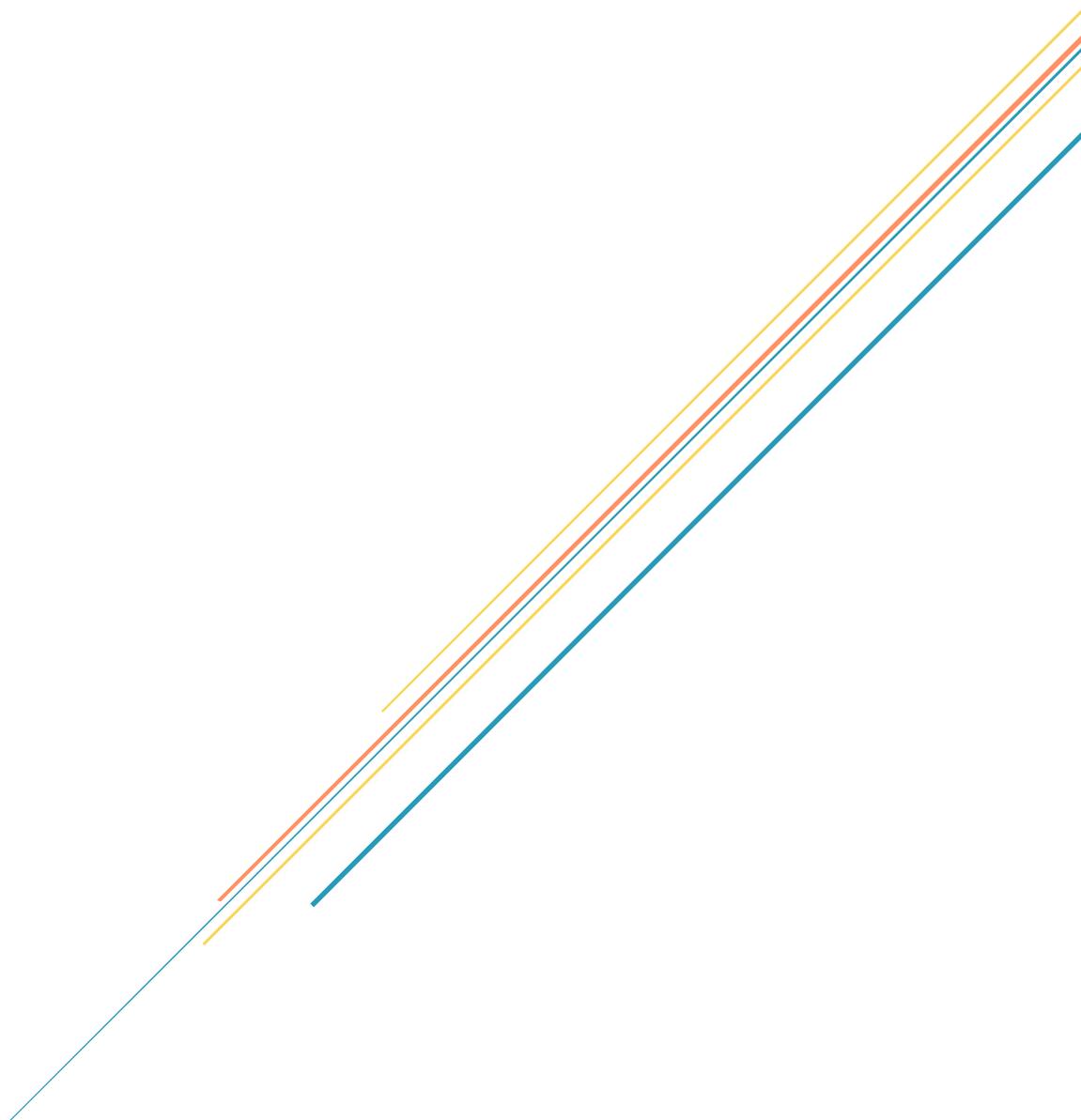


PROJECT INFORMATION PACKET

Ecuador: La Sierra 2021



Amigos

Table of Contents

AMIGOS DE LAS AMERICAS	3
WHAT IS AMIGOS?	3
VISION	3
MISSION	3
VALUES	3
DIVERSITY	3
HISTORY	4
HISTORY OF AMIGOS IN ECUADOR	5
WORK AREA	5
GEOGRAPHY, CULTURE, FOOD, CLIMATE, & TRADITIONS	6
GEOGRAPHY	6
CLIMATE	6
CULTURE & TRADITIONS	7
FOOD	7
RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION	9
COUNTRY-SPECIFIC LANGUAGE	11
AMIGOS HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER PROGRAM 2021	12
PROGRAM GOALS AND PILLARS	12
ROLE OF THE VOLUNTEER	13
PROJECT SPECIFIC INFORMATION	14
PROJECT THEME	14
PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS	14
GENERAL PROJECT CALENDAR	15
POSSIBLE EXCURSIONS	15
HEALTH AND SAFETY TOPICS	16
PACKING LIST	18

AMIGOS DE LAS AMERICAS

WHAT IS AMIGOS?

AMIGOS is a leader in international youth development, creating a world in which young people realize their full potential as leaders and global citizens. We provide extraordinary opportunities for youth to design and lead projects in collaboration with U.S. and Latin American peers and partner organizations across the Americas. Our strong partner network, built over 50 years, enables authentic engagements in communities across the region.

Since its start, AMIGOS has operated continuously in various countries in Latin America, including Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. Currently, AMIGOS works in seven countries in Latin America (Costa Rica, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Uruguay) and the U.S. running youth leadership programs. AMIGOS always works through partnerships with local organizations and with members of host communities in Latin America and the U.S., with projects led by young people.

VISION

A world where all people are lifelong leaders sharing responsibility for our global community.

MISSION

Amigos de las Américas inspires leaders through authentic service and immersion experiences.

VALUES

- **Safety First and Always:** We prioritize the health and safety of AMIGOS volunteers above all.
- **Youth Leadership:** We believe in the capacity of youth to become leaders for positive change.
- **Transformational Outcomes:** We strive to transform volunteers and communities in measurable ways.
- **Community-Led:** We create socially and environmentally conscious partnerships through collaboration with communities throughout the Americas.
- **Diversity Throughout:** We promote diversity of volunteers and stakeholders and work to break down barriers.
- **Respect:** We maintain respect, transparency, and high standards in everything we do.

DIVERSITY

To realize the AMIGOS vision and mission, we believe in the power of every voice and the wisdom of diverse voices. AMIGOS embraces universal diversity, including:

- race
- nationality
- ethnicity
- socio-economic status
- religion
- age
- gender
- sexual orientation

AMIGOS seeks to include:

- different life experiences
- belief systems
- abilities
- opinions

throughout its work and aspires to eliminate barriers to inclusion and participation.

AMIGOS' Board of Directors and Convention of Chapter Presidents adopted this as the organization's official diversity statement in June 2012.

HISTORY

AMIGOS was founded on the principle that young people can change the world. In 1965, a 29-year-old pastor from Houston, Texas named Guy Bevil led a team of teenagers into rural Honduras to support in the fight against a growing polio epidemic. Serving communities in remote areas of the country, this group of 181 youth and 36 adults helped protect people from the crippling disease and established friendships that crossed borders. This service had a bold impact on the lives of these young people and, as a result, they returned more mature, culturally aware, and inspired to continue serving communities at home and abroad.

The AMIGOS model of developing critically engaged young leaders remains highly beneficial to youth today. AMIGOS programs have evolved to be more responsive to the changing priorities of host communities and inclusive of young people across the Americas. Today, our projects cover a broader array of activities in health and education and focus on building skills in youth of both the United States and Latin America. More than 30,000 alumni have carried on the passion and commitment that started over 50 years ago. Our successful history supports the belief that young people have the power to rise to any challenge and make a difference.

HISTORY OF AMIGOS IN ECUADOR

AMIGOS began working in Ecuador in the 1970s implementing vaccination programs and public health initiatives. In 1999, AMIGOS worked in the provinces of Tungurahua in central Ecuador and Imbabura in northern Ecuador. From 2010-2015, AMIGOS began a new youth entrepreneurship theme in Cotopaxi, Ecuador. In 2016, the project moved to Chimborazo, Ecuador. In 2017, AMIGOS opened our GAP program in the city of Cuenca where we operated year-round. Finally in 2019, for the first time AMIGOS, we began the first Summer Immersion program in Cuenca. We are very excited to come back in 2021 to this amazing and magical place.



WORK AREA

Ecuador is one of the most geographically and culturally diverse countries in the world and is home to the world's only snow-capped mountain on the Equator. The capital city, Quito, is situated amongst the beautiful Andes Mountains. The country is divided into distinct regions each with a unique climate, history, culture, and environment. In 2021, AMIGOS will be working within the provinces of Azuay and Cañar.

The provinces of Azuay and Cañar are home to the famous Austro region of Ecuador. Consisting of the three most southern provinces of the Andes region of the country, the Austro is renowned for its lush green mountains, cattle farming, and production of the Panama Hat. Volunteers will be exploring both rural and urban areas of these provinces. During the summer months in the Sierra, the weather is typically windy and sunny with little rain. Daytime temperatures range from 45-65F, and the temperature at night can drop to as low as 20F.



GEOGRAPHY, CULTURE, FOOD, CLIMATE, & TRADITIONS

GEOGRAPHY

The territories of what is now the province of Azuay and Cañar was, in ancient times, a large, beautiful region occupied by the nation of the Cañaris. The Canari beautifully named the territory Guapondeleg, which means " Plain as big as the sky ".

There are two distinct zones: the east, an area dominated by the eastern and western Andes and the west, an area belonging to the coastal region made up of Sub Andean basins.

Some of the tallest peaks in the area are Cerro Patul, with 4,163 m; Soldados, with 4,137 m; Patacocha, with 3,900 m.



CLIMATE

The climate ranges from tropical to glacial and is variable due to the altitude. Due to the presence of the Andes Mountain range and subtropical vegetation to the west, the territory is climatologically fragmented in different sectors. In addition, because of its tropical location, each climatic zone has only two distinct seasons: wet and dry. In the west, the temperature ranges between 20 °C and 33 °C, while in the Andean zone, it usually ranges between 10 °C and 28 °C.



CULTURE & TRADITIONS

Some of the most popular traditions and customs of the area are closely related to the history of its land and people. The culture of this territory has been and continues to be passed down from generation to generation. Some of the most important traditions are:

Día de los difuntos (All Souls Day) – Like other festivities, this celebration showcases the combination of an ancient indigenous tradition with a Catholic holiday. Día de los difuntos celebrations consist of vigils and visits to cemeteries where offerings of flowers and traditional food are brought to the deceased.



Semana Santa (Holy Week) - This celebration is part of the liturgical calendar and is highly respected by Ecuadorians. During Holy Week, processions and masses are held to commemorate the path that Christ traveled when he was captured and crucified.



FOOD

The Austro region is known for being rich in tradition and culture where food plays a very important role and highlights the heritage of the area. Most of the dishes contain different types of corn, potatoes, and pork. Here are some of the most popular foods in the area:

Ataco: Popularly known as amaranth or ataco, this is a plant that is produced in the Andean zone of the Ecuadorian Sierra.



Mote Pillo (white corn): Delicious and very easy to prepare, this dish consists of peeled and cooked corn that is fried with white onion, garlic, achiote, eggs, milk, spring onions and cilantro or parsley.



Mote Sucio: This dish receives its name because of its appearance and is made by mixing mote with mapahuirá (pork fat).



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

We encourage you to learn more about Ecuador by looking into these resources.

General Information About Ecuador

<https://www.elcomercio.com/>

El Comercio - El Comercio is Ecuador's most widely read newspaper.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jzB0YVBUOs&t=111s>

Youtube - Geography Now, the Ecuador episode is very informative.

<https://www.state.gov/countries-areas/ecuador/>

US Department of State - Countries & Areas – Ecuador.

<https://ec.usembassy.gov/es/>

U.S. Embassy and Consulate in Ecuador.

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Ecuador

https://www.ecuadorexplorer.com/html/about_ecuador/about-ecuador-2.html

Ecuador Explorer

Recommended Books About Ecuador

The Ecuador Reader: History, Culture, and Politics

Carlos de la Torre and Steve Striffer

Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America

John Charles Chasteen

Culture Shock! Ecuador: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette

Nicholas Crowder

Culture and Customs of Ecuador

Michael Handelsman

Millennial Ecuador: Critical Essays on Cultural Transformations and Social Dynamics

Norman Whitten

The Panama Hat Trail

Tom Miller

Cañar: A Year in the Highlands of Ecuador

Judy Blankenship

Ecuador: Culture Smart (The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture)

Russel Maddicks

The Queen of Water

Maria Virginia Farinango & Laura Resau

[Recommended Movies About Ecuador](#)

Crude

Joe Berlinger

Que Tan Lejos

Ricardo Gonzalez, Cecilia Vallejo, Tania Martinez, and Pacho Aguierre

Vengo Volviendo

Gabriel Hernández and Isabela Rodas

With My Heart in Yambo

María Fernanda Restrepo

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC LANGUAGE

Every country has its own set of idioms, mannerisms, and phrases. No need to worry though; your Spanish will serve you very well this summer and will allow you to communicate with different stakeholders.

Ecuadorian Spanish has been greatly influenced by the array of indigenous cultures in the region. Quechua is the most common indigenous language. You will likely find yourselves picking up on Quechua words throughout the summer in addition to building your Spanish. The city of Cuenca has a reputation for the way people speak almost as though they are singing the words. It is very likely you will hear any outsiders comment on the singsong speech of Cuenca.

Below is a list of regional vocabulary that you should learn.

<i>Spanish/Quechua word</i>	Definition
<i>achachai</i>	(cold) — Exclaim “achachai!” when you feel chilly in the Andean highlands.
<i>mashi</i>	(friend) — Fun Fact: ex-President Rafael Correa posts from the Twitter handle @mashirafael.
<i>ñaño/ñaña</i>	(brother/sister).
<i>morocho</i>	A type of corn, usually made into a sweet creamy drink that helps you stay cozy in the Andean mountains.
<i>chakra</i>	A small family farm intended for growing food necessary to feed the family.

AMIGOS HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER PROGRAM 2021

PROGRAM GOALS AND PILLARS

All AMIGOS programs and project areas are different! They are uniquely designed to fit the needs of our volunteers, partner agencies, host communities, and the regions we work in. However, all programs are designed to meet 3 goals and uphold 5 pillars:

Program Goals

1. Develop young people's personal leadership capacities.
2. Strengthen young people's commitment to community engagement and service.
3. Increase young people's cross-cultural capacity and competence.

Program Pillars

1. Training and Curriculum

Volunteers build their leadership and community development skills through hands-on training. All programs include leadership, community service, and cross-cultural humility training. Volunteers have a hands-on training throughout the experience.

2. Language and Cultural Immersion

Volunteers are immersed in the culture and language of their host country by interacting with locals in the pod, collaborating with partner agency members, and participating in cultural activities and excursions.

3. Community Service

Volunteers learn about design-thinking and begin to think through the design of a service project that they will carry out upon arriving back home.

4. Mentorship

Every volunteer is mentored by a staff team member and receives personalized feedback on their development as a leader throughout their experience.

5. Reflection and Continued Engagement

Volunteers are guided through various reflection activities during their experience. Upon successful completion of a program, all alumni are encouraged to climb our leadership ladder to continue building their leadership skills as members of our project staff teams, our training teams or through other opportunities.

ROLE OF THE VOLUNTEER

As you prepare for the adventure that lies ahead, think about your role as an AMIGOS, as a member of a team, and group of fellow peers. How do you hope to integrate into the group while also learning about the local culture?

Keep in mind that sometimes it may be hard to find tangible benefits to your experience throughout the trip, because it won't be easy. However, your primary role as a volunteer on our programs is to **LEARN** about the local culture, to **PRACTICE** your Spanish with fellow group members and locals, to **SUPPORT** the work of your partner agency through your volunteer service work, to **FACILITATE** group activities, to **SHARE** your passions, and to serve as a **CATALYST** for change and multi-cultural understanding.

You are a:

- Community action promoter
- Representative of your home community and your country
- Representative of AMIGOS
- Representative of your partner agency
- Guest in a foreign country and community
- Organizer, motivator, facilitator, role model, student, and friend
- Spanish-speaker
- Humble human being – you're going to discover that there is much more to learn than we have to teach. Be open to learning all that you can, and let your local contacts share their experiences and wisdom with you!

PROJECT SPECIFIC INFORMATION

PROJECT THEME

This project will be developed in the Ecuadorian Andes, specifically in the provinces of Cañar and Azuay. Through field visits to various farms, communities, and national parks, the aim of this program is for participants to learn about and discover Ecuadorian agriculture, which is based on ancestral cultures. More specifically, the program seeks to understand the importance of superfoods and indigenous medicine. By getting to know and being in contact with the Chakra (country), we hope to understand more about the indigenous "cosmovisión", i.e., the way in which the indigenous culture understands the world.

At the same time, the program seeks to investigate the implications that agriculture has generated in indigenous communities, particularly to understand the impact it has had on the food security. The dependence that the city has on the countryside and the implications of this relationship will also be a point of discussion.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Granja Learnaya

Granja Learnava is located on Cerro Cabogana and is a space for you to be immersed in nature. Here, vegetables are grown according to the cycles of the plants and their seasons using the lunar calendar. They produce dairy products while also taking care of the animals responsibly. You can enjoy horseback riding, beautiful views of the city and the countryside, and hikes to waterfalls and mountains.

Kinti Wasi

This is an organization led by three indigenous women who have built an enterprise focused on community-based tourism. Unlike other forms of community tourism in the province and the country, Kinti Wasi focuses on the correlation of the four natural elements of earth, air, water, and fire, and how woven into Andean wisdom and influence the agriculture, gastronomy, medicine, language, music, architecture, and spirituality.

GENERAL PROJECT CALENDAR

Days	Activities
Day 1	Arrive to the airport in Quito.
Day 1 – 13	<p>Travel from Quito to Cuenca. Get settled at hostel to start briefing.</p> <p>Cuenca: Briefing + Quarantine: Spanish classes, briefing activities, outdoor fun, 2 COVID tests (day 5 & 10), icebreakers, team building and group tone setting.</p> <p>Participants will stay at an organic farm. This space will serve for you to be immersed in nature. Here, vegetables are grown according to the cycles of the plants and their seasons using the lunar calendar.</p> <p>Chat with "Casa de la Juventud" about the role of youth in food security - Visit historical center of Cuenca.</p> <p>Learn more about environmental rights protection with our partners "Comisión de Gestion Ambiental"</p>
Day 13 - 20	<p>Travel to Cañar: Vist one of Cañar’s organic farms. Experience the experiential wisdom of the Andean cosmovision.</p> <p>Through this experience you will learn more about the correlation of the four natural elements of earth, air, water, and fire, and how woven into Andean wisdom and influence the agriculture, gastronomy, medicine, language, music, architecture, and spirituality.</p>
Day 21	Fly out of the Quito airport!

POSSIBLE EXCURSIONS



Cajas National Park

“Cajas” National Park has 152 different species of birds and is home to an intriguing variety of animals that can be seen on hikes in the lowlands. The landscape of the park is astonishing; high peaks overlook pristine lakes, lowland rivers lead to wooded forests, and lookout points give you a bird’s eye view of the sprawling tundra at every angle.

Laguna Culebrillas

Laguna Culebrillas is located in a valley at the foot of Cerro Yanahurco or "Cerro Negro" in the province of Cañar. Considered a sacred lagoon, legend has it that the mythical snake of the Cañari entered and hid in the water. Observing the curves of the lake closely, you can see they form figures and beaks of birds typical of the Cañari mythology. Its waters, agitated by the constant Andean



wind, barely reach 40 °C. In the surrounding area, there are several stone ruins that reveal the existence of past Cañari-Incan cultures.



Cerro Cabogana

The Cabogana route is a hike where you can connect deeply with natural environment. The ascent through the cloud forest and the moorland is a challenge for the mind and body but is very rewarding once you reach the lagoons and experience the panoramic views that look over the city and valleys.

HEALTH AND SAFETY TOPICS

Altitude Sickness

This project is set at a high altitude, which for many of our volunteers, is higher than what they are normally used to. For many volunteers, there will be a process of adjustment, or acclimatization. Acclimatization is the physiological process by which the body adjusts to living at high altitude. This process occurs within days of arriving at altitude; however, during the first days of the acclimatization process, there is the chance that you might have symptoms of high-altitude sickness.

Symptoms

- Headache: worse at night and in the morning (can be throbbing) – onset typically 2-12 hours after arrival
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea (possible vomiting)
- Feeling of weakness or laziness
- Inability to sleep well at night
- Dizziness
- Confusion, inability to walk straight, severe shortness of breath when resting, coughing, and feeling faint are signs of severe altitude sickness (take to doctor and contact On-Call immediately if these signs appear)

Treatment

AMIGOS has carefully considered the issue of high-altitude acclimatization and has consulted with several of the world's leading experts in altitude medicine. To minimize these symptoms, it is very important that you pay careful attention to staying well-hydrated and rested and to avoid significant physical exertion for the first few days. The initial days of briefing are planned to take this issue into careful consideration. If altitude sickness is suspected, do the following:

- Limit activity – get lots of rest
- Drink plenty of water

- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil), or naproxen (Aleve) for headache
- Eat more carbohydrates (bread, pasta, grains, etc.)

In addition, AMIGOS recommends that volunteers and Project Staff take the medication Acetazolamide to assist in acclimatization. The dose is 125 mg, twice daily, and should be taken during the day of travel to the project, and the first 3 days of project briefing (a total of 4 days). PLEASE NOTE THAT VOLUNTEERS ALLERGIC TO SULFA MEDICATIONS SHOULD NOT TAKE ACETAZOLAMIDE.

Acetazolamide is the accepted treatment to mitigate acclimatization and is used commonly throughout the world in this situation. Any medication can have side effects, and acetazolamide is no different. The most common side effects are:

- A tingling of the hands and feet.
- An increase in urination. This makes it even more important to stay hydrated.
- Cola drinks will taste differently.

In the event that your altitude sickness worsens and/or does not respond to the above forementioned treatment strategies, you will be taken to a local clinic for an evaluation. Please note that while altitude sickness can happen, the majority of our volunteers do extremely well and have no major symptoms.

PACKING LIST

You should bring clothes you already have from home and are comfortable wearing! You do not need to purchase a whole new wardrobe. Bags can get lost on their way to Ecuador. Please remember to pack any essentials, including a change of clothes, toiletries, and prescription medications, in your carry-on luggage to tide you over should that happen.

Please be sure to read to entire packing list and all the extra tips. Your trip will be in the more mountainous areas in and around Cuenca which means it will be quite cold at night and comfortable, yet still cool during the day. **Note: Ecuador is on the equator and the sun is very strong. Always wear sunscreen even if it is cloudy outside. Pay special attention to the suggested quantities.** If you have questions while you are packing, please do not hesitate to email us:

amigosprogramas@amigosinternational.org

Clothing

- 2 pairs of jeans
- 2 pairs of work pants that you don't mind getting dirty (good for hikes and for excursions)
- 1 pairs of shorts,
- 1 pair of sweats or yoga pants for exercise or for hanging around the house
- 5 comfortable t-shirts for working outside and/or exercising
- 1 nice shirt (polo, blouse, button-up, or t-shirts)
- 1 skirt or dress (if desired)
- AMIGOS polo
- 1 warm fleece jacket
- 7 pairs of underwear & socks
- 2 bras (if desired)
- 1 set of warm & conservative sleepwear
- 1 set of light weight sleep wear for a warmer climate
- 1 pair of comfortable closed-toed shoes/tennis shoes
- 1 pair of hiking boots
- 1 pair of flip flops
- 1 pair of rubber sandals (e.g. Tevas, Chacos, Crocs, etc.)
- 1 swimsuit

All Volunteers Should Bring

- 1 waterproof rain jacket (should fit over warm fleece jacket)
- 1 bottle of sunscreen (SPF 30 or greater)
- 1 hat with a brim (a baseball hat is fine)
- 1 reusable water bottles (1 liter—two 1-liter water bottles if not bringing a LifeStraw)
- 1 [LifeStraw Waterbottle](#) (highly recommended)*

- 1 mosquito net and hanging supplies (refer to Required Immunization and Medication List)
- 1 pair of garden/work gloves
- 1 bottles of mosquito repellent
- A day bag/small backpack for carrying stuff on short trips
- Thermometer and basic first aid kit
- 2 washable face masks
- Prescription medications (if applicable)
- Toiletries: soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, shampoo, conditioner, razor, deodorant, hairbrush.
- 1 washcloth and 1 towel (quick drying is recommended)
- Luggage Locks (these are useful for independent travel)
- Spanish-English dictionary
- Health, Safety, and Travel Guidelines
- Project Information Packet (this packet)
- Money & ATM card
- Passport & two copies of the first page of your passport
- COVID negative test results
- Plane tickets, if applicable, and confirmation codes for e-tickets

Recommended Items

- Small, inexpensive camera and extra batteries or charger
- Journal & pens
- Small photo album with extra pictures of yourself or your family to give away
- Umbrella
- Sunglasses

Optional Items

- Reading books (limit 2 - you can trade books with others)
- Board games & cards
- Multi-vitamins

**LifeStraw water bottle information from website:

- Protects against 99.999999% of bacteria (including E.coli, Salmonella), 99.999% of parasites (including Giardia and Cryptosporidium), 99.999% of microplastics, chlorine, organic chemical matter, dirt, and, and cloudiness; improves taste
- Long-lasting membrane microfilter lasts up to 1,000 gallons (4,000 L) and the activated carbon filter lasts up to 26 gallons (100 L) of water with proper use and maintenance
- Durable and BPA-free, independently lab tested to meet drinking water protocols established by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and NSF International/ANSI
- 22oz and 1L capacity. Every fill avoids single use plastic bottled water! Easy to use, easy to clean bottle and cap are dishwasher safe once the filter is removed.