



HOMESTAY MANUAL
2014/15

WOO 101 – HOMESTAY MANUAL

First of all, we are thrilled that you have chosen to "get local" and live with a homestay family. We assure you that it will be an amazing experience, a great opportunity to deeply and truly live the Nicaraguan culture. We would like to help you have the best of this experience, so here are some important points to remember:

- **IT'S NOT A HOTEL:** True to Project WOO's mission, we ask that you behave the same way in your home stay as you would in your own home. This is about the immersion. You have an amazing opportunity to get to know Gigante from the inside when you stay with a family for a period of time here. You are not in a homestay just to sleep and show up for meals. Offer to wash dishes, help prepare meals, clean your room, etc.
- **HANG OUT WITH FAMILY:** While it may seem easier to hang out in town amidst other travelers and at the internet café during downtime, we ask that you take time everyday to just be with your family. Spend time during the day other than for just a meal or at the end of the evening. If you were home with your own family, you might hang out around the house, sit in a main living area and converse, play with the children, etc.
- **BRINGING FRIENDS HOME:** Please do not bring other volunteers to your home stay for anything other than a social visit, (i.e. to use the shower, for meals, to sleep over...) Your family is paid adequately per person to provide food as well as cover costs for electric, water, etc. Having an additional person come by for a meal or to use the shower can deplete those funds. Please be respectful.
- **BE POLITE:** Offer to wash dishes and clean up after meals. Be persistent, as the families are often too polite to let you help at first. But it won't take much prodding to win them over and let you get your hands dirty
- **FAMILY TIME:** There will be opportunities to enjoy an evening or two out with other travelers and/or WOO staff, but for the majority of your time in the home stay, **we do ask that you please do not leave your home stay in the evening after dinner** unless there is a scheduled or planned activity. Enjoy this time to do some activity with your family and get to know each other better!
- **LATE FOR DINNER:** If you are going to be late for a meal, please let your host family know way in advance if possible. If you go out in the evening for a scheduled activity, please let them know in advance as well and discuss an appropriate time for your return that is convenient to the home.
- **ACTIVITIES WITH FAMILY:** Schedule times with your host mom or dad at the beginning of your stay to do some of the activities listed below throughout your time in their home.

- **GIFTS FOR THE FAMILY:** Please do not give gifts or any leftover personal items to your family. This is a WOO policy and we do not want to set an expectation that volunteers bring presents or items. Feel free to leave a photograph or a homemade card or letter to your family.
- **EXPENSIVE ITEMS:** Please be conscientious of using your ipods, iphones, laptops, etc. and other expensive items around your family. Please do your best to avoid conversations around the costs of plane tickets, and other high priced items. There is such a huge disparity of wealth and sometimes those conversations can lead to misunderstandings or conflict.
- **BE NICE:** It's always nice to greet people on the street. You can say Buenas, or Hola or Adiós!
- **DRESS CODE:** Please dress appropriately in your home and around the community. It is a fairly conservative village. Bikinis and short sundresses, no shirt and boardies should only be for the beach. If you are walking to and from your shower or bucket bath, be sure to have clothing to wear, and not just a towel.
- **TOILET:** Toilet paper, tampons, etc. **DO NOT go into the toilets that flush.** There is usually a garbage can nearby for all paper products. Toilet paper can go directly into latrines.
- **WATER USE:** Nicaragua is in its 3rd year of a drought! Lots of wells are going dry... Be aware of water use (e.g. short showers or turning off tap while soaping up).
- **FOOD**:** You will have the opportunity to eat the true Nica Style meals! The traditional dish for a Nicaraguan family is Gallo Pinto (rice, beans, meat and eggs), which is eaten for breakfast and also dinner. You may have some other typical food such as: fish (sometimes whole), chicken, plantains, eggs, cheese, tortilla, nacatamal (rice, mashed potatoes and meat), guiso de chayote (squash creamy sauce), etc. We say: Live like a local, eat like a local. Prepare to explore a world of new flavors!

**If there is something you just can't go without, you can go at the Pulpería (fruits, vegetables and snacks) where you can purchase what you need.

Homestay Activities

Activities with your family!

During the duration of your homestay with a family of Gigante, you will be experiencing the true life of the authentic locals. Due to the full immersion, you will be spending a lot of time together both learning and teaching the family. There are many things you can do together even though at times communication can be difficult due to the language barrier. Some activities that are fun and educational are

- Practicing Spanish: making flash cards with Spanish on one side and English on the other. Because you are learning different languages at similar levels it will be a good way for both participants to learn. You can also take blank paper, say a word and then have the other person draw the object. You can even make a game of it such as bingo, or matching the words with drawings. The Project WOO office has some activities but it is great to make your own.
- Share photos!
- Make a map of Gigante and where things are.
- Family tree
- Make a list of highlights and challenges of your stay
- Another fun way to spend time together is playing music together....whether it is exchanging songs or teaching each other songs on the guitar, (WOO has one at the office for volunteers). You can even create makeshift instruments by filling bottles with rocks or using bottle caps on wire to make 'shakers'.
- Cooking is another great way to spend time together and teach one another's culture. For example learning how to make tortillas, tamales or even take on their pescado (fish), then one night offer to make a plate of comida tipica from your home.
- To experience some of the daily life and spend time with your family you could wash clothes/dishes, it is more fun than you might think.
- **With kids**, a great way to have fun together is through sports, of any kind! Baseball is the national sport of Nicaragua and the kids get super into it. They also love to play catch, soccer, and their own made up games...remember when you were six?
- All members of the family, especially the kiddos like to create artwork, whether it is drawing with pens and pencils or taking it to the next level with markers and paints. WOO has lots of supplies, just ask!

Other Activity Ideas

Work Related

- Fishing trip

Household

- Learn how to make tortillas
- Learn to cook in the clay ovens
- Wash your laundry in the open sink
- Go for a community walk with the children in your family (be sure to have permission from parents)
- Prepare a meal for your family

- Ask if they have a photo album and share your photos of family

Community

- Create a photo essay about your homestay that you can share with your family
- Interview your family about life in Gigante before the tourism hit
- Interview your family about their lives
- Investigate and construct a family tree
- Daily Teach/learn English and Spanish Exchange

This is both a very rewarding and challenging experience! Look after yourself; anything that feels particularly hard, please talk to WOOsters. We might know tricks or tips to help out. We have all been through this before!