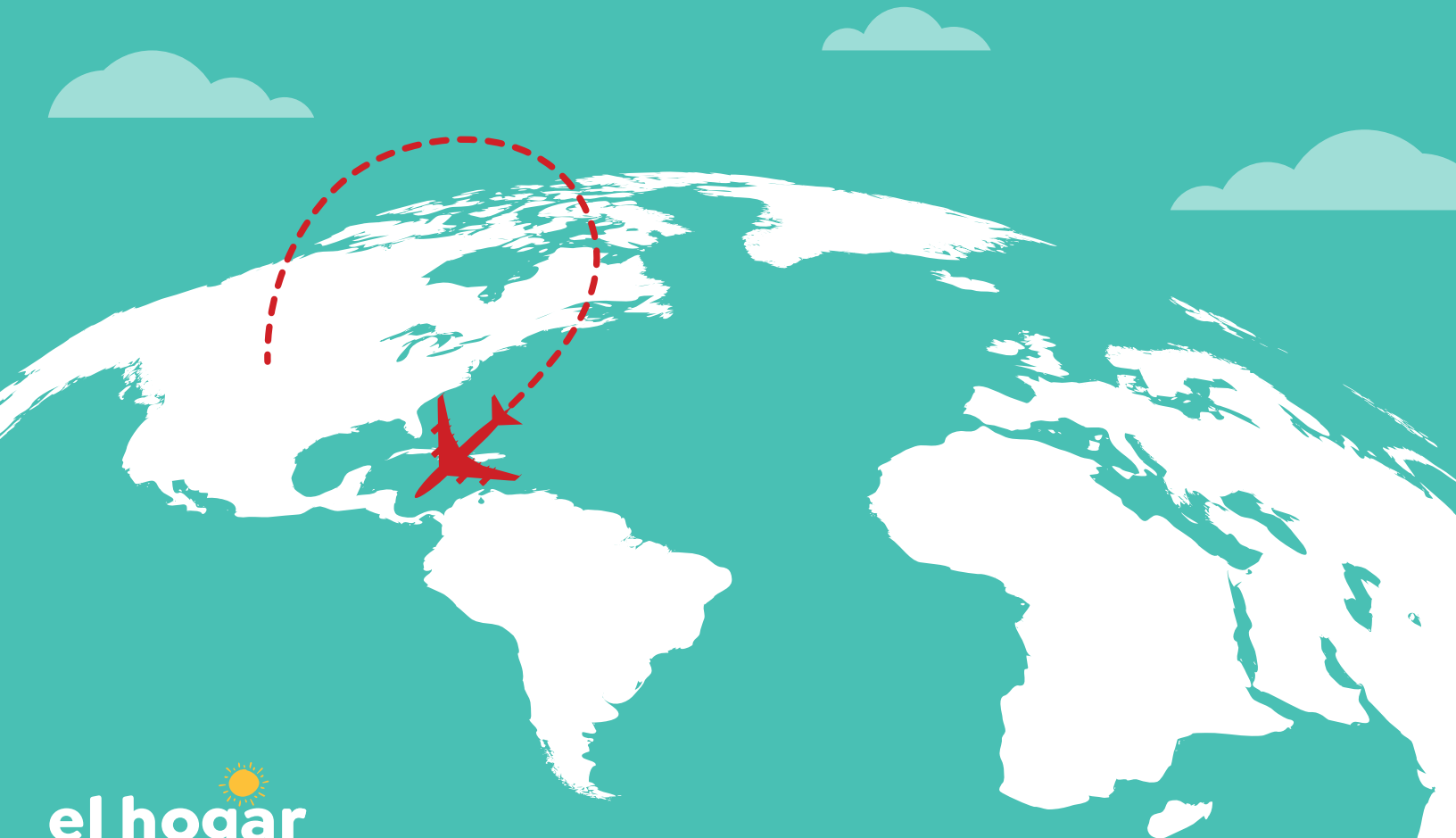




**el hogar**  
connects

# HANDBOOK



# PROGRAM GUIDE



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# WELCOME TO EL HOGAR



Thank you for your interest in the El Hogar Connects Program. The mission of this program is to provide an opportunity for visitors to our campuses to **partner** with our students and staff for a **transformational experience** that promotes **service to one another, intercultural communication, and experiential learning** that creates a deeper understanding between communities and provides opportunities for **intellectual and spiritual growth**.

Visiting El Hogar will provide you with a chance to disconnect from your everyday lives at home and connect with the lives of those you meet and spend time with in Honduras. Our goal is that after a week at El Hogar, visitors will have come alongside our team in Honduras and have gained a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the challenges our students face and the ways El Hogar helps them to overcome those challenges. Perhaps most importantly, visitors will go home transformed and energized to continue engaging with El Hogar and advocating for our mission and for the communities we serve.

No one trip to El Hogar can solve the very real challenges that our organization is working to address. However, we do believe that connecting with El Hogar can provide valuable insights into the situation in Honduras and Central America, inspiring you to join us - alongside our staff, students and the people of Honduras - in an ongoing dialogue about sustainable solutions to the region's challenges.

Many of us living in North America come armed with our own pre-conceived notions of what conditions in Central America will be like, and what solutions to apply to whatever problems we perceive. We hope you will set those aside and approach your visit to El Hogar with an open mind and an open heart and allow yourself to be moved and perhaps even changed by the people you meet and the culture you experience. Our goal is for everyone - teachers, staff, students and visitors - to work alongside each other and learn from each other in order to advance the important mission of El Hogar.

We are excited to welcome you to El Hogar in Honduras. We hope that this experience deepens your understanding of the humanity we all share and inspires you to participate in the reconciliation of our worlds.

**Erika Skafel**

Communications and  
International Relations

**Denise Vargas**

Executive Director  
El Hogar Projects Honduras



# WHAT WE DO



El Hogar provides **hope through opportunity** for Honduran children living in the most vulnerable circumstances and breaks the barriers to access quality education and a safe and nurturing home.

Founded in 1979 with five boys in one house in Tegucigalpa, El Hogar has grown and now works with over 200 boys and girls each year from all over Honduras.

El Hogar provides a loving home to those who need it and an integral education from 1st to 12th grade on two campuses. At El Hogar, our students are offered a quality education and learn a marketable trade. They are given three meals a day, and they gain the key values, life skills and empowerment so they can **transform their own lives** and become productive and independent members of Honduran society.

El Hogar's works is centred in **four areas**:

Education	Residential	Vocational	Health
High quality formal education from 1st to 12th grade on two campuses, characterized by individualized support and parent involvement.	Family-like home environment for children separated from their family, prioritizing family reunification where possible	Formal vocational training in welding and electricity. Students graduate 12th grade with certification in electricity.	Promoting physical and mental health through access to first aid, public health and wellness support and on-site preventative and restorative dental care.

El Hogar has a dedicated staff of over 65 Honduran professionals who are the reason that over 1,200 students have graduated from our programs over the last 45 years.

**For more information about what we do, please visit our website:**

<https://elhogar.org/learn>

# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT



The El Hogar Connects program is a way for global citizens to learn about and act on the needs around the world. Visitors become a part of the El Hogar community and are passionate about making a positive difference in the world. With an open mind and heart, this experience is a powerful way to learn about and partner with locals to respond to needs in their community.

This handbook will guide you through what you need to learn about the best practices in caring for children and youth from vulnerable circumstances and engage in activities that support family-based care and quality education. Pursuing best practices in these areas is complex and challenging, but with appropriate partnerships we can support the long-term wellbeing of the children and youth in our care.

## As a visitor at El Hogar, you will:

- Observe what daily life is like for the staff and students in El Hogar's programs
- Learn about the values of El Hogar, the history and culture of Honduras and the complexities of poverty
- Recognize the professional qualifications of El Hogar's teachers and other Honduran professionals, and partner with the organization to help promote their work and their programming goals
- Expand your understanding of how actions in North America affect Honduras and Central America; from personal purchases to local and global political policies and decisions
- Experience heightened personal and spiritual growth and cross-cultural learning
- Become an advocate for El Hogar, for social justice and for solutions to poverty in Honduras and Central America
- Make a commitment to serving El Hogar's vulnerable populations, socially and/or financially



# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT



## Some of the things you might do on a Connects trip would be:

- Visit our different campuses
- Participate in structured recreational time with our high school students
- Visit a community where our students live, meet families and learn about where our students come from
- Connect with community members and educational speakers
- Visit local cultural centres or other NGOs

El Hogar's first priority is the safety and wellbeing of the children and youth in our care. For this reason, we require you to complete a screening process, review and comply with our [Code of Conduct](#), and other policies found in the [Appendix](#).

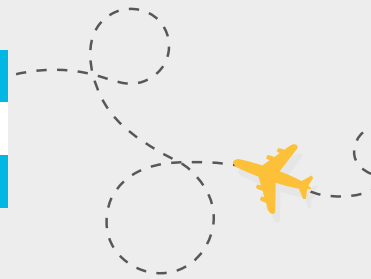
We hope that after spending a week with us in Honduras, you will go home and share your experiences, the stories of the people you met and the work that is being done by passionate Hondurans to uplift their community. By visiting El Hogar, you will be an important witness to the challenges and opportunities in Honduras and have the chance to challenge assumptions and share about the reality of the region with your family, friends and community back home.

Our program is proudly run by Honduran professionals but requires a partnership with North Americans and visiting El Hogar is just the first step in your relationship with us.

**For more information about how you can get and stay involved with El Hogar, please visit our website: <https://elhogar.org/get-involved/>**



# ABOUT HONDURAS



## General Information

Honduras is in the heart of Central America, bordered by Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. The Caribbean Sea washes its north coast and the Pacific Ocean its narrow coast to the south. Honduras has an area of 112, 492 km<sup>2</sup>, which is approximately the size of the state of Virginia in the US, or the island of Newfoundland in Canada. It has a population of approximately 10 million people. Tegucigalpa is the capital and largest city in Honduras, located in the south-central region of the country. Spanish is the official language, and Catholicism is the most prominent denomination, with the Protestant church growing rapidly.



## Geography and Climate

More than three quarters of the land area of Honduras is mountainous, with narrow coastal plains along the Caribbean and Pacific coasts.

**The climate is generally hot, with high humidity on the coasts, cooling as the elevation increases towards the interior of the country.** Rain falls year-round along the Caribbean coast, but is seasonal throughout the rest of the country, generally between mid-May and mid- October.



Honduras lies within the hurricane belt and the Caribbean coast is particularly vulnerable to hurricanes and tropical storms. Because much of the economy depends on small-scale agriculture of a few exports, natural disasters and climate change have a particularly devastating impact on the country and its people. Most notably, Hurricane Fifi in 1974, Hurricane Mitch in 1998, and Hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020 all caused widespread destruction both in Honduras and throughout Central America. Effects of climate change continue to be a threat to the region as these storms get stronger and more frequent.

## Pre-Colonial Period

Before the Spanish conquest, the Mayans were one of the most powerful and advanced indigenous populations, inhabiting the Yucatán in Mexico, Belize and Guatemala, however their sacred city and ceremonial metropolis was in Copán, in the western part of Honduras. The Mayans made great progress in various fields of human knowledge, particularly in mathematics and astronomy.

After the collapse of Mayan culture, other groups slowly settled in various parts of Honduran territory. In the northwestern sector of Honduras were the Chortí people, descendants of the Maya, and the Lenca, the largest indigenous population. Other indigenous groups, such as the Tolupanes, Pech, Tawahkas and Misquitos together formed the remainder of the country's population.



## Spanish Colonization

On August 14, 1502, Christopher Columbus landed on the north coast of Honduras on his fourth and final trip, beginning the process of conquest and colonization of the Honduran territory. It is said that Columbus, while exploring the eastern coasts of the region reached a peninsula where he found shelter from a tropical storm and declared “Gracias a Dios que hemos salido de estas honduras!” (Thank God we’ve escaped these treacherous depths!), thus giving Honduras its name.

Spain began its conquest of Honduras in 1525, which was met by heavy resistance from the indigenous population. El Cacique Lempira, chief of the Lenca tribe led the resistance against the conquistadores, but was deceived and killed in 1537 during supposed peace talks. **The currency of Honduras is called Lempira, after this national hero.**



During Spanish rule, the population became more diverse. The miscegenation of Spanish conquerors, the indigenous population and the slave African population brought to the continent, shaped the complexity of Honduran society and brought the emergence of new ethnic groups such as the Garifuna.



## History: Independence

After three centuries of Spanish rule, Central America declared its independence from Spain on **September 15, 1821**. Shortly after, the Emperor of Mexico proposed the annexation to Mexico, arguing that Central America lacked the necessary elements to ensure its autonomy, to resist foreign threat, and to become a nation.



In 1823, Mexico became a republic and gave the Central American provinces the right to determine their own fate. Honduras was provisionally part of the United Provinces of Central America, also made up of the states of **Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica**. In 1839, Honduras officially separated from the Federation and the country's first constitution was formally adopted. **The Honduran flag has five stars, representing these five Central American countries.**

## History: Banana Republic

In the late 19th century, Honduras granted land and extensive concessions to several US-based fruit and infrastructure companies in exchange for developing the country's northern regions and building an interoceanic railroad. As a result, work opportunities in the banana plantations drew thousands of migrants to the north coast. The Cuyamel Fruit Company, Standard Fruit Company (both becoming Dole) and United Fruit Company (later to become Chiquita) developed an enclave economy. They held control over the northern region of the country and even exercised their power to overthrow the government when it did not promote their interests.

The term *Banana Republic* was coined by writer O. Henry, referring to Honduras and the economic exploitation by the US-based fruit companies. These companies did not respect the deals for development, opting to develop no further than within their own properties, with railroads running never further than between their plantations. Since this time, the US has had heavy influence over the politics and economy of Honduras and its neighbouring countries.

Eventually overcoming the Banana Republic days, the Honduran economy has since diversified to include other exports such as coffee, other produce, textiles, African palm, sugar cane and insulated wire, exporting mostly to the U.S.A., Mexico and other Central American countries. The GDP of Honduras is \$28.49 billion USD (2021) and approximately 20% of that comes from remittances from the U.S.A.

Honduras is one of the poorest and unequal countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region. In the last official data available from World Bank international, estimates showed that almost half the population (4.8 million people) lived on less than US \$5.50 per day and 14.8 percent lived on less than \$1.90 per day. Many Hondurans are at risk of falling back into poverty. Slowing economic growth is affected by lower agricultural and manufacturing output and exports, while services and remittances fueling private consumption help buffer the decline in production and exports.

Income disparity is another factor affecting the population. According to 2019 data, the poorest 20% of the population received 3.6% of the national income, while the richest 20% received 52.2%. Globally, Honduras ranks in the top 20 of all countries in disparity of income distribution with a Gini coefficient of 0.48 (where 0 is total equality and 1 is total inequality).

Most recently, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and hurricanes Eta and Iota that hit Honduras less than two weeks apart in 2020 have had a devastating impact on the economy and infrastructure of the country. Recovery from the natural disasters, as well as the global pandemic is slow and challenging, leaning on international entities to invest in recovery and relief efforts.

Over the last few decades, government spending on defense and security has risen steadily while social spending on services such as healthcare and education have decreased. Other issues that challenge development in Honduras include high crime and violence, heavily fuelled by gangs.

## Politics



Since its independence in 1821, Honduras has constitutionally been a democratic state. The president is head of state and is elected by popular vote for an unrenovable term of four years. The two major political parties are the Partido Liberal de Honduras (Liberal Party of Honduras) and the Partido Nacional (National Party). For most of the 20th century, dictatorships and military governments ruled Honduras until a civilian government was elected in 1981. Since then, the government has continued to be plagued by accusations of corruption and fraud. In 2009, there was a coup d'état that saw Honduran military forces overthrow the Liberal government. The Partido Nacional was in power until 2022 when Honduras elected its first female president, the leader of the Partido Libre, a political party that was born out of the resistance after the coup d'état.

## Education and Health

Education is free and is compulsory up to ninth grade, however enforcement of this rule is inconsistent. Although attendance at public schools is free, there are still financial barriers for children to be able to attend, such as the purchase of uniforms, school supplies and transportation. Public schools are also severely underfunded and underresourced. Families are often required to subsidize teacher and school support staff salaries and materials.

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the gap in access to education has increased dramatically and more than 250,000 school-aged children are not enrolled in school. Among students who are enrolled, many are behind in learning because they did not have access to resources to attend online classes during the peak pandemic months when schools were closed.

In Honduras, the quality of and access to health care is directly tied to income level. There are public clinics and hospitals, but are often understaffed and lacking appropriate resources. Approximately 50-60% of the population regularly use public health services, while the private sector serves about 15%. The remainder, mostly rural populations, do not have regular access to health services.

**References and links to more information can be found in the [Appendix](#).**

# PRE-TRIP LOGISTICS



If you are interested in bringing a team to Honduras on an El Hogar Connects trip, please visit our website ([www.elhogar.org/visit/](http://www.elhogar.org/visit/)) to fill out an application.

***This application should be sent 6 months in advance of your prospective trip.***



Typically, groups travel from Saturday to Thursday, but scheduling can be flexible depending on the price and availability of flights and the schedule of your team members. Travel dates are available on our [website](#).

Once your application is accepted and your week is confirmed, you can start the preparations for your trip. An ideal team will have multiple first-time visitors and have a composition of intergenerational members.

Youth teams need to have an adult team leader and should consider a minimum ratio of one adult chaperone to every five youth. The minimum age is 15 years old or going into 10th grade. There is no upper age limit. Visitors must keep in mind that there are physical demands of the program and team members must be physically capable of getting into and out of vehicles, walking on uneven ground and handle high temperatures.



**An ideal team size is 10-12 people.** *(The maximum team size is 14 people)* If your team is smaller than 8 people, please contact **the Manager of communications and International Relations** to potentially combine with another team.

If you are an individual who is interested in coming to El Hogar, please contact **the Manager of communications and International Relations**, to join a team.

In order to travel to Honduras, each team member must complete **an application, a background check, review program policies and sign an agreement and a legal waiver.**

The team leader is responsible for ensuring the completion and submission of all screening requirements. The team leader is also responsible for completing and submitting the team roster and travel information. Forms will be completed **online**, and the link will be shared with the team leader once your trip is confirmed.





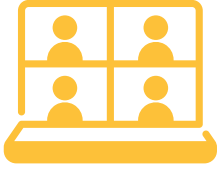
All forms and fees must be submitted **three months** in advance of your trip.

## The cost of travelling to El Hogar is:

- Room, board and local transportation fee (non-refundable) - **\$470 USD per person\***
- Team Donation-**\$2,500 USD per team\***
- Airfare to and from Comayagua, Honduras (XPL) - **varies by departure location, day of the week and time of year**
- Discretionary funds - **about \$50-100 USD per person recommended**  
- Note: major credit cards are accepted most places you will visit

*\*The room & board fee and team donation must be paid [online](#) or mailed to our EHMI office in Andover, MA **at least 3 months before your trip.***

# TEAM PREPARATION



It is essential that your team complete thorough preparation before you travel. El Hogar requires a minimum of 4 meetings beforehand and will provide team leaders with the resources needed to facilitate preparation meetings.

One of these meetings will include a videocall with the manager of Communications and International Relations to clarify expectations and answer any questions that you and your team may have. **A list of resources that are very useful in your preparation process can be found in the [Appendix](#).**

## Donations

Donated items are optional when you travel to El Hogar. It is usually more cost effective and better for the local economy to have Honduran staff purchase clothing, school supplies and hygiene items locally, especially considering the cost of luggage fees applied by most airlines. In addition, Honduran staff know what items are a priority, and the best place to get them locally. However, we do recognize that some teams are able to engage their church or community by soliciting donations to bring. Please be in touch with the manager of Communications and International Relations before you plan a donation drive.

## Travel Documentation

- **Passports** - You are responsible for knowing the current passport requirements for travel to Honduras.  
As of January 2025, U.S. and Canadian Citizens do not require a visa to travel to Honduras. The date of expiration on your passport must be AT LEAST six months after the date your trip begins. It is recommended to bring an extra copy of your passport.
- **Travelling with Minors** - Honduran law requires that all minors (under the age of 21 years) travelling unaccompanied or with only one parent must have written permission to travel from their non-travelling parent(s). Please visit your government's travel information site for more information.
  - **Canada:** <https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/honduras>
  - **United States:**  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Honduras.html>



## Medical

We recommend that you contact a physician and/or a travel clinic 8-10 weeks prior to your departure to obtain advice regarding any immunizations that may be necessary. Additional travel advice can be found here:

- **U.S.A. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention**

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/honduras>

To find a travel clinic in your area: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/find-clinic>

- **Government of Canada Travel Information**

<https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/honduras>

To find a travel clinic in your area: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/clinic>

- **World Health Organization**

<https://www.who.int/countries/hnd/en/>

**Travel health insurance is highly recommended.** Bring contact information for your doctor and your insurance provider.

**Quality health care is available in Honduras should the need arise.** Most health centres accept all major credit cards and require payment upfront.

**Over-the-counter medication:**

(pain relievers, cough suppressants, antihistamines, anti-diarrheal medication etc.) and basic first-aid supplies can be brought for any minor illnesses or injuries throughout the week. If needed, these items can be purchased in Honduras.

## Useful Numbers

- U.S. Embassy in Honduras: **+504-2238-5114** ext. 4400  
<https://hn.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/>
- Canadian Embassy in Honduras: **+504-2232-4551**  
<https://www.international.gc.ca/country-pays/honduras/index.aspx?lang=eng>

We recommend that you register with your country's government before travelling to Honduras.

- U.S. Citizens can register with the Safe Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/>
- Canadian Citizens can register with the Registration of Canadians Abroad program at <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration>

## What to Bring



Read the suggested packing list in the [Appendix - Suggested Packing List](#)

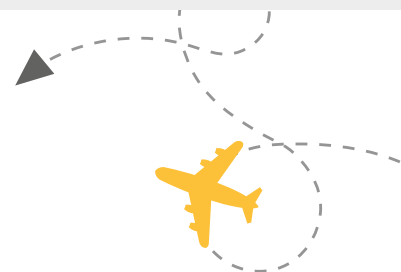
- Pack enough clothing for one week.
- Bring all your personal items.
- Bring group items such as basic first aid kit, equipment, etc



# ARRIVAL LOGISTICS AND ACCOMMODATIONS



## At the Airport in Honduras



- As of December 2021, all international flights now arrive at:  
**Palmerola International Airport (XPL) in Comayagua, Honduras**
- The custom forms is now online. There will be a QR code to scan with your phone camera when you arrive at the airport. There is free Wi-Fi access. Fill this out while you are waiting in line. Once you submit the form online, it will generate a new QR code which you should keep open in your phone's browser.
- Use the following address: **Instituto Técnico Santa María, Aldea Río Frío, Amarateca**
- Go through the immigration line and show your passport. The Immigration officer will stamp your passport with a visitor visa.
- In the hallway between Immigration and baggage claim, you will have to put your bags through an X-ray scanner and show the QR code generated from your online customs form.
- Enter the baggage claim room and retrieve your luggage.
  - The baggage claim room is often crowded and can be chaotic. **Be alert.**
  - **Hold on to your baggage claim tags, as you will be asked to show them before you can leave the baggage claim area.**
  - It is easier and cheaper to move your luggage on your own, but if you need assistance, it is available from porters for a small charge.

Once you leave the baggage claim area and into the arrivals area, **Erika Skafel**, manager of Communications and International Relations, will be waiting for you and your team.

## Accommodations

Your team will stay at the visitor house on the **ITSM campus in the Amarateca Valley**, an approximately 50-minute drive from the airport. The house has the following amenities:

- Four bedrooms, each with an adjoining bathroom.
  - Each sleep 3-4 people in bunk beds; bedding and towels provided
- Dining Room
- Kitchen
  - Stove
  - Coffee Maker
  - Refrigerator
  - Dishes and Cups
- Enclosed porch and wading pool





**There is Wi-Fi access** in the visitor house, however connectivity is unpredictable. We recommend using the opportunity to unplug, but if you do choose to connect, please consider that the staff and students need to use the Internet during the day, and need the bandwidth to complete their work. **Please try to limit Internet use to the evenings.**

## Food

During your stay, all of your meals will be provided. You will be eating traditional Honduran food, which includes **beans, eggs, chicken, rice, plantains and corn tortillas**. We cannot guarantee that dietary restrictions will be accommodated, but we will do our best if they are advised in advance. However, if you do have a dietary restriction, we recommend that you bring snacks that can supplement parts of a meal. ***Please keep these snacks stored in the visitor house and do not share with students or staff.***

## Water

**Tap water is safe to use for bathing and washing dishes, but not to drink.** When washing dishes, make sure that they are dry before you use them.

**Purified water for drinking will be provided.** This should be used when making food, tea or coffee and brushing your teeth.

Water is much more scarce in Honduras than it is in North America, particularly in dry season, and when you are living in a large group. Please be conscious of your water usage and practice conservation.



As with many countries in Central America, toilet paper is disposed of in the garbage cans beside the toilets.

# MOTIVATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS



## Why Do You Want to Come to El Hogar?

Good intentions are a great starting point for short-term volunteer trips, but good intentions have to translate to good outcomes. There are set objectives for the El Hogar Connects Program, but each visitor will have different motivations for coming to visit El Hogar. It is important to evaluate those motivations and learn how you can ensure a positive impact and avoid the detrimental outcomes of short-term volunteering.

Our Honduran staff are highly skilled and qualified in their roles as teachers, caregivers, maintenance workers and administrators. Learning from them and how you can support El Hogar should be embraced as one of the primary purposes of your trip

**“Action without learning is ignorance. Learning without action is selfishness.”**

– Daniela Papi-Thornton.

El Hogar is a part of the Episcopal Diocese of Honduras. Spirituality is an important part of the lives of students and staff. They attend daily devotionals and weekly Eucharist services. Participation in these activities is welcomed as a way of learning and sharing experiences with the students and staff, however it is optional. Visitors of all cultural and religious backgrounds are welcome at El Hogar.

The Episcopal Church offers resources outlining guiding principles for world missions and global partnerships. If you and your team are interested in exploring these themes more, visit <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/guiding-principles-for-world-mission>

or check out their digital toolkit

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/global-partnerships/digital-toolkit/>.

## Your Responsibilities

It is important to remember that you are a **guest** in the home of the students and staff at our centres. Despite language and cultural differences, the students and staff are very welcoming and enjoy spending time with visitors. However, please be mindful of and respect the schedule that the students and staff maintain. They have classes, chores and responsibilities, and will be able to spend time with you during structured meetings or activities. Classrooms and dormitories are not to be entered, unless the director or a staff member has extended an invitation.

Please remember that at El Hogar we work with children and youth from vulnerable circumstances. You have a unique opportunity to interact with our students in ways that are both affirming and inspiring, however it is essential that you maintain appropriate boundaries with them. For example, let the students initiate contact with you, and if they decide to do so, hug them from the side. **More information is provided in the [Code of Conduct](#) and [Child Protection Policy](#) review during your team preparation.**



## Cultural and Language Considerations

With increasing travel, immigration and modern media and the Internet, cultural borders are becoming more blurred. The act of travelling is easy, but connecting with the people you meet is more complex.

Learning about different cultures helps broaden and shape your worldview and help you relate to the people you meet. While you are in Honduras, you will experience many things that are different than what you are used to, from the way people interact to the way things get done. It is important to recognize these differences, but also to acknowledge that **there is no one right way to do things.**

Like in many many Latin American countries, hierarchy is a very important concept in Honduras. When interacting with students and staff at our centres, please work through the appropriate channels if you need something. Start by asking the program coordinator, or the director of the centre. Asking a staff member or student will make them feel uncomfortable and they will often say yes, even when it is not appropriate for them to help you. Communication is usually indirect, often prioritizing a friendly exchange over straightforwardness.

When you pass by someone or enter a room, it is polite to say **“permiso”** before you enter. This simply means, **“Excuse me.”**

It would be helpful to learn some basic Spanish vocabulary and phrases prior to coming to El Hogar. The directors are bilingual and some teachers speak English. Don't be hesitant to try speaking Spanish! Many local school boards offer beginner Spanish classes, and there are many resources online. Applications such as Duolingo are also helpful.

**There is a list of helpful Spanish phrases on our website:**

<https://elhogar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Useful-Spanish-Phrases.pdf>

Dealing with the unfamiliar on a daily basis means making new decisions constantly. What you know and how you do things is challenged and you need to relearn these things in a different context. Do some research before you travel to Honduras. Be humble and open-minded. Avoid making generalizations. Learn to accept ambiguity.

**More information on Cultural Considerations can be found in the [Appendix](#).**



## Financial Policy

**No money shall change hands while in Honduras.** This includes monetary gifts to children, families or staff and the funding to cover the cost of a perceived need while in Honduras. All donations must be sent to the EHMI office in Andover, MA or to El Hogar Projects (Canada) so that funding can be allocated to priority areas, and so that the donor will receive a tax receipt. Exceptions to this rule can be discussed with the Manager of Communications and International Relations.

## Dress Code

It is important to respect the Honduran culture by considering physical appearance. Generally, Hondurans dress modestly and are always presentable. Consider the following points when choosing what to wear.

- Shirts should fit well and be tucked in, particularly for men
- The use of shorts should be reserved for physical activity and/or inside the volunteer house
- Dresses or skirts should be knee length
- Shoulders should be covered, especially if attending church or other professional activities
- Close-toed shoes must be worn when visiting the workshops

## Safety and Security

- Do not leave the premises unless you are on a team outing in a vehicle driven by an El Hogar employee.
- When on an outing, stay with the group and follow instructions from El Hogar staff
- Tobacco use and alcohol consumption on campus and in the lodging facility are strictly prohibited. - **Violations to these rules will not be tolerated and violators are subject to removal from El Hogar premises and could be restricted from returning.**
- Please leave valuables at home.
- When leaving campus, any valuables brought should be left behind and locked in your room.
- Do not allow students to handle or use your phone or camera.
- Any belongings you bring with you are your responsibility and El Hogar is not responsible for the loss of or damage of personal property during your stay.
- Students are not permitted to enter the volunteer house, but may use the enclosed porch around the house. When leaving campus, please lock the bedroom doors and close the front door of the house. - **The only exception would be if students help deliver food to your dining room, or have received direction or an invitation from a staff member.**

## Social Media Use

Sharing photos on Social Media is a great way to communicate experience, to tell the El Hogar story and to encourage others to get involved. We ask that you review and abide by our [Communications and Social Media Policy](#), found in the Appendix, when using social media to share your experiences from your trip.

- Gain informed consent before taking and sharing photos.
- Promote dignity and respect privacy when choosing what photos to take.
- Avoid photos that place yourself as the focus. Instead, highlight your partnership with the organization.
- Limit your posts to a few quality photos and appropriate text.
- Do not connect or communicate with students via social media platforms. Do not share your contact information or take theirs.

For more information on how to communicate with the world, visit

<https://www.radiaid.com/social-media-guide>

Please consider sharing your photos with El Hogar. You can send them to **Erika Skafel** ([eskafel@elhogar.org](mailto:eskafel@elhogar.org)) or **Candy Beckwith**, Administrative and Database Manager ([cbeckwith@elhogar.org](mailto:cbeckwith@elhogar.org)).



# TYPICAL ACTIVITIES



<p>Saturday <b>(Arrival Day)</b> </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrive at Palmerola International Airport (XPL)</li> <li>• Lunch in Comayagua</li> <li>• Drive to Amarateca (about 50 minutes)</li> <li>• Settle in to Visitor’s House and Group Discussions</li> </ul>
<p>Sunday</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend church at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Tegucigalpa</li> <li>• Lunch out in Tegucigalpa</li> <li>• Visit grocery store and other locations in Tegucigalpa</li> <li>• Organized Activities with Students</li> </ul>
<p>Monday to Wednesday</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with directors, teachers and staff at El Hogar centres</li> <li>• Meet families of students</li> <li>• Visit communities where our students live</li> <li>• Hear from or visit El Hogar partnering organizations</li> <li>• Participate in educational and cultural activities</li> <li>• Plan organized activities with students</li> </ul>
<p>Thursday <b>(Departure Day)</b> </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakfast at ITSM</li> <li>• Drive to Palmerola International Airport</li> </ul>



**el hogar**  
connects

# APPENDIX



# Appendix 1: Code of Conduct

All staff members, volunteers and visitors to El Hogar have the responsibility to minimize any risk to the students in our program through the exercise of best practice and the identification and management of potential issues when in the company of and in contact with our staff and students.

The code of conduct provides guidelines for appropriate and proper behavior for El Hogar visitors when interacting with students and staff in our programs. These guidelines are designed to protect the individuals that the visitors are in contact with and are also intended to protect visitors from false accusations of inappropriate behavior or abuse. Read and acknowledge agreement with the statements below.

I understand that El Hogar requires that all staff, volunteers and visitors abide by the following rules when they participate in an El Hogar Connects trip and present at any of El Hogar's centers.

- **1.** I will treat the students, staff and other visitors at El Hogar with dignity, patience and respect. I will not act with intent to embarrass, humiliate or degrade them or perpetrate any form of emotional abuse. This includes offensive, abusive or inappropriate language as well as utilizing informal names with the students.
- **2.** As a visitor to Honduras and a guest at El Hogar, I will respect cultural differences, traditions and practices, and even when I don't understand, I will be respectful and courteous.
- **3.** I will not discriminate or use differential treatment or favor one student over another, especially if such behavior excludes any student. In addition, I understand that any discrimination based upon race, gender, sexual identity or other towards any student or member of the organization including visitors is strictly prohibited.
- **4.** I will not inflict any physical or emotional harm to our students or staff. I will not permit that a visitor or student harm or abuse another student. I will report any incidences immediately to El Hogar staff for appropriate action.
- **5.** I understand that romantic or sexual relations with any member of the staff, the students or any members of their family are prohibited.
- **6.** I will ensure that I am never alone with a student or group of students. I will ensure that there are always at least two adults present during any interaction with the students, preferably with at least one El Hogar staff member.



# Appendix 1: Code of Conduct

- **7.** I will comply with the Social Media and Communications policy (included below). I will gain informed consent before taking a photo of anyone and limit photos of students. I will use good judgement when posting on social media, in accordance with the policy.
- **8.** I will not jeopardize the safety of the students or staff by sharing their personal details, location or personally identifiable information to external parties, in accordance with the Communications and Social Media policy.
- **9.** I will not exchange contact information with any of the students or staff or contact them through any social media platforms or via phone or messaging.
- **10.** I will not offer money or gifts to any student, families or staff. I understand that the organization has a process for donations and any monetary gifts can be made through the El Hogar Ministries Inc. (EHMI) office in Woburn, MA or through El Hogar Projects Canada (EHPC) or directly to El Hogar Projects in Honduras. Any exceptions may be made through the Manager of Communications and International Relations in Honduras.
- **11.** I understand that El Hogar serves vulnerable children and youth and will be mindful of that in any of my interactions with them. I will not initiate physical contact with any student, and I will never pick up a student. I will not behave in a sexually provocative manner including apparel, attitude, gestures, language and behavior. I will be sensitive to others and cease any behavior that is making someone feel uncomfortable.
- **12.** I will respect the El Hogar students and employees and their personal and workspace. I will not enter classrooms, dormitories or other personal or work areas, unless accompanied by an El Hogar staff member and permission is granted.
- **13.** I will not smoke, vape, consume alcohol or any type of illicit drug while on any El Hogar campus. I will not share any of these substances with students or staff of El Hogar.
- **14.** I will not leave the El Hogar campus or lodging facility unless on a planned outing, accompanied by El Hogar staff.
- **15.** I will respect and uphold the values of El Hogar in order to create a safe and protective environment for the students at all of our centers.



# Appendix 2: Honduran History References

1. “Honduras Profile - Timeline.” BBC News, BBC  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-18974519>.
2. Nationsonline.org, Klaus Kästle -. “History of Honduras.” History of Honduras,  
[https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/History/Honduras\\_history.htm](https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/History/Honduras_history.htm).
3. “History.” Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.,  
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Honduras/History>.
4. “The World Factbook: Honduras.” Central Intelligence Agency, Central Agency,  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ho.html>.
5. “Overview.” World Bank,  
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/honduras/overview>.
6. Palmero, Nan. “Honduras.” OEC, <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/hnd/>.
7. Dupuis, John. “The Birth of a Banana Republic.” Honduras Travel  
<https://hondurastravel.com/honduras-history/birth-banana-republic/>.
8. Eschner, Kat. “Where We Got the Term ‘Banana Republic.’” Smithsonian.com, Smithsonian Institution, 18 Jan. 2017,  
<https://www.smithsonian-mag.com/smart-news/where-we-got-term-banana-republic-180961813/>
9. “Honduras.” UNESCO UIS, <http://uis.unesco.org/country/HN>.
10. Honduras, <http://countrystudies.us/honduras/>.
11. Honduras’s Economics,  
<https://www.worldeconomics.com/Country-Data/Honduras.aspx>
12. Country Office Annual Report: Honduras UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org/media/117051/file/Honduras-2021-COAR.pdf>
13. “Honduras.” World Health Organization, World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/countries/hnd/en/>.
14. “Honduras.” Health in the Americas 2017, [https://www.paho.org/salud-en-las-americas-2017/?page\\_id=133](https://www.paho.org/salud-en-las-americas-2017/?page_id=133).
15. Teach for Change – Teaching Central America Curriculum: <https://www.teaching-centralamerica.org/teach-hondurast>



# Appendix 3: Useful Resources for Preparation

## Videos

1. What's Wrong with Volunteer Travel by Daniel Papi, TedxOxbridge  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYWI6Wz2NB8>
2. Learning Service: Being a Valuable Volunteer  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiS0jgqU29A>
3. Learning Service: Returning from your volunteering experience  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAvjKcXRZfg>
4. Learning Service: How can I do good in the world?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oZq3OMgRLU>
5. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xm1B6sFZPc>
6. What is Poverty?  
<https://vimeo.com/125760376>

## Websites

1. Seven Standards of Excellence for Effective Short-term Missions  
<https://missionexcellence.global/7-standards/>
2. How to Communicate to the World  
<https://www.radiaid.com/social-media-guide>
3. Volunteering and Visiting Orphanages – Unpacking the harmful effects of sending teams and volunteers to residential care institutions  
<https://ethicalmissionstrips.org/orphanagevolunteering>
4. Orphanage Volunteering – Why to Say No  
<https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/Infographic%20Better%20English.pdf>
5. Cultural Comparisons in Honduras – Hofstede Insights  
<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/honduras/>



# Appendix 3: Useful Resources for Preparation

## Books

1. Foreign to Familiar: A Guide to Understanding Hot – and Cold-Climate Cultures by Sarah Lanier  
[https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/183781.Foreign\\_to\\_Familiar?from\\_search=true](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/183781.Foreign_to_Familiar?from_search=true)
2. Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence by David Livermore  
[https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/105266.Serving\\_with\\_Eyes\\_Wide\\_Open](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/105266.Serving_with_Eyes_Wide_Open)
3. Enrique’s Journey: The Story of a Boy’s Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother by Sonia Nazario  
[https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/158277.Enrique\\_s\\_Journey](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/158277.Enrique_s_Journey)
4. Learning Service: The Essential Guide to Volunteering Abroad by Clair Bennett, Joseph Collins, Zahara Heckscher, Daniela Papi-Thornton  
<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/41417002-learning-service>
5. Solito: A Memoir by Javier Zamora  
<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/59900688-solito>

For a list of multicultural and social justice books about Honduras and Central America, check out: <https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/central-america/>



# Appendix 4: Suggested Packing List

**Pack enough clothing for one week.** There are outdoor washboards if you wish to hand wash some of your clothing throughout the week. You may consider bringing:

- Activewear for recreational activities
- Dress casual clothing for church or visiting other cultural or educational centres
- A sweatshirt or light jacket
- Rain Jacket or umbrella
- Hat or bandanna
- Close-toed shoes for visiting the workshops
- Casual shoes and/or sandals

**Consider bringing the following personal items:**

- Personal toiletries such as shampoo, conditioner, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste etc.
- Refillable Water Bottle
- Insect Repellent with Deet
- Sunscreen
- Hand Sanitizer
- Prescription Medications (in their original containers)
- Flashlight or travel reading lamp
- Snacks, sports drink mixes
- Journal, reading books, pens, cards etc.
- Surgical and/or N-95/KN-95 masks

**As a group, you may consider bringing some of the following items**

- Basic first aid kit
- Over-the counter medications for nausea, diarrhea, pain etc.
- Hand sanitizer
- Group reflection/devotional materials
- Games, activities and sports equipment to share time with the students
- Sheets and towels will be provided, but you are welcome to bring an extra set
- Spanish/English dictionary or Translation Application that works offline

Any belongings you bring with you are your responsibility and El Hogar is not responsible for any loss or damage of your personal property during your stay. Please consider leaving any valuable personal items, such as jewellery or electronics at home. Please be extra cautious about any valuables that you do bring, ensuring you keep them on your person or secured in the visitor's house.



# Appendix 5: Communications and Social Media Policy

Sharing photos on social media is a great way to communicate experiences, to tell the El Hogar story and to encourage others to get involved. However, there are risks associated with sharing information on the Internet, especially involving children. El Hogar is committed to the privacy and safety of the students in our care and require that you follow these communication guidelines to protect them.

- **Gain informed consent.** Respect other people’s privacy and ask for permission if you want to take photos. Separate informed consent is required to share any photos on social media or elsewhere. Do not take photos of people in vulnerable or degrading positions. **Photos where children are identifiable should not be shared on social media.**
- **Promote dignity.** Avoid using words or descriptions that demoralize or further propagate stereotypes. Do not present people as helpless and in need of being ‘rescued’. Do not use the names of students or family members in any online posts, nor share any personal details of a student or their family. This respects their privacy, but also protects their safety. Many come from abusive or dangerous situations and identifying them on social media could put them at risk.
- **Question your intentions.** Your intentions affect how you present your experiences and surroundings on social media. Good intentions, such as raising awareness of the issues you are seeing or for the organization you are volunteering for is not a reason to disregard people’s privacy or dignity.
- **Seek understanding and objectivity.** Issues, communities and people need to be presented objectively; facts should not be exaggerated, nor issues sensationalized. Avoid oversimplifying issues, their causes and solutions. Highlight the diversity of the community.
- **Challenge stereotypes.** Your experiences in a new or different place are an opportunity to tell people on social media untold stories. Portray people in ways that enhance the feeling of solidarity and connection.

In order to tell a story, avoid using images that contain only one subset of the population (i.e. children), in order to represent an issue or issues that affect the broader community. This avoids the false impression that a response to an issue needs to be directly targeted towards this subset instead of the broader community. Children should be shown with their families, their communities, their caregivers or teachers and/or siblings or other groups of children. Avoid photos and videos that place yourself as the focus.



# Appendix 5: **Communications and Social Media Policy**

Photos should be taken with discretion, and subjects should be treated with full dignity and respect. Subjects should never be photographed in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Before taking a picture, think, **“Would I want that photo taken of me?”** and before you share a photo, think, **“would I want this shared?”** or **“what would I want said about me?”**

**Limit your posts** to a few quality photos and appropriate text. These posts can say more than a large collection of photos. Where appropriate, please tag El Hogar in your posts via [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#)

**Do not communicate** with students or staff via social media platforms, e-mail or phone. Do not share or ask for contact information.

Consider changing the **privacy settings** on your social media account(s) so you can control who is seeing the photos. Consider **alternate ways of sharing** photos and videos. To protect the safety of our students, remove geotagging, distinguishable landmarks, names and change any personal details where necessary.

**These guidelines exist to protect the vulnerable students in our care. El Hogar reserves the right to request that you remove any images or text pertaining to any of our students, their family or the organization from your social media platforms that violates any of these guidelines.**

