



Volunteering at Project Bona Fide

Frequently Asked Questions

Who volunteers on the farm?

We welcome volunteers of all ages and backgrounds who are interested learning more about regenerative agriculture, sustainable living systems, and Nicaraguan culture. You needn't have prior farm/gardening experience, just an openness to learn, flexibility, and patience! We are always looking for ways to improve our current systems and/or create new projects to benefit the farm and surrounding community, so if you have a specific skill set or expertise, please let us know.

What does a typical workday look like?

Volunteers work together on the farm Monday through Friday from 6:00am – 11:30am. We break at 8:00am for breakfast and lunch is served around 12:00pm. The type of work depends on the season and the particular needs of the farm but may consist of planting trees, harvesting fruit/vegetables, working on the garden or in the nursery, digging swales, weeding garden beds, animal husbandry, medicinal garden care, organic fertilizing and pest control, building raised beds, watering plants, or assisting with natural building and appropriate technology related projects. If you are volunteering during the rainy season (June-November) you can expect to do plenty of tree planting and in the dry season (December-May) plenty of watering. There are also opportunities to plug into our food processing and fermentation activities regardless of when you are here! Afternoons and weekends are free for volunteers to explore the island or get involved with other farm work and projects.

How long can I stay?

Your stay depends on the available space on the farm and the movement of other interns and long-term volunteers. You can stay as long as you'd like, but we give preference to those who commit more time. Having continuity and consistency within the volunteer program is crucial to the long-term success and daily maintenance of the farm. Below is a basic breakdown of the different stays generally offered:

- **Visitors** – *No minimum requirement.* Guests who are not interested in volunteering but want to have a farm lodging experience. Visitors can make use of all our facilities on the farm but are not expected to participate in volunteer work hours.
- **Volunteers** – *No minimum requirement.* All volunteers are expected to work in the mornings and are not required to partake in afternoon activities or projects.
- **Long Term Volunteers** - *1+ month.* Long term volunteers are a vital entity to the farm. In addition to working the morning volunteer hours, they are encouraged to take on or participate in afternoon projects and activities.
- **Interns** – *3 month minimum.* Interns are responsible for completion of a specific project, and usually work on their projects during the morning and afternoon. They have the opportunity to manage teams of volunteers and are expected to be leaders on the farm. Generally internships go fall to spring or late spring to winter but are flexible depending on needs and schedules! Please e-mail Sabrina Kerin at probonafide@gmail.com for more information.

What is lodging like?

Life on the farm is rustic, but we try to make it as comfortable as possible. Lodging options include open-air cabanas/shelters or a space to pitch your tent (dry season only). The open-air cabanas include wooden bunk beds, mattresses, a set of sheets, pillow and mosquito net. There are no lights in the dorm, so headlamps or a lantern are extremely useful. Our bedding and mosquito nets are in a constant state of wear and may be in use, so we encourage people to bring their own mosquito net and sheets if possible. The more notice you are able to provide of when you can come the better we are able to accommodate you!

What do you eat on the farm?

Our open-air kitchen is the center of life on the farm. Marina, Paola, or Mirtha come up from town to prepare breakfast and lunch, often with the help of a volunteer or two, and volunteers sign up for rotational dinner shifts in the evenings. Meals are cooked using fresh tropical fruits, vegetables, and grains from the farm or from our neighbors, as well as other basic staples such as rice and beans, corn, eggs and fish. We consciously try to eat as local, organic, and Non-GMO as possible and minimize our imports of veggies from outside the island. This means that we minimize the purchase of many vegetables that people from cooler climates are used to having in abundance. We have also eliminated the use of vegetable/soy/corn oil in our kitchen for health and environmental reasons and instead use sustainably sourced pig fat as our primary cooking oil. Please let us know in advance if you have any dietary needs or allergies or any concerns/uncertainties. We will do our best to work with volunteers to accommodate different needs.

How much does it cost to volunteer?

- Visitors: \$25/night
- Volunteering:
 - Less than 1 week: \$20/day
 - 1-2 weeks: \$18/day
 - 2 weeks-1 month: \$16/day

- 1 month: \$400

Aside from lodging expenses, you should budget another \$10-\$30 US per week depending on how much you want to eat off the farm, experience the town, partake in local activities and workshops on the farm, or explore the island. There is no bank in Balgüe so we advise stopping at an ATM or bank in Moyogalpa before arriving at the farm.

*** Effective January 1, 2017 prices listed above will increase by 10%.

What does my pay cover?

The Program Fee goes into the Volunteer Fund, which supports these principal expenses:

- Three meals a day, six days a week and two meals (breakfast and lunch) on Saturday. ***Saturday night we close down the kitchen and eat out in town or explore the island.***
- The salary of our Nicaraguan staff with whom you interact daily.
- The maintenance cost of the program and facilities e.g. new beds, plates, cups, utensils, building materials, farm system projects, and basic upkeep.
- Projects led by our Core Team and long-term coordinators
- Unlimited Wi-fi and a solar power charging station
- Operational costs of the project such as Nicaraguan Municipal and State taxes

Visitors, volunteers and interns also have unlimited access to the medicinal, perennial and vegetable gardens, many of the in-season fruits of the farm, and our extensive research and leisure library.

What should I pack?

We recommend bringing the following items:

- Sunhat and sunscreen
- Towel /sarong & bathing suit
- Insect repellent (*no DEET please*)
- Shampoo/conditioner/soap (*biodegradable only*)
- Comfortable work clothes (*including a pair of long trousers & long-sleeve shirt to protect yourself from certain plants & insects*)
- Gardening gloves
- Water bottle
- Rain jacket (*If you're going to be around May-Nov*)
- Rubber boots (*If you're going to be around May-Nov; available in town*)
- Sandals/flip flops & covered shoes
- Headlamp/flashlight
- Sheets or a sleeping bag
- Tent, sleeping pad & mosquito netting (*Dry season only*)
- Pro-Biotics!! (a huge help with all sorts of bugs and a great preventive treatment. Highly recommended for all travel and especially here on the farm. Get the all natural stuff from a Whole Foods/local natural health store)
- Basic first aid kit
- Yoga Mat!

You will get dirty, so if you really don't want something to get dirty, we recommend leaving it at home!

Can you buy feminine hygiene product in Balgüe?

It is possible to buy pads but not tampons in town. We highly suggest products which have less of an impact on the environment and our composting toilets. If you can, we recommend looking for 100% cotton pads/tampons that are biodegradable and can be disposed of in our toilets. Another alternative would be to look at reusable silicon cups, and reusable fabric pads or panties. We recommend the brands THINX and Diva Cup.

I have extra room in my pack, is there anything that I can bring for the farm?

Glad you asked! Our needs vary, so if you have room please send us an email and we will tell you what is currently at the top of our wish list. We can always use more of the following: headlamps, AAA batteries, mosquito nets, work/garden gloves, markers, art supplies, glue, tape, pens, notebooks, stationary, English or Spanish books, and natural, biodegradable soaps (Dr. Bronners liquid soap preferably), as they go easy on our greywater systems. We also love to receive seeds for the farm and can tell you what we need if you drop us a quick email.

Do I need to speak Spanish in order to volunteer?

No, you do not need to speak Spanish in order to volunteer. While we do employ local Nicaraguans on the farm, some of which speak only Spanish, the majority of volunteers and Core Team speak English. Bona Fide offers a wonderful opportunity to practice your Spanish as well!

Is there somewhere that I can take Spanish lessons?

There are Spanish lessons given at our community center Mano Amiga by local teachers from Balgüe. Private lessons are US \$5/hour and group lessons are US \$4/hour per person. These can be arranged with one of the Coordinators when you get here.

Do you have electricity and Internet access?

Though we live rustically, we enjoy a small solar power system that allows for unlimited Wifi and lights in the kitchen area and main common space. Our dormitories do not have power. There is no shared computer on the farm, but there is an Internet Café in town. People who would like to access the Internet on the farm must bring their own Internet-capable device.

Do I need a visa to stay in the country?

Visitors from most countries can stay in Nicaragua for 30 or 90 days without a visa. As long as you have a passport valid for the next six months, proof of sufficient funds and a ticket home or to another country (though this is rarely checked), you will not have any problems. If you need to extend your visa, it is simply a matter of crossing over into Costa Rica for a couple of days, though it may be possible to do it in one day if you talk to the right border officials. For visitors not from the Americas or Europe, check the Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry website for visa requirements: <http://www.cancilleria.gob.ni/servicios/visas.shtml>.

Do I need to get any shots before travelling to Central America?

It is best to check the Center for Disease Prevention and Control (<http://www.cdc.gov/>) prior to doing any international travel as they provide information on what shots are recommended for particular

countries. Scheduling a checkup with your doctor prior to leaving is always a good idea to make sure you are up to date on any shots.

Is the island safe?

Though the island is very safe, like in any developing country, it is wise to exercise caution when travelling around town. This means not flaunting a lot of money, as your only real concern could be petty theft, though this does not happen often. Overall the island is home to kind, friendly people who love getting to know tourists and helping you find your way around.

Do you provide a safe place to store my belongings?

We provide lockers in most of the structured sleeping spaces, as well as shared lockers in the kitchen for all those needing safe storage. For storage in the dormitories, please bring your own locks.

Is there a health clinic nearby, in case I get sick or hurt?

There is a free health clinic in Balgüe that is able to assist with basic injuries (e.g. stitches) and sickness. For more serious injuries or disease, there are two hospitals located on the island, one in Moyogalpa and one in Altagracia. For less serious injuries/sickness we have first aid on the farm and a great medicinal garden on site. First world care can be found in Managua in the private hospital Vivian Pellas.

Is there a way for me to call home if I need too?

We have wireless Internet on the farm that volunteers who bring their own computer/device are able to use. There is an Internet Cafe in town as well from which you can call if you have no computer. The farm does not pay for calls made by the volunteers but anyone can call into the farm phone at no charge to the person receiving the call. The number to the landline in the kitchen is (505) 2560-1457.

Can family or friends come visit me and stay at the farm too while I volunteer?

We always welcome more people to the farm, though for all visitors the same fee and work requirements apply. We can also recommend and help find good lodging in town.

I would like to fundraise for the farm. Is there anything I can do / is there any information you can send me to help fundraise?

Fundraising for Project Bona Fide is greatly appreciated and encouraged for those who are staying long-term/doing internships. If you would like more information on fundraising needs you can contact mitchaddad@gmail.com.