

THE FOUNDATION FOR RURAL EDUCATION AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
LA BASTILLA TECHNICAL CENTRE FOR AGRICULTURE &
TOURISM

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME



La Bastilla Ecolodge
Simply... Nature!

Jinotega, 2014

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INTRODUCTION

Dear volunteer,

La Bastilla Technical Centre for Agriculture and Tourism would like to welcome you and thank you for wanting to support and share your experiences with us, and above all, with our students.

This guidebook provides the key information that you will need for your voluntary stay in our school. If you have any queries or questions, we are here to help.

We hope that you enjoy our time at the Project. Many thanks and welcome to our team.

PROGRAMME

La Bastilla Ecolodge, is the main business of the **Agricultural Technical Centre**, which is located on the La Bastilla Coffee Farm in Jinotega, within the Datanlí El Diablo Nature Reserve. The farm is certified by Rainforest Alliance and is one of the oldest producers of the best coffee in Nicaragua.

This educational project, which has a focus on financial sustainability, was set up in 2009 by the La Bastilla Coffee Farm as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility programme. The school aims to achieve full self-sufficiency by 2016 as a result of the income generated by the different areas of production which have been set up with funds from The Jacob's Foundation; a Swiss organisation. La Bastilla Ecolodge and its tourism programme represents one of the main sources of income generation.

The volunteer programme that we offer does not discriminate on grounds of gender or profession. It is open to people from all over the world, who want to share their knowledge and skills with our students and community members. The set-up of this volunteer programme has been supported by Teach A Man To Fish, a UK charity specialising in supporting schools to set up school businesses: <http://www.teachamantofish.org.uk>.

If you are a professional or a post-graduate needing to carry out research we are able to offer a range of areas for study including: rural development, sustainable tourism, renewable energy use, self-sufficient education, natural resources, community work, nature reserves and coffee farming.

The Agricultural Technical Centre and **The Bastilla Ecolodge** will work with the volunteer to plan a detailed programme of activities. This will include clear objectives and **the programme will have a minimum duration of one week.**

Volunteer Profile:

1. SOCIAL

The Social Volunteer programme offers a uniquely fun experience combined with the satisfaction through of sharing the LEARNING BY DOING methodology with members of the local and Educational Community. Furthermore, it grants the opportunity to acquire new skills through sociocultural exchange and daily tasks, providing the participants with a more profound involvement than that of traditional tourist services. Volunteers can choose to work both in the areas of the [Agricultural Technical Centre](#), as well as in the Primary School which caters for children from 6 to 16 years old.

2. PROFESSIONAL:

This programme is aimed at specialists in different fields who are willing to share their knowledge with students currently undertaking the Technical 'Bachillerato' in Agriculture. We are looking for professionals who are interested in Scientific Tourism, in animal or vegetable species studies, and who can also give talks to the students on different topics. Specialist input in particular fields is very important in order to both improve our production processes and to broaden our own knowledge and skills base. In addition, this programme is suitable for post-graduate students who wish to conduct research on local subject matters.



Activity Areas:

TECHNICAL SCHOOL

- ✓ Pig breeding
- ✓ Laying hens
- ✓ Stable (dairy cows)
- ✓ Dairy plant
- ✓ Vegetable Gardens
- ✓ Coffee and forest nursery
- ✓ Hotel
- ✓ Bakery



EDUCATION:

- ✓ Primary and Secondary Education
- ✓ Community Strengthening Programme
- ✓ Nutrition
- ✓ Sports

WORKSHOPS & TRAINING:

- ✓ Creating websites
- ✓ Sexual and reproductive health
- ✓ English Class
- ✓ Music and singing lessons
- ✓ Gender
- ✓ Specific Technical Skills
- ✓ Values/soft-skills



COFFEE FARMING & PROCESSING:

- ✓ Coffee nurseries
- ✓ Treatment of wastewater
- ✓ Biodigesters
- ✓ Coffee cupping

ECOTOURISM

- ✓ Butterfly house
- ✓ Hummingbird shelter

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- ✓ Working on the farms of community members
- ✓ Building community ovens
- ✓ Activity groups with the community children

Programme costs

- US\$ 135 per week per person.

This includes:

- Accommodation in a dormitory at the La Bastilla Ecolodge
- Meals in the boarding school. (There is also the option to purchase meals in the restaurant of the La Bastilla Ecolodge. Please check the website for the prices).
- Internet access
- Participation in the activities

All revenues generated by the project go towards covering the operational expenses of the school and to achieving its goals of self-sufficiency.

The programme cost does not include:

- Flights and visa
- Travel and health insurance
- Transport to La Bastilla
- Local and national independent travel
- Extra or independent activities not included in the programme



*There is an additional supplement of US\$ 35 for transportation from Jinotega to La Bastilla (optional). Please specify if you require this service.

*There is an additional supplement of US\$ 130 for transportation from Managua International Airport to La Bastilla (optional). Please specify if you require this service.

Payment and cancellation policy:

All reservations made, including those made by national or international tour operators must be paid in full one month in advance of arrival.

We kindly request that volunteers pay the full amount via bank transfer at least 14 days before arrival.

Reservation Policy:

Please make your reservation as far in advance as possible in order to guarantee a place at La Bastilla Ecolodge.

How to Apply for the Programme

If you are interested in the programme, please send your CV with a covering letter (both in Spanish) that details the main areas in which you would like to assist, your reasons for volunteering, and your objectives and expectations for the placement. Our contact details can be found on page 16.

Requirements

Language: an intermediate level of Spanish is required as very few of the staff and students speak English.

Minimum age: 18

Minimum stay: 1 week

Whilst volunteers are often independent and proactive, you can count on our constant support during your time at the school. If at any time whilst you are volunteering with us you have any queries or concerns, please let us know. We want your experience with us to be as enjoyable as possible.

Support During the Programme

Upon arrival you will have an introductory meeting with a designated member of staff who will explain about the school and discuss in more detail the activities in which you will be participating during your stay. You will also be introduced to the other members of staff and to the students, be shown the facilities, the business areas and your accommodation.

Life at La Bastilla Ecolodge and School

Life at the Ecolodge is exceptionally beautiful, there is a great spirit of solidarity and security issues are very rare.

Volunteers are immersed in the daily activities of the school and the Ecolodge, for instance, sharing three meals per day with the students and teachers. The food that is served in the school follows the typical diet of the region with rice and beans served at most means as the staple foods. In addition, tortillas, bananas and produce of the school such as fresh eggs, cheese and vegetables grown by the students are also served. Three meals in the dining room are included in the volunteering package, however, volunteers also have the option to purchase special dishes from the tourist menu on offer at the Ecolodge, for an additional \$5-8 depending on the dish. Please advise us in advance if you have any allergies or special dietary requirements.

Here are a few examples of how we usually enjoy our free time at the school:

- Play sports (baseball, basketball and football are the most popular)
- Watch television and DVDs
- Enjoy music (there is a choir and guitar on site)
- Go for leisurely walks or go hiking
- Enjoy the nature, beauty and tranquillity of La Bastilla and the nature reserve.



Communications

Internet – The best means of communication at the farm is the internet. There is wireless connection at both the school and at the La Bastilla Ecolodge. Please be aware that we only have a couple of computers and they are mainly for the students use. If you do not have a laptop, you are free to use a computer from the library whilst the students are in class.

Mobile phone – The dialling code for Nicaragua is +505 followed by the respective 8-digit telephone number. Being located in a nature reserve, the Las Colinas community does not have a landline connection. If you bring your mobile phone from abroad, you must ensure that it is unlocked, i.e. that it is compatible with SIM cards from other countries (including Nicaragua). You can buy a SIM card from Jinotega or other cities for approximately US\$10. The two main mobile phone networks are Claro and Movistar. Please be aware that it is only possible to access mobile phone coverage in limited areas of the reserve. However, it is usually possible to access coverage near the Ecolodge.

NB: The postal service does not cover many rural areas such as La Bastilla. Therefore, if during your stay your friends or family would like to send you something by mail, please let us know and we will give you an alternative address of one of our partners in Jinotega city.

Weather and Clothing

There are only two seasons in Nicaragua: summer (November – April) and winter, or the rainy season (May – October). Being located in a mountainous region in the North of the country, the weather in Jinotega is cooler and often more favourable (between 20-28°C depending on the season) than other popular cities like Managua, Granada and León where it is usually much hotter.

It is necessary that you bring comfortable, casual and conservative clothing since you will be at a school based on a farm. It is also recommended that you bring tough shoes and / or wellington boots, as well as a raincoat or waterproof clothing and clothes for cold weather (e.g. jumpers) at night and in winter.

Checklist of Useful Things to Bring With You:

- Passport and other travel documents. It is necessary for volunteers to ensure that they have travel and medical insurance
- A small first-aid kit including medicine for bad stomachs and rehydration tablets (since the school is approximately 20km from a pharmacy)
- A rechargeable torch
- An alarm clock
- Rain boots / tough shoes
- Raincoat / waterproofs
- Insect repellent

- Comfortable, casual and conservative clothes, in addition to warm clothes for cold weather (at night and winter)
- Electrical adaptors (please refer to the “Electricity” section on page 13)
- Sunscreen
- Books / magazines / DVDs / music for your spare time
- Money for additional activities (please refer to the “Money” section on page 16 for a guide on how much you could need per day)
- Camera and charger
- Laptop – depending on the length of your stay and the type of work that you shall be undertaking
- A Spanish-English dictionary

Transport:

If you would like to book transport to La Bastilla Ecolodge, please contact:

Reservaciones@bastillaecolodge.com

Taxi: Jinotega - La Bastilla, Managua - La Bastilla, La Bastilla - other destinations

Contact: (505) 88594541

Dollar Rent-A-Car: Nicaragua: (505) 2255 7979, toll free - 1 800 462 9912

Avis: e-mail – reservations@avis.com.ni, telephone no. - (505) 2268-1838, toll free – 1 866 978

6539

Targa Rent-A-Car: e-mail - rentacar@ibw.com.ni, telephone no. – (505) 2222 4824

Budget-Rent-A-Car: e-mail – reserve@budget.com.ni

Reservations from Nicaragua: 1800 1800

Reservations from USA: 1800 758 9586

Central Telefónica (505) 255 9000

How to Get to La Bastilla Technical Centre for Agriculture & Tourism:

The cost of the journey to Jinotega is not included in the volunteering packet. Volunteers usually organise their own journey to Jinotega once they arrive in Nicaragua (please refer to the “Travel

Documents, International and Domestic Travel” section on page 12 for more information and links to useful web page). However, if you would like some help coordinating your journey to Jinotega, for example, to be collected from Managua International airport please contact us. Volunteers are responsible for arranging the relevant travel insurance.

From Managua you can take an *expreso* (direct) bus from Mercado Mayoreo to Jinotega. If you are travelling from the airport, a taxi to Mercado Mayoreo should not cost more than C\$ 70 (USD \$ 2.75). If you arrive in Managua at night it is recommended that you stay in a hotel or hostel overnight. There are 10 direct buses or expresos daily from Mercado Mayoreo. A ticket costs C\$80 (USD \$ 3.15). The journey should take about 3 hours and you will arrive at the Cotrán (bus station) in Jinotega. Please advise us in advance so that we can arrange to pick you up at the Cotrán to take you to La Bastilla in case you request our transport service.

Information About Nicaragua

Capital	Managua
Currency	Córdoba
Languages	Spanish (oficial), Indigenous languages and some English
Borders	Honduras to the North, Costa Rica to the South, the Caribbean Sea is to the East and the Pacific Ocean is to the West of Nicaragua
Population	6 million (World Bank 2012)
Size	130,668 km ² (approximately the same size as Greece or New York state)
Climate	Tropical
Temperature	Ranges between 20°C and 33°C. A rainy season (May - October) and a dry season (November – April).
Time zone	Nicaragua shares a central time zone with the United States (-6h GMT).
International dialling code	+505 (followed by the respective 8-digit telephone number)
Head of State	President Daniel Ortega Saavedra
Net National Income per Capita	\$ 1,650 (World Bank 2012)
Main exports	Coffee, sugar, beef, shellfish, gold, tobacco, cattle

Sources: World Bank
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1225218.stm

Travel Documents, International and Domestic Travel

Travel Documents

It is necessary that you have a passport that has at least six months validity remaining before expiration when you arrive in Nicaragua. Most foreigners do not need a visa, but have to pay US \$10 for a Tourist Card, which will give you the right to remain in the country for up to 90 days upon arrival into Nicaragua. The list of countries whose citizens require a visa can be found on the following website: <http://www.visitanicaragua.com/> It is recommended that you always carry a copy of your ID with you whilst you are in the country.

Please bear in mind that visitors who leave the country from the airport have to pay a US \$25 exit tax, or US \$2 to leave by land.

International Transport

There are several airlines such as Aeroméxico, American Airlines, Continental, Copa, Grupo Taca y Delta that fly to the Augusto Sandino International Airport in Managua. These airlines offer connections from Europe and direct flights from Atlanta, Houston, Miami and other Central American countries, from which you can also enter by land.

There are numerous international bus services daily between Managua and other Central American countries. The main international bus companies are:

- Tica Bus <http://www.ticabus.com>
- King Quality <http://www.kingqualityca.com>
- Trans-Nica <http://www.transnica.com>

Domestic Transport



The most common way to travel in Nicaragua is by bus. Inter-city buses leave from the main markets. The most convenient and direct way to travel is with *expresos* – express service buses. However, there are also *ruteados* – inter-city ordinary service buses – which are indirect and a little bit cheaper. You can find timetables for all major bus routes on this useful website: <http://horariodeonibuses.com/EN/nj/>. Please refer to the section “How to Arrive at La Bastilla Technical Centre for Agriculture & Tourism” on page 11.

Money

The official currency of Nicaragua is the Córdoba. However, the US Dollar is commonly accepted throughout the country. Therefore, it is easier to find places that exchange Córdobas with Dollars than with other currencies. At the time of writing (January 2014) the official exchange rate was US\$ 1 = C\$ 24.8.

Credit cards are recognised and used in several establishments and banks across the country. If you wish to pay by credit card, you will most often be required show ID. All major towns will have several cash points. Travellers Cheques can only be cashed in certain places. Visitors can live on a budget of US \$15-\$50 for regular expenses such as food, accommodation and local transport.

Electricity

Nicaragua uses the 120V, 60Hz electricity system, so it is compatible with the US, Canada and the majority of countries in the Americas and the Caribbean.



Health and Safety

It is necessary to consult with your Doctor before travelling to Nicaragua regarding the vaccinations and medications that you may need. The following websites may also be useful:

<http://vianica.com/nicaragua/practical-info/9-forward.html?id=9-salud-y-seguridad.html>

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/nicaragua>

Volunteers are responsible for organising their own medical insurance to cover their stay in the country. If you feel unwell at any point whilst you are staying at the school, please inform us immediately and we will take you to a clinic.

Nicaragua is not as dangerous as some other Central American countries. There are more problems with crime in the capital than in other places and travelling by taxi is recommended in large cities. It is not advisable to walk through the streets with many valuable items or a lot of money. Generally, life in rural areas like La Bastilla is very peaceful and quiet.

For more Information about Nicaragua, tourism, culture and general information for visitors, please check the following websites:

<http://vianica.com/>

<http://www.visitanicaragua.com/>

<http://moon.com/destinations/central-america/nicaragua/>

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/nicaragua>

Country Profile and Government Travel Advice

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/nicaragua>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1225218.stm

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicaragua>

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/1850.htm>

National Press

<http://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/nacionales>

<http://www.laprensa.com.ni/>

Information about Jinotega



Jinotega is the nearest city to the school. It is approximately 20kms or 30 minutes from the Ecolodge by car.

The department of Jinotega is located 168km north-east of Managua. With an approximate size of 9,222 square kilometres, it is one of the largest departments of Nicaragua and is composed of 8 municipalities. According to the Census carried out in 2005 the department has a population of 331,335 inhabitants, of which 30% live in the city with the same name – Jinotega.

The Jinotega department (otherwise known as “city of the mists”) is known for its refreshing climate, and for being a mountainous, fertile agricultural region, and in particular, for being one of the most important coffee-producing areas of the country. Despite being an area that is rich in primary resources, according to the Nicaraguan government in 2001, the department registered one of the highest levels of people living in extreme poverty (37%).

Despite the economic situation, Jinotega stands out for its picturesque landscape – with primary forests, fast-flowing rivers and the artificial Apanás lake (one of the major attractions of Jinotega) and the beautiful Datanlí El Diablo nature reserve where La Bastilla is located.

What to do in Jinotega on the weekend

Restaurants, Bars and Clubs

Despite being a small city, there are several places in Jinotega where you can eat out (there are numerous food vendors in the street and *fritangas*), have a beer or go dancing. Here are some of our favourites (they are near the main street and if you ask, locals will be happy to give you directions):

- **Soda el Tico**: this restaurant, serving typical Costa Rican and Nicaraguan dishes in addition to hamburgers and fries, is undoubtedly the best option in Jinotega. It is clean, with excellent service and delicious and reasonably priced dishes (à la carte and buffet) which start from around C\$75 (US \$3.00); It also has wifi.
- **Flor de Jinotega**: a lovely café which serves high-quality fairtrade coffee. It is owned by the local cooperative Soppexcca, who can be seen cupping coffee in the adjoining room. It also has wifi.
- **Karaoke Kids**: known as “the best karaoke bar in Jinotega”. This is an excellent place to have fun. It does not matter if you sing, or simply prefer to observe.

Places of Interest in Jinotega and the Surrounding Departments

Known as the Coffee Route of the Land of Cowboys, the Northern mountainous departments of Jinotega, Matagalpa and Estelí have plenty to offer tourists.

Jinotega: amongst the activities to choose from the most popular are climbing up to la Peña de la Cruz (a hill overlooking the city and which has a crucifix at the summit) or visit the Apanás artificial lake and hydroelectric power plant. For more information about places of interest please visit: <http://www.jinotega.com>

Matagalpa: larger than Jinotega, it is the Nicaraguan coffee capital – it even has its own Coffee Museum where you can taste samples of the local product. Apart from being a lively city, there is plenty to do in the countryside, for example, exploring the highlands and the hiking trails. The Coffee Museum is also a tourist office. Matagalpa is an hour and a half by bus from Jinotega and buses leave every half an hour from Cotrán in Jinotega. A trip costs C\$25 (US \$ 1).

Estelí: a lovely peaceful place. It is famous for growing tobacco, for el Salto de la Estanzuela (a 36m waterall), and the Mirafior and Tisey nature reserves. Estelí is 2 hours away from Jinotega and buses leave from the market in Jinotega. There are 5 direct buses daily and a ticket costs C\$50 (US \$2.00)

Check the websites under “Tourism, Culture, General and Useful Information for Visitors” on page 17 for more information about places of interest in Jinotega, the neighbouring departments and those further afield.

Useful Contacts and Addresses

School Contacts

Address

Centro Técnico Agropecuario y Turístico La Bastilla,
Finca La Bastilla,
Comarca Las Colinas, Jinotega
Nicaragua

Martin Montero

Director of the La Bastilla Technical Centre for Agriculture and
Tourism
Martin@bastillacoffee.com

Belkis Rivas

Manager of the La Bastilla Ecolodge
Belkis@bastillaecolodge.com
+ (505) 8654 6235

US Embassy

Kilometer 5 ½ (5.5) Carretera Sur, Managua, Nicaragua.

Embassy Telephone: + (505) 2252-7100
Consular Section Phone: + (505) 2252-7888
Consular fax: + (505) 2252-7304
Consular E-mail: consularmanagua@state.gov

British Honorary Consulate (Nicaragua does not have a British Embassy and the nearest one is in Costa Rica)

Avenida Bolívar # 1947, del hospital Militar 1 cuadra al Lago,
Managua, Nicaragua

Switchboard: +(505) 254 5454/3839

Fax: +(505) 254 5295
Website: <http://ukincostarica.fco.gov.uk/en/nicaragua/>

Embajada de España

Dirección: Av. Central, 13. Las Colinas, Apartado de Correos: 284, Managua

Telefono: +(505) 2 276 09 66
+(505) 8 889 56 23
(emergencia consular)

Fax: +(505) 2 276 09 66
Email: emb.managua@maec.es