These trips include visits to places such as women's cooperatives, women's centers, and health care centers. You will also have the opportunity to engage in discussion with university students, rural women, and indigenous women. Last but not least, you will visit the Masaya volcano, and Managua, the capital of Nicaragua.

Furthermore, the growing number of Spanish speakers in the United States has increased the need for individuals who have an understanding of Latin American culture. This program will help you gain the cultural skills necessary to communicate with Spanish speakers in the U.S.

The Location

The program is located in Matagalpa, a valley city surrounded by green hills. Known as "The Pearl of the North," Matagalpa has steep, hilly streets and clean mountain air. The city has about 250,000 people and is the center of the coffee growing region in Nicaragua. "Matagalpa's true precious stone is a ripe, red coffee bean, the production and harvest of which is essential to the region's – and the nation's – economy" (Moon, Nicaragua). While the city was settled by the Nahuatl Indians, the Spaniards introduced cattle ranching in the 17th century and the Germans introduced coffee in the 19th century. Matagalpa is a good place to explore the beautiful tropical forest nearby.

Our Partners in Nicaragua

Noelia Corrales will be the on-site director for the program. She will correspond with the faculty leaders during the Fall Semester to help answer questions and to learn more about you to match you with host families.

*Tentative Program Calendar**

**Please do not book your international flight until after orientation on October 7th.*

The program runs from January 5-25, 2018. You will fly in and out of the Managua airport.

January 5: Arrival in Managua.

January 6: Classes on the political situation in Nicaragua, and tour of Masaya Volcano

January 7-12: Homestay + classes in Matagalpa

January 13-14: Free weekend to travel or explore Matagalpa and surrounding area.

January 15: Classes + activities in Matagalpa

January 16-19: Field trip to Women's Cooperative in El Porvenir, El Chile community and Mulukuku

January 20-21: Free weekend to travel or explore Matagalpa and surrounding area.

January 22-23: Class and discussion panels in Managua and program reflection

January 24: Depart for Managua

January 25: Departure shuttle to airport

ACADEMICS

Program Prerequisites

To participate in this program, you must **be in good academic standing and have the minimum 2.3 GPA required.** We will check grades at the end of the fall semester prior to departure. If you are on probation, we will need to check with the faculty leader to see if you will be allowed to participate. If you have been suspended, you will not be allowed to participate in the program.

Additionally, students must have taken at least one college-level Spanish language course prior to the program OR sign up for one-on-one Spanish class in Nicaragua (a total of twelve hours, \$10 per hour).

Pre-departure Orientation & Academic Planning

Attendance at the October 7th orientation plus other preparation sessions required by your Faculty Leaders during fall 2017 is required. Times and days will be announced by your Faculty Leaders. Each meeting will include a discussion of assigned videos and/or readings.

Upon successful completion of the program, you will earn 3 credits of **WMNS 422 Advanced Travel Seminar: Women's Lives and Experiences in Nicaragua.**

For students in catalog years through 2015-16, the course fulfills GE-III and 3 credits of Foreign Culture upon successful program completion (*students earning a B.A., B.F.A. or B.M degree in the College of Arts & Sciences cannot use study abroad to fulfill their foreign language/foreign culture requirement. See the university catalog for details.*)

For students in catalog years 2016-17 and later, the course fulfills the Responsibility Outcome 2 (R2): Global Perspectives requirement upon completion of all course assignments.

There are 2 required texts for the course. You will need to purchase them from UWEC's Bookstore:

- The Country Under My Skin: A Memoir of Love and War by Gioconda Belli, 2003.
- Narrating a Psychology of Resistance: Voices of the Compañeras in Nicaragua by Shelly Grabe, 2016.

Credits and Grades

Credits earned abroad on this program are considered UW-Eau Claire resident credits. The class you take abroad will count towards the total credits needed for graduation, **and the grade will be figured into your GPA.** The UW-Eau Claire Faculty Leader will issue grades for the course using the usual UW-Eau Claire A-F grading scale. Grades are not available until late February after you have submitted your final assignment.

Class Attendance

Class attendance and participation in fall preparation meetings, in program lectures, and while on excursions in Nicaragua are required of all students. The coursework will be experiential and hands-on, comprising lectures from local partners and experts, visits and excursions to

local sites, and group discussions. Field trips are academic in nature and may require some coursework. **You are expected to actively participate in all activities on the itinerary.**

Academics during Program

Pre-departure: There will be various pre-departure meetings, either in person or on D2L. Each meeting will include a discussion of assigned videos and/or readings. The first pre-departure meeting will be held during the program orientation on October 7, 2017. Professors Kemp and DeGrave will email you with more information on pre-departure meetings and assignments. In addition, students are assigned to write a 5 ½-page reflection paper.

Program in Nicaragua: During the program, class will meet for a couple of hours most days for a discussion of assigned readings. Each student moderates/leads the class discussion of one of the assigned readings. Students will meet to listen to speakers and participate in field trips to community organizations. Students will reflect daily on their experiences in a reflection journal. Finally, students may attend optional Spanish classes at the Colibrí Spanish School. (Interested students should contact Professor Kemp or DeGrave during the Fall Semester to schedule Spanish classes).

Post Departure: After completing the program, students will submit a reflection paper on their experiences in the program. See D2L for paper guidelines and due-date.

MONEY MATTERS

Information about how payments are made, when they are due, withdrawal/refund deadlines, financial aid, scholarships, and budgeting is in your Study Abroad Handbook.

Undergraduate Costs Paid to UWEC

UG tuition/fees (WI res, 3 credits)	\$1102
Program Fee	\$2600
Application Fee	\$30
Total Program Costs:	\$3732
<u>FLIIE Program Subsidy</u>	<u>-\$1500</u>
Total Payment to UWEC	\$2,232

Additional Costs

Passport/photos	\$135
Additional Meals	\$50
Personal Expenses	\$200
Airport Exit Tax	\$42
<u>Estimated Round-Trip Airfare</u>	<u>\$1050</u>
Total Additional Costs	\$1,477

UG Total Costs **\$3,709**

Minnesota residents may apply for reciprocity, non-residents will pay non-resident tuition.

FLIIE Funding

This program is supported by Blugold Commitment FLIIE Funding for undergraduate UWEC students. While students are encouraged to participate in multiple high-impact immersion programs, each student is eligible to receive BCDT funding for only one FLIIE experience. Graduate and non-UWEC students are not eligible to receive this funding. Blugold Commitment funding is not able to cover the costs of tuition, but will include \$1500/student towards the program fee in 2018.

Program Fee: What does it cover?

- Airport shuttle service for those arriving and departing at designated time
- Housing in host families in Matagalpa
- All meals while in homestay
- In-country transportation
- All activities, entrance fees, and field trips listed in the program itinerary

Not included: the cost of a passport, airfare, some meals while on excursions, laundry, or personal expenses and independent travel.

Souvenirs & Personal Travel

The amount of personal funds to cover souvenirs and personal travel will vary based on your shopping habits, off-program entertainment, personal spending habits, etc. We do not expect you will spend a lot on personal travel as you have limited opportunities to travel during the program due to a full calendar. Also, there some time after the program ends and before spring semester begins for independent travel.

Program Refunds from UW-Eau Claire

The \$30 application fee is non-refundable. **The withdrawal deadline for the program is October 1. No refunds are available after October 1, and if you withdraw after October 1, you will still be required to pay all program costs and any funds already committed on your behalf, up to the full program cost.** All withdrawals must be in writing.

Undergraduate students who withdraw will lose their FLIIE funding. As such, they will be expected to pay ALL non-refundable program costs paid to UW-Eau Claire. A student who withdraws after the refund deadline would be responsible for paying the \$2600 estimated cost, which is the true cost of the program without the

FLIIE subsidy. FLIIE program support is based on student enrollment and can only benefit students actually participating in program.

Currency Exchange

The currency of Nicaragua is the Córdoba Oro. As of September 2017, the exchange rate was 30.5 Córdobas to the dollar. You can find current exchange rates at <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>.

Credit Cards

In addition to the information on credit cards in your Study Abroad Handbook, you should be aware that **credit cards are not as widely accepted in Nicaragua as they are in the U.S.** Only major stores, tourist hotels, and travel agencies usually take them.

ATMs: Credit/Debit Card Use

24-hour ATMs are available in the large cities you will be traveling to. The most commonly accepted U.S. cards are Visa and MasterCard. You can also draw cash as soon as you land at the airport. You should compare the international transaction fee charged by your different banks; the fee can range from 1-3%. Some travelers have reported ATMs snatching back money if you don't remove it within around 30 seconds; others have reported having to wait 30 seconds or more for the funds to be released from the machine.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Additional information on these issues, as well as on CISI insurance, is included in the Health Issues and Safety Abroad sections of your Study Abroad Handbook.

Immunizations

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that travelers to Nicaragua discuss several vaccinations with a doctor at least 4-6 weeks prior to travel. Per the CDC, all routine vaccinations should be up to date prior to travel to any location. The CDC recommends that most travelers to Nicaragua receive the following vaccines due to risk associated with contaminated water and food:

- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid

For a full list of immunizations suggested, please visit the [CDC page for Nicaragua](#).

UW-Eau Claire's Student Health Services offers immunizations (IG, tetanus, Hepatitis B, etc.) and health education on international travel. Tel. (715) 836-5360.

Often, your health insurance will cover the cost of immunizations. **If your immunizations are not covered by your health insurance and you receive financial aid, you may want to meet with the Office of Financial Aid to inquire if these can be added to your total financial aid budget.**

Malaria

According to the CDC, the risk of malaria is present in Nicaragua including in Matagalpa, but possesses a low risk to travelers. Learn more about this recommendation [here](#).

You should discuss your malaria prevention strategy with your doctor. The decision about what you will do about malaria is one you must make yourself. If you decide to take anti-malaria medication, follow the instructions from your physician carefully. Many anti-malaria

medications can have serious side-effects. Remember that malaria is rarely acquired if you've taken the proper precautions. The best way to avoid malaria is to avoid getting bitten by mosquitoes!

To minimize mosquito bites:

- Cover up with clothing. Wear garments with a high neckline (or a bandana around the neck), long sleeves, and long pants.
- Use a DEET-containing insect repellent (such as Off Deep Woods) on exposed skin AND permethrin, an insecticide, on clothing.
- Avoid shiny jewelry and perfumed cosmetics, as they attract mosquitos.
- If travelling on your own, choose accommodations with tidy grounds and air conditioning or with windows having well-fitting screens. Use mosquito netting elsewhere.
- Avoid local preventatives. Many are unproven, such as mosquito coils or Avon Skin-So-Soft. While these are popular folklore insect repellents in the U.S., they perform poorly in scientific studies.

If you become ill:

Early treatment is essential if you do contract malaria. Consider any flu-like illness with fever in a malarial area to be malaria until proven otherwise. Common symptoms of malaria include fever and chills, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headaches, and dizziness. See a physician promptly! Delay in seeking medical care and delay in diagnosis increases the chances of complications. Malaria can occur as early as six days to several months after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Inform your physician of recent travel if you have flu-like symptoms after returning home.

Dengue Fever

Per the CDC, dengue fever is the most common cause of fever in travelers to the Caribbean, Central America, and South Central Asia. This disease is spread through bites of infected mosquitoes, not person to person. Severe dengue can be fatal, but with good treatment, less than 1% of patients die from dengue.

Symptoms of dengue include:

- fever
- headache
- pain behind the eyes
- joint and muscle pain
- rash
- nausea/vomiting
- mild bleeding, such as nose or gum bleeding or easy bruising

People who have had dengue before may get severe dengue if they are infected again. Anyone with dengue who experiences the following warning signs should go to a doctor or emergency room immediately:

- severe abdominal pain or persistent vomiting
- red spots or patches on the skin
- bleeding from nose or gums
- vomiting blood
- black, tarry stools (feces, excrement)
- drowsiness or irritability
- pale, cold, or clammy skin
- difficulty breathing

As there is no cure for dengue fever, the best prevention in all cases for insect bites is using a good repellent (with DEET) and wearing appropriate clothing. Wear loose, long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors. For more protection, clothing may be sprayed with a repellent containing permethrin. (Don't use permethrin on skin.)

Zika Virus

The Zika Virus is a risk in Nicaragua, and is spread mostly by the bite of an infected mosquito. There is no current vaccine or medicine for Zika, and therefore ALL travelers should follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during *and* after their travel. The most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, headache, joint pain, red eyes, and muscle pains. These symptoms can last for several days to a week. However, many infected people won't have symptoms at all, or have only mild symptoms.

In particular, the CDC recommends that pregnant women should not travel to Nicaragua because Zika infection during pregnancy could cause serious birth defects. Partners of pregnant women and couples planning pregnancy should know possible risks to pregnancy and take preventive steps.

Common Health Problems

The most common health problems for U.S. Americans in Central America are intestinal upsets. They usually occur as a result of the change in diet, the different meal schedule, and organisms unfamiliar to your system.

A very common ailment is traveler's diarrhea. It can largely be avoided by being careful about where and what you eat, and avoiding dairy products if they are not pasteurized. If you do come down with it, the following suggestions will help speed recovery and guide your decision to seek formal care:

1. It will usually run its course in three to five days. The worst symptoms usually occur the first day. Bed rest may help relieve cramps.
2. The main risk of the illness is dehydration. Be sure to maintain fluid

intake. An excellent source of fluid replacement is ORS or Oraltys, a prepackaged liquid sold in many countries. If unavailable, the following recipe will provide similar value: one liter carbonated water, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon baking soda (not baking powder), 4 tbsp. sugar.

3. An over-the-counter medicine like Pepto Bismol may help relieve nausea and vomiting.
4. See your physician prior to departing for Nicaragua regarding the possibility of bringing along anti-diarrheal medication such as Levaquin or Cipro.

If nausea and vomiting persist for more than 24 hours, if you develop a fever over 101 degrees F, or if you develop severe abdominal pain, a physician should be contacted immediately.

Health Facilities

There are health facilities in Matagalpa, and on-site directors can help you access good medical care. You will learn a lot more about this during your first days in Nicaragua.

Water

In Nicaragua, **tap water is considered unsafe**. You should drink bottled or boiled water at all times. Brush your teeth with bottled or boiled water, also.

Carbonated bottled water, soft drinks, hot tea, and coffee are usually safe. Be sure to wipe off the top of a bottle before drinking out of it, or ask for a straw. By making sure that you are drinking uncontaminated water, you can reduce your exposure to many diseases such as infectious hepatitis, cholera, diarrhea and dysentery. Where water is contaminated, ice is also contaminated—

you may wish to learn to order drinks without ice. In general, stay away from any bottled water where the plastic of the bottle is not strong or clear, as this may mean the bottle was reused.

When you are not in control of your water supply, consider bringing a portable water purifier, available at most outdoor stores, and boil water vigorously for at least 10 minutes, or use water purification tablets (one tablet per quart of clear water, or two tablets if water is cloudy).

Other Keys to Staying Healthy

- Other than malaria, bugs (mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas) can cause a number of diseases, so you should take general precautions such as covering exposed skin, using insect repellent, and sleeping with a bed net if necessary.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap.
- Keep away from animals such as stray dogs, as they may carry rabies.
- If you are buying food from street vendors, stick to breads or fruits that you peel yourself. (The knives used might be dirty.) Fruits that cannot be peeled, fruit juices diluted with water, raw vegetables and salads that have not been washed with disinfected water should be avoided.
- In addition to bringing anti-diarrheal medication, some students experience the opposite effect. It is a good idea to bring along fiber snacks or constipation medication.

Alcohol & Drugs

Alcohol: The legal drinking age for alcohol consumption is 18 years old in Nicaragua. However, if you are of age to drink, it is recommended that you take precautions to be safe while drinking – such as never leaving your

drink unattended, ordering drinks containing ice cubes, or accepting drinks from strangers.

Drugs: Marijuana and other ‘recreational’ drugs can be available in Nicaragua, and are **highly illegal**. Courts treat possession of cannabis as severely as possession of heroin. Be aware that the police target foreign drug users in bribe scams. Remember, you will be subject to local laws, not U.S. laws while in Nicaragua.

Sexual Harassment & Assault

Harassment: Sexual harassment is commonplace in Nicaragua. Female travelers have reported everything from staring, lewd and suggestive comments to catcalls, and groping. Often these incidents occur in crowded areas such as market places, bus/train stations, and public streets. Women travelers in Nicaragua are advised to respect local dress codes and customs as a way to minimize harassment. When in doubt, dress more conservatively than you ordinarily would while in Eau Claire.

Assault: Crimes against women including rape are reported in Nicaragua, thus women should maintain stringent security precautions. Suggestions include:

- Avoid public transport after dark without the company of known and trusted companions.
- Avoid isolated areas any time of day.
- Keep your hotel room number confidential.
- Lock your hotel room and use deadlocks/door chains while in your room.
- Hire only reliable cars and drivers. Avoid traveling alone in cabs at night.
- Keep conversations with unknown men short—getting involved in conversations can be interpreted as a sign of sexual interest.
- Have someone else join you on excursions

More Info on Health & Safety in Nicaragua

Information on crime, road safety, drug penalties, and terrorist activity in Nicaragua is included in the [State Department Consular Information Sheets](#). It is highly recommended that you read through that information carefully before travel to Nicaragua. Safety in-and-around the countries will be discussed during orientation and Nicaragua.

Emergency Contacts

General emergency procedures are described in the Study Abroad Handbook, and the faculty leaders are available if difficulties arise. You will receive an emergency contact card at orientation; be sure to keep it in your wallet at all times. The information is also on the Contact Names & Addresses page of this guide.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Passport

General passport information is included in your Study Abroad Handbook.

Visa

A visa is official permission to visit a country and is granted by the government of that country. To study in Nicaragua, you will not need a visa before you arrive. However, a tourist card must be purchased for USD\$10 upon arrival. The entry card/stamp for standard tourist visits is typically valid for 90 days and illegal presence begins to accumulate when the card expires. U.S. citizen visitors must have an onward or return ticket and evidence of sufficient funds to support themselves during their stay.

Since you won't be in Nicaragua for over three months you will not need to get a visa. However, you will have to pay a fee when leaving. Tourists pay a \$42 departure tax.

PACKING TIPS

In addition to the general packing information in your Study Abroad Handbook, you should know the following about Nicaragua.

Clothing & Weather

You will be in Nicaragua in January. The temperature will range from 65-85 degrees Fahrenheit. For evenings and field trips, and if you plan to travel in mountainous regions, you will want a jacket or warm sweater.

In the area of clothing, it is best to be conservative. You should not wear revealing clothing or short shorts. Nicaraguan younger female students are more likely to wear jeans, skirts (often quite short skirts), or dresses, and usually wear them with dressier shoes than U.S. women might.

Bring clothing that is washable and does not wrinkle easily. Bring garments that can be worn interchangeably, and which you can layer. Dark colors show travel dirt less quickly, although they also attract the sun! The following packing list was suggested by past participants.

Women:

- 1-2 dresses (fun, "going out" dresses)
- 2-3 skirts (jean skirts are common)
- Longish shorts (mid-thigh at least)
- 2-3 nice pairs of jeans
- 2-3 light, loose-fitting slacks
- Several short sleeved blouses/shirts

Sweater/jacket to dress-up/warm-up
Swimming suit and cover-up
Flats, strong sandals, walking shoes

Men:

2-3 dress shirts
2-3 cotton shirts/polo shirts
Nice T-shirts
1 sports coat
Long shorts
Casual trousers
2-3 pairs nice jeans
Swimming suit
Dress shoes, walking shoes, sandals
Sweater/jacket for warmth at night

Both:

1-2 beach towels
Washcloths
Sandals for shower/pool
Hiking sandals that can get wet
Mosquito net for over your bed
Waterproof light jacket
Umbrella, poncho, and waterproof shoes
Earplugs
Camera
Hand sanitizer
Roll of TP
Sunscreen
Mosquito Repellent

GETTING TO NICARAGUA

Travel Arrangements

It is your responsibility to make travel arrangements to the Managua airport in Nicaragua. We encourage you to consider traveling with another program participant—a travel companion can make arrival in a new

country safer and much less intimidating! You will have the opportunity to discuss travel arrangements with your fellow participants during orientation.

The faculty will meet you at an agreed upon meeting place and time at the airport where you will go to Matagalpa together. **Pick up service will depart from the airport at 4pm on January 5th so you must arrive with enough time to get through immigration and customs. It is suggested you arrive before 1pm.** If you do not arrive at the designated time, you will be responsible for finding your own way to Matagalpa. It is always a good idea to have some cash with you (in US dollars) when you arrive.

SETTLING IN

Homestays

To encourage the maximum use of newly acquired Spanish language skills, all students live with Spanish-speaking families in Nicaragua. Most students will be within walking distance, and all will be close to one another.

Our partners in Nicaragua arrange accommodations with carefully selected host families. In general, only one student is placed per family but some homestays might have two UW-Eau Claire students. The cost of room and three meals a day (except when traveling) is included in the cost of your program.

Information about your Nicaraguan family (name, address, telephone [if they have a phone], ages of family members) will be sent to UW-Eau Claire during fall semester, and we will forward it to you. You may **want to write or call your**

family after you receive the information, in order to introduce yourself.

Financial Arrangements

While our partners in Nicaragua screen families carefully to try to ensure that they have cultural interests for participating, **most** households participating do so at least partially for economic reasons. This is only logical, given the general economic situation in the country and the disruption that hosting a student causes to family life.

Even for families with cultural reasons for participating, it is not easy to welcome a stranger into your home for several weeks. The entire family needs to adjust its schedules and habits to accommodate this new person. In addition, there are very real costs associated with having another person in the home. Receiving some monetary compensation for this is only fair, and most families would not consider hosting otherwise.

If you stay after the program ends and want to remain at your host family's house, you **must pay** your family for room and board. In some cases the family truly needs that income, in others the family may be in a position to charge you less than they normally do. **In all cases**, you should not expect your host family to do so for free. The families need your contribution in order to take care of you.

Keep in mind, that any relationship is a two-way street. It is as much your responsibility to fit into the family as it is their responsibility to include you in their daily life. A few pointers that may help you to fit in more easily:

"Your" Room

In Matagalpa you will have your own room. Even if you have your own room, however, the concept of a private room is different in Nicaragua than in the U.S. A messy room reflects poorly on you and your upbringing. In addition, it will reflect poorly on your host family, as the messy room is part of their house. Keep your room neat, make your bed every day before leaving home, and you will avoid tensions that could otherwise arise. Just closing the door is not acceptable.

You should only invite visitors to your house if you have first cleared this with your host family. Visitors should never be invited for meals or to stay overnight without prior family permission. In addition, be aware that **it is never proper to entertain guests, regardless of their gender, in your bedroom.**

Telephone

Telephone rates are very high in Nicaragua, and every call, local or long distance, is charged by the minute. The program will provide cell phones to all students, which should be used to communicate with Faculty Leaders and other participants.

Some families forbid the use of the telephone, and **all prefer that students use a pay phone rather than the phone at home.** The phone is primarily an instrument used briefly to set up times/places for meeting with friends. If you find it absolutely necessary to use a phone at home, and your family approves, limit yourself to **ONE 3-minute call** per day.

Never make a long-distance call from your host family's home unless you make it COLLECT or if you're using an international calling card. Ask

someone in the family to help you do this. Long distance calls are often not billed until two months later, and the bills may not be itemized. It is therefore not practical or polite to offer to pay for a long distance call. Another option is to make a direct call through an AT&T operator (dial 114), MCI (dial 162), Sprint (163) and have the call billed to your credit card or phone card.

At first it will be easier for you to call home than for your parents to call you. However, once you get situated, it is cheaper for your parents and friends to call you. You may want to set a specific time and day so that you are by the phone.

In Nicaragua, you can call the U.S. using the internet cafes. They allow you to talk in real-time (with a pause of a fraction of a second) and are very inexpensive.

Water

Water is a precious resource in Central America. Most Nicaraguans take a shower every morning, and you can, too--but it should be short, both to conserve water and to keep the bathroom free as possible. Hot water is not to be expected.

Checking In

Nicaraguan parents are generally more protective, even of university-age students, than are their U.S. counterparts. This may feel intrusive to you, particularly if you have been living on your own for a while. Remember that this is a cultural adjustment and respect your host family's wishes. Let them know if you are going out, particularly in the evening, where you are going, with whom, and what time you will be back. Be aware that they will most likely not go to sleep until you have returned. If they ask that you be back by a particular time, be sure that you

are. If you will be gone overnight, be sure to inform your family well in advance.

If you have questions about what your family expects of you, or you feel they do not understand your behavior, talk with them! Open lines of communication are important in building trust in any relationship.

Laundry

Your family will do your laundry for a small fee, please discuss with them the family laundry schedule. Note that women may have to wash their own underwear.

Meals

You will be eating typical Nicaraguan foods with your host family. Expect lots of beans and rice, fresh fruits and vegetables, and chicken and beef. The food is not spicy. Unless you have an actual food allergy, it is only polite to try whatever you are offered. Do not expect your family to prepare special meals for you--remember that you should expect to be treated as part of the family, not a special guest. However, do ask your family to peel all your fruits and to cook all of your vegetables.

Meals are considered family time, unless the work/study schedule makes it necessary to bring your lunch along. Some U.S. students are in the habit of taking their meals to their rooms at home; this is not acceptable behavior in Nicaragua.

The refrigerator and kitchen cupboards are off-limits. You should never just help yourself to between-meal snacks unless specifically invited to do so by your host family. You are allowed to keep your own "special food" in the refrigerator. Be sure to talk with your host mom prior to

putting it in there. You cannot eat the other food in the fridge. Note: the younger children in the house may eat your special food, as they may be used to having access to all food in the refrigerator.

Telephone Information

From the U.S. to Nicaragua: To call someone in Nicaragua you must first dial 011, which is the international dialing code. When calling Nicaragua, you dial 505, the country code for Nicaragua, and the rest of the number.

Computer Access/E-mail

Internet access will be extremely limited and the cost is paid by the individual. In Matagalpa you will be using internet cafes for all e-mail/internet use.

CULTURAL NOTES

Greetings and Addresses

Observe proper greeting and leave-taking etiquette. Always shake hands when you meet an acquaintance. It is also acceptable for women to kiss friends (men and women) on the cheek; men shake hands. Using titles and addressing people with the "Usted" form is considered polite.

Nica Time

In U.S. culture, we tend to be ruled by our appointment books. Time is measured differently in Nicaragua. There is a sense that what you are doing at the present is important, particularly if you are spending time with a person, and that things planned for later will be taken care of later. In Nicaragua, it is not uncommon for a friend to show up half-an-hour after an agreed-upon meeting time, or for a party to begin two hours later than announced. It

would be considered rude to arrive on time if invited to a friend's house for dinner. Relax and try a new style.

Note: The more relaxed time concept **does not apply** in academic situations, such as class or a meeting with a professor. In these situations and other more formal business settings, punctuality is expected.

Schedules

Along with the idea of time goes the idea of written schedules. Students who have studied in Central America sometimes complained that itineraries for field trips are very loose. For example, if a written schedule is available at all, it most likely lists the time/location you will meet to begin the trip, and the general sights that you will see. There will be no times attached to the various sights. Try to understand that this is **not** a lack of organization, it is a completely different cultural framework: in Nicaraguan terms, it would be silly to say that you are going to spend 60 minutes at a specific site, because when you arrive, it could be raining & you'll spend less time there, or you may get into a very good discussion & need to spend more time in a certain location. The focus is on making the most of the present moment, rather than forcing the experience to fit a particular artificial timeframe.

"Developing World"

Part of U.S. students' frustration with time and schedules in Nicaragua may be that, on the surface, major cities there can seem similar to the U.S. For example, there are McDonald's, Subway, and other U.S. chains there.

Despite having U.S. brands, Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in the region. Students become frustrated when the ATM doesn't work,

and they are forced to stand in line at the bank for two hours to complete a transaction that takes three minutes at home. They don't mind the restrictions on phone use at their host family's home until they learn that only 50% of the phone booths they see around town actually function. Keep in mind that this is all part of truly experiencing life in a different culture.

Family

The family plays an important role in Nicaraguan culture. The extended family is often a very large, close circle of relatives and friends. It is not unusual for children to live with parents until they marry--or to continue to live with parents if they never marry. Your host family may include several generations in one house.

Traditional family roles, although not as pronounced as in the past, are still apparent to a U.S. observer. The man is still the authority figure and main provider, while the woman, even if she works outside the home, is usually responsible for running the household and caring for the children.

Gender Issues

Women in Nicaragua are working to make gains toward equality, and there have been many gains since the Sandinista Revolution. You will study these changes during the immersion program. Despite the above paragraph, as you interact with Nicas your age, you may become aware that social rules and etiquette are stricter for women than for men. A woman's reputation is important. You may notice that Nicaraguan women rarely drink very much, and they almost never go to clubs or bars alone.

U.S. students who have studied in Nicaragua suggest that U.S. American women behave in a similar manner, even if it feels a little artificial.

Acting the way you typically would in the U.S. may send out the wrong signals to Nica men—you could be seen as an easy sexual conquest. You will most likely encounter this stereotype anyway, before people get to know you as a person, rather than as a U.S. American.

For women, avoiding certain social behaviors, such as going out for a pitcher of beer with the guys, hanging around men with steady girlfriends, or dating several men simultaneously, can pay off. **When people see you respecting their cultural norms, they are more likely to open up to you more, and to invite you into their homes.** Even if you don't agree with these standards for women, you may get a better look at Nicaraguan culture if you try to adhere to them.

"Piropos"

Piropos (catcalls) are a fact of life for women in Nicaragua. Although they may be considered "harmless" at one level, they often do not feel that way to U.S. Northern American women. For women, avoid wearing revealing clothing. Dressing appropriately may help you avoid *piropos*.

Language

Students generally report that Nicaraguan Spanish is fairly easy to understand. People speak fairly slowly and clearly, and they tend to be patient with non-native speakers. "Usted" is the formal address and is widely used, even among friends and family.

Other Notes

Pedestrians never have the right of way—be careful when crossing the street!

Be sure to agree on a price before you get into a cab, or you may be charged a high rate. Also ask if the driver has a taxi meter (Maria)—if not, look for another taxi, as the rate could be set arbitrarily.

CONTACT NAMES & ADDRESSES

GENERAL UW-EAU CLAIRE & CISI CONTACT INFORMATION IS IN YOUR STUDY ABROAD HANDBOOK.

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(715)839-4972 or (715)577-9045

In an after-hours emergency, please call University Police at (715) 577-9045. Calls can be made to this number 24 hours a day. You may get an answering machine; however, an officer is alerted as soon as you have left your message. Be sure to give the officer the phone number you can be reached at, as well as what type of assistance you require.

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