

Welcome to Nicaragua and León Spring 2018

Welcome as a student with Kulturstudier and UNAN-León in Nicaragua!

When you arrive in León you will have close contact with the local staff that will answer many of your questions - but a good journey starts before take-off. In this letter we have gathered the most important practical information that you will need. It's important that you read this very carefully before arriving.

On Sunday 11th February at 14.00 hours we will meet at [The Monkey Republic Hostel](#) ([map](#) close to Posada del Doctor) for an introduction of the staff and main house. Later we will move on to our [Study Center](#) (close to La Cuchara de Pipa), where we will have a general information meeting. After the meeting we will take you to **El Fortin**, where we have a nice view of León, and can continue talking/answering questions in a more informal setting.

Students who take the pre-course in Spanish, will find more information here:

www.kulturstudier.org

Help yourself

Kulturstudier is an educational institution with an emphasis on teaching our academic programs. We consider our students to be responsible adults and do not wish to create a summer camp environment where your whole stay is organised by us. For the most part, you will set up a good life in León on your own. In this manner, it will be easier for you to explore and get to know your new home. This means, for example, that if you are unlucky enough that your luggage doesn't arrive, you'll have to make contact with the airline company yourself. If you have trouble with your ticket, you have to talk to the airline company/travel agency. If you need to see a doctor, we provide phone numbers and addresses so you can contact the doctor and go by yourself, or together with your new roommate. If you want to travel during the weekends, you will have to find the information about the buses. If the shower in your room doesn't work, you need to talk to the house manager. In other words, you just act in the same way as if you were travelling on your own.

When all of this is said, our staff in León will work as your safety net. You are going to see us every day and we are going to be available to give you advice, counselling and guidance. If there is a serious situation or emergency, we will always be there to help you.

In this arrival guide you will find a lot of information that you need to get started with your life in León and in your neighbourhood. Furthermore, you will receive necessary information throughout the program.

The student houses

Students live in different houses in León. In the houses provided by Kulturstudier the breakfast is served every weekday from 06:30-07:30. The kitchen is available for all students in the house, and students are expected to keep it clean and in good order. The kitchen is relatively small considering the number of students, so try to find a solution that works for all of you. As a general rule you must clean up after using the kitchen so that it is always clean when the next person uses it. We cannot count on other people to clean up after us. Also remember that the food leftovers will attract insects so if you want to keep food in your room it needs to be put in plastic containers.

The rooms are dusted and cleaned daily, and bed linen are changed once a week. Please keep your room fairly tidy, so that the cleaning staff will be able to work without having to organize all your belongings. Some of the rooms are small and there is limited space to unpack your things. Many of your belongings can be kept in your suitcase under the bed or use plastic bags and containers that you can buy for a low price at the market. There is also a small security locker for every person in the room where you should put your valuables. There is laundry service in your house, or close to your house. This will be explained in more detail when the semester starts.

The standard of the student houses is pretty basic and it might take some getting used to in the beginning. The bedrooms have fans, a small night stand and a space to put your clothes. The houses have spacious and comfortable common areas where you can socialise, study and eat. You will be living together with a Nicaraguan family that runs the houses and a few of our Nicaraguan scholarship students, so you have the possibility to practice Spanish in your home also. Only Kulturstudier students and staff are allowed into the houses.

Your address for receiving mail in León depends on what house you live in. One of the coordinators will make the room assignments just before the students arrive. Street names are not used and postal codes do not exist in Nicaragua. The direction is therefore an explanation of where your house is. If you need to send something to Nicaragua before your arrival, please use the following address and include your name. Remember to put your name on the package.

The address for the main house is:

Your name/ [HOSTAL THE MONKEY REPUBLIC](#)
DE PARQUE SAN JUAN, MEDIA CUADRA ABAJO
LEON, NICARAGUA

You can also find your own accommodation in León. There are several pages online where you can find cheap houses and rooms for rent. The reason that pricing of the housing Kulturstudier offers might be a bit higher is that we offer stable full-time jobs to the employees all year around, social insurance, above minimum salary and a safe environment both for the guests and the staff. Breakfast is also included in the price. If you are finding your own place to stay you should check if costs for electricity, water, internet and cleaning is included in the rent.

Food

You will be served breakfast at your house between **06:30 and 07:30**. The breakfast normally consists of gallo pinto (red beans and rice), bread, fruit, eggs or pancakes. Coffee and juice will also be served. Lunch is served during weekdays between 11:30-13:30 at our Study Center in León. The food will be Nicaraguan and a variety of international cuisine.

Dinner is not included but there are many cheap and good places to eat out in León. After a while you will find your favorite places and share your preferred spots with others. There is plenty to choose from, including vegetarian options. Kulturstudier will arrange a welcome party with dinner on the first **Friday** of the semester and a farewell party at the end of the semester.

The Staff

The field manager, Rigo Sampson, is Kulturstudier's head representative in León. You can reach him by telephone: +505 8868 1569 and +505 2311 3306 and E-mail: rigo@kulturstudier.org (Please write in English/Spanish) **OBS!** Be aware that the e-mail ends with .org!

Other staff members are:

- Marthe Kalleklev (Staff manager)
E-mail: marthe@kulturstudier.org (Speaks Norwegian)
- Elise Hjalmason (Seminar leader Latin American studies)
E-mail: elise@kulturstudier.org (Please write in English/Spanish)
- Ivan Sandino (UNAN representative)
E-mail: ivan_sandino@yahoo.com (Please write in English/Spanish)

General information about the studies

The basis for all studies at university level is the individual student's effort to learn. Kulturstudier' academic staff is highly motivated to help you along the way with lectures and seminars, but a successful study is first and foremost dependent on your own preparation for lectures and seminars. You are expected to attend both lectures and seminars, and to be well prepared for both.

Therefore:

- Read as much of the curriculum as possible before you leave for Nicaragua.
- Develop good routines for studying efficiently after you arrive in Nicaragua. Based on experience, we know that many students feel like they have an ocean of time and thus tend to “take time off” the first few weeks for sightseeing and social activities. This is not a good idea. Firstly because studies offered by Kulturstudier are intensive, and secondly because the non-curricular activities tend to increase rather than decrease as the semester passes along. Also, the sooner you begin to involve yourself with the studies, the sooner you will “land” and adapt to the life in León. In this way you will be able to avoid reading 24-7 during the last weeks of your stay (when social activities are really starting to absorb you).
- Study efficiently! Most students discover that the study outcome increases when one takes notes or highlights important sections in the literature with a marker. If you make good notes during both lectures and self-study, you will also find it easier to review the curriculum when the exam is approaching.
- Work in groups! Our experience shows that group work offers many advantages as compared to working individually (even though you may not think so). One of the advantages of studying with Kulturstudier is that it is easy to create small study groups. This gives you, as a student, many advantages. You should thus strive to utilize this advantage.
- Participate actively in seminars and lectures! An important prerequisite for good seminars is the students’ own effort. This means that we expect our students to meet for seminars and lectures well prepared and to participate actively in-group discussions. The seminars are a forum for students to discuss in depth the topics and themes already presented in the lectures. The seminars are only useful if everyone is well prepared and takes part in the discussions. Don’t be afraid to say things that might be considered foolish. Take our word for it: the other students may not know as much as it seems either. **Bear in mind that attendance and participation in lectures and seminars will affect your grade at the end of the course.**
- There will be several Nicaraguan students in your classes, this is a great opportunity to get to know the locals, understand better their culture and make good friends!

Time plan

During the classes all students are expected to participate actively. You are thereby obliged to come prepared to class and not try to get a “free ride”. One of the nice things while studying with us is the direct contact you will have with the teachers and the other students. You will have classes from Monday to Friday, and some days will be more intense than others. **In other words, this is a full-time study.** The time plan will vary a bit every week, but we try our best to keep it

as stable as possible. However, during the semester, changes are bound to occur; lecturers may be sick and unforeseen things may occur. The Kulturstudier staff does not have the capacity to notify all students in person about changes. In the study center you will find a noticeboard where changes in the academic schedule will be posted together with important information about different activities. You are obliged to check the board frequently. We also use email-lists to notify changes, so check your email inbox every day as well.

A normal school day (depending on the combination you choose) is that you start at 08.00 with lectures in Spanish, Latin-American Studies or Pedagogy at UNAN Campus, La Prepa. To get to La Prepa it's more or less 10 to 15 minutes in taxi or local bus from the center of León. There is a library with A/C available for you to study in when you don't have classes at La Prepa. It is also popular among students to study at the different hotels and cafes with A/C in Leon. Then lunch is served at our Study Center in León and after lunch you will have your seminar groups at our Study Center. Some days will be more intense than others, but you should assume you have classes between 08.00 to 17.00 Monday to Friday. We will also offer relevant Guest Lectures in the evening some weeks.

The first day of classes is on Monday the 12th of February. This day we will have a welcome ceremony at UNAN Campus for all students and afterwards students studying Spanish will take a diagnostic test to place you in the correct level and groups. The test is both written and oral. We do this so that we can divide you into smaller groups on the same study level. This day we will also help you fill out the necessary papers to register you at UNAN-León. You need to bring 3 passport copies and 4 passport size photos of yourself this day. We advise you to bring the pictures and copies with you from home, so that you don't have to stress with this after arrival.

Transport

A taxi in León costs about 20 Córdoba per person (around 5 NOK) within the city, and about 25 to 30 Córdoba per person (6/7 NOK) for longer taxi rides (for example to UNAN Campus or the bus terminal). The taxis are in other words a kind of a collective transport. The local bus to UNAN Campus costs 4 Cordoba and goes all day from 6 in the morning. There are bus stops close to all our student houses. A taxi to the beach (20km from León center) costs 300 Córdoba in daytime and 300 to 400 Córdoba at night time. There is also a list of recommended taxis that you can call in every house.

We can help you arrange Airport pick- up if you arrive independently. The taxi costs \$ 70 from the airport to León (About 120km and one and half to two hours' drive). Please write to our Field Manager Rigo Sampson for assistance with taxis. We keep track of people arriving at the same time so you can share taxis and make the price per person cheaper. Note that if your flight arrives after midnight or is very delayed the price will increase to \$ 80. There might be other transport services offering lower prices, but we cannot guarantee the safety and quality of these drivers and therefore prefer to send you drivers that we have worked with for over 10 years.

The Study Center

Kulturstudier has a Study Center in the city center of León ([From San Jose Church, 1 and a half block north](#)). This is where lunch will be served every week day. You will also have seminars here in the afternoon. The study center is open for you to sit and study in peace or have group sessions. There is internet, a small library and a kiosk there. During the semester, the study center has opening hours (07.30 – 17.00), but right before the exams it will be open for you longer to study for your exams. The local staff and teachers has an office at the study center where you can find us every week day if you have questions or need help with anything.

Kulturstudier also rents a beach house at Las Penitas ([Rigo's Guest House](#)) that is available for you to use for studying and relaxing. You can use this house whenever you want to, and you only pay if you want to spend the night there. We will also arrange some extra-curricular activities here - to change environment from León once in a while.

Information and meetings

During the second or third week assembly meeting we will ask the students to elect their student representatives. The representatives typically meet with members of staff once every week. It is their job to be an intermediary between students and staff, to help make sure that staff is able to give attention to problems or opportunities that have been overlooked.

Every **Monday** after lunch, we will have an information meeting at the study center. These meetings are compulsory. If you for some reason cannot attend, you are responsible for reading the meeting summary or asking your fellow students for the information. The idea is to give you important information for the coming week, to discuss problems that might occur and to come with suggestions. To be able to help you with your problems we need to know what they are. More information will be sent out if there is a need for it or will sometimes be given after classes, during breaks or put up in the houses. We also use the Facebook group to give information. Please join the Facebook group already now to keep updated and in contact with your fellow students. **The group is called:** [Kulturstudier Nicaragua Spring 2018](#).

Traveling and spare time

When you study our programs you are part of the University of León, UNAN, and can use the university's facilities including the study halls, computer rooms and libraries. We recommend that you connect with other students at the University, both for friendship and to practice your Spanish.

Contact with the locals might be more difficult than you think. Even though you are students at UNAN-León, it takes commitment and work to get in touch with the local students. The biggest obstacle is the language. The Nicaraguan students normally only speak Spanish and contact between the Norwegian and Nicaraguan student will mostly have to take place in Spanish. We will have some English speaking Nicaraguan students in our study program and they would like

to practice their English with you. This is a nice opportunity for language exchange and you can agree you speak English one day and Spanish another day, for example.

When you are not studying, you are free to do whatever you want. León has many possibilities and it is up to you to explore them. Kulturstudier will arrange some optional activities, like movie nights, volunteer work and field-trips. You will get more information about the trips during the semester. Except from this you should explore Nicaragua on your own or with other students during the weekends. We recommend you to not travel alone or when it's dark. We ask you to please always write the local staff when you leave town (and stay overnight), this is just in case of any emergency.

VISA

As a Scandinavian citizen you will automatically get a 90-days VISA when you arrive in Nicaragua. At the airport this will cost **USD 10**. You will have to extend your VISA when you reach 90 days, and we will give you a letter from the University to help you make this process easier. It is important that when you renew your VISA after 90 days, you have to have a ticket out of Nicaragua. You can renew your visa in León, but it will take about a week to get your passport back, so this needs to be planned well with your travels. You can also renew your visa at the main migration office in Managua, and then you will get your passport back the same day.

Money

In the center of León, you can find several ATMs (see the map of León) where you can take out both Córdoba and dollars. **1 NOK = 3,7 NIO (Nicaraguan Córdoba)**. **1 USD = 29,70 NIO**. You can use both US Dollars and Nicaraguan Córdoba in all places in Nicaragua, and in most stores you can use your credit card. We suggest that you take out more or less 4000 Córdoba the first time you take out money after arriving in León, and this will last you for a while.

Remember that you need to have \$ 10 (USD Dollars) with you when you arrive at the airport in Managua to pay for your VISA.

Internet and phones

We have wireless Internet at all student houses and at the study center, but the connection may vary (and sometimes be absent) depending on how many are connected. It is not allowed to download big files, like movies, as this slows down the Internet for everyone else. We strongly recommend you to bring a laptop if you have one. It might be wise to buy a quality adapter in Norway before you leave. The electricity can be unstable in Nicaragua (especially in rainy season), and you should not leave your computer charging longer than necessary. There are plenty of Internet cafés in León and many of them provide Internet and call services, which makes it cheaper to call to Norway.

You can buy a local sim-card for about 5 USD for your smart phone and a cell phone with a local sim-card for about 35 USD (the cheapest). You need to buy prepaid minutes and internet at kiosks or stores, you will find these all around town. We recommend all students to buy sim card from the same phone company as it is cheaper to call then. In our experience “Movistar” is the best phone company, and all staff members use this.

Many parents want to call Kulturstudier in Oslo within a couple of days of your arrival to Nicaragua - It’s important that you call them and tell them that your journey went well and that you are in good shape. **Call or write home as soon as you arrive!**

Communication with Kulturstudier

We appreciate suggestions from students during the semester. It is important for us to make sure that suggestions and grievances are communicated to us while there is still time to make changes. This includes issues with the academic program, housing, food, and other aspects of the program and the welfare of the students. After many years of experience there is usually a reason for the way we do things. And if you ask us we can probably give you the reason. But there is always room for improvement and reminders. So please voice your suggestions.

Compulsory Monday meetings

Every Monday, all students and staff gather for a weekly meeting. The purpose is to share information and to discuss problems and opportunities. These meetings are compulsory. If you for some reason cannot attend, you are responsible for obtaining the information from fellow students.

Suggestion box

At the Study Center, you will find a “suggestion box” where you can put your suggestions and comments.

Talk to us

If you need help with something it is important that you let us know. Do not take for granted that your suffering is obvious and visible to everyone. Use your voice and contact us.

Student representatives

During the first or second weeks Monday-meeting we will ask the students to elect their representatives. The representatives typically meet with members of staff once every week. It is their job to be an intermediary between students and staff, to help make sure that staff know what the problems are and together with students can work together to solve them. For specific occasions, trips, happenings, etc, separate committees can be formed. These will be responsible for planning and carrying out the activities.

Final evaluation form

At the end of the semester you will receive an extensive evaluation form where you are expected to give us your feedback and help us improve.

Complaints

If you have tried the above, and feel that you are not getting serious response, you are welcome to file a complaint by contacting Kulturstudier in Oslo. Preferably in time to make us able to act on your issues. Please write in English: [Feedback and Complaints](#)

If you decide your complaint is not treated seriously by Kulturstudier, and you want to further your complaint beyond Kulturstudier, you can contact the University.

Ethical conduct

In Kulturstudier there is no tolerance for harassment or bullying. We also expect everyone to avoid using swearing and offensive language in their communication with each other. Harassment also includes sexual harassment from staff towards students. If you experience sexual harassment from Kulturstudier staff or lecturers you should report to alarm@kulturstudier.org, which will be treated confidentially. Staff and teachers are informed that sexual attention towards students is strictly prohibited. We expect staff and students to socialize together, but drunkenness or drugs is not accepted. Neither is drunk driving.

Local knowledge

Efficiency is different here in Nicaragua than back home, so being patient is very important! Communication problems often create misunderstandings and rumors. Even those of us that have been living in Nicaragua for a long time must accept that things do not go as smooth as we wish. To get frustrated, angry and stressed and to show immediate irritation will make the situation more difficult and might damage your relationship with Nicaraguans.

In Nicaragua you have other norms and values when it comes to dressing up. To maintain a respectful relationship with the local population, it is important that we analyze and think about what might be considered as inappropriate. As a general rule, the more decent you are dressed and the better behaved you are, the more respect and less negative attention you will receive. In other words: The respect you get is connected to the respect you show. When we have classes at UNAN Campus the general rule is to wear long pants/skirts and t-shirt/top. We advise you to observe how the Nicaraguan students dress, and then try to adapt to this.

A Scandinavian student will attract more attention in León than in Stavanger or Bergen. This means that people you don't know might want to know about who you are and if you are a part of the Norwegian group. To get the acceptance of a group of 70 students and to integrate them in the society in León, it is important to think about what kind of signals we give. Each student serves as a representative for the group and can influence how Nicaraguans view the entire group.

It is also important to understand that gender roles are different here than at home. This can be a source of misunderstandings, especially for Scandinavian girls. Girls get a lot of attention from local men. Whether they like it or not this is a part of Nicaraguan culture, and you should find a strategy to deal with these encounters that will be understood by the local population. Men will also find examples of gender differences.

General routines

You will travel to Nicaragua as students, not as charter tourists. It is up to you to choose what you want to do during your spare time, and it is up to you to choose what you want to make of your stay. We do recommend that you begin your daily routines as fast as possible in order to get used to life in León. Even though you will be studying in another continent, there are many routines and activities you can continue with. The most important thing is to get started with your studies, reading, and to remember the study habits you had at home. We also recommend you to bring running shoes and a gym bag in order to take advantage of the many training opportunities you can find in León. León is a mid-sized city and has cultural resources, such as museums, live music, quiz etc. Students usually fill their free time in cinemas, concerts, voluntary work, course activities and sports. There are several volcanoes near Leon that you can hike and a new outdoor/indoor football centre with artificial grass, which closes at 22.00 hours.

Our Field Manager Rigo Sampson also work as guide for out-door activities year around and during weekends while the semester is running. They will be happy to advice or organise for you. For more information on Eco-tourism visit: www.journeynicaragua.org or write to journeynicaragua@gmail.com

Climate

Nicaragua has a range of microclimates. On the Pacific side (where León is located), *invierno* (winter), or rainy season, runs from May to November, rainiest in September and October.

Verano (summer), or dry season, is November to April. For the Autumn semester you should bring a light rain jacket. You can buy cheap rain boots, rain poncho and umbrellas at the markets in León.

Mold (mugg) is a common problem in the tropics, especially in rainy season. Clothes, books, shoes etc. can easily get damaged if they are kept many days in closed compartments, such as in your suitcase, a drawer, or in a closed cabinet, without much ventilation. The way to prevent mold is by ventilation. Keep windows, drawers, closets and doors open as much as possible. Keeping the fan on helps.

Life in Nicaragua follows another rhythm than at home - an early start in the morning, very calm after lunch and a lot of people and movements after sundown. It is normally quiet in the streets after 9-10 in the evening. The reason for us to start with an early breakfast is to follow the normal

time schedule in the country we are staying in. In Nicaragua it is so hot at midday that it is the morning and afternoon/night that is the most productive period of the day. For the night owls among us this might be a problem, but due to the time difference you will probably wake up at 05 o'clock in the morning anyway, which will later help you to come in to the right rhythm.

Safety

It is important to remember that Nicaragua is a country with many poor people and with a history of violence. However, it is also said to be one of the safest countries in Central America. But still, we need to give you some advice on safety here, and we will give you more advice once you are in León.

- It is not safe, especially not for girls, to walk alone during the night.
- We always recommend taking a taxi after dark.
- Never visit a place alone at night if you are drunk!
- Don't accept drinks from strangers
- Always keep an eye on your belongings and don't walk around with a lot of cash or valuables.
- Even in your home it is best to keep your things in good order and not leave your valuables, cameras etc. out. We trust our employees, but we don't want to cause temptation that they can't resist. If something disappears it will usually lead to an awkward situation with accusations, arguments etc.

Going to the police station in Nicaragua can be a long and frustrating process, and if you don't speak good Spanish you need to hire a translator. In most cases you can prevent getting robbed by following our simple safety advices. If you need to report something to the police it needs to be done within 24 hours after the incident at the police station in the city where it happened.

Drinking and driving is quite common in Nicaragua, but it is against the law, as anywhere else. Never take a ride with someone who has been drinking. If you are caught drunk driving, or taking a ride with someone who has been drinking, this is considered as highly irresponsible behavior and might be a reason for expulsion from the program.

You should not carry around your passport in León, but it is wise to keep a copy of it in your wallet. It can be smart to scan important documents such as your passport, insurance papers and flight tickets, and mail this to yourself so that you always have it available if you need it. When you travel outside of León you need to bring your passport, as most hotels ask for it during check in, and just in case you get stopped by the police.

Drugs

Kulturstudier takes drug consumption very seriously. Not only to fight it, but also to maintain our good reputation. Even though Nicaragua has strict laws concerning the use of drugs, the consumption is common in some parts of León. Many will see and be offered drugs, and might be told that you don't have to worry about the police. This is not true. The local police have a very good control of the drug consumption in León, and if you don't keep away from it, the police might use you as an example. The prisons in Nicaragua are pretty crowded and not very nice. A Scandinavian student in there would probably receive a lot of attention both by the media and the Norwegian Embassy in Guatemala. This would also make it hard to find a job later on in life. In other words: Kulturstudier has zero tolerance for the use of drugs among our students, and our immediate and only action is to expel you from the program.

Health

Preparations before leaving: *prevention is the best cure!*

We encourage all students travelling to León to consult a doctor or a vaccination clinic before travelling to Nicaragua. The doctors and nurses there will be able to advise you on which vaccines you should take prior to your travels. Remember that some of the vaccines must be taken 2-3 times in order to have an effect. You should therefore not consult the doctor just a few days prior to your departure! If you travel prior, during or after your stay in Nicaragua to other places, this is important information to give to the vaccination clinic.

Generally, it is safe to eat out in León, but be careful with salad, uncooked vegetables and meat when eating in certain places, especially in the street. The water in León is considered drinkable, but we recommend that you buy bottled water, at least the first weeks.

Some of you will get sick in the beginning of your stay. Usually we are talking about annoying, but not very dangerous stomach infections. They can be partly avoided by wise choices about where and what you eat and drink, and hygiene. It is important to drink a lot of water. We recommend at least 3 liters a day of total fluid intake, because it is easy to get dehydrated. When you have a stomach infection it is smart to drink water mixed with oral rehydration salts (ORS). You can buy it in the pharmacy under the name "Suero oral". The milk from a green coconut and the sports drink Gatorade/Poweraid also help. The ORS allows the body to absorb more liquid and minerals even though you may have diarrhea. Therefore, this will help you to get on your feet faster. Hand hygiene is the most important precaution. Wash your hands often and thereby avoid most of the germs.

Every year there are cases of Dengue Fever and Chikungunya in León, which is a tropical disease, caused by the virus transmitted through mosquito bites. The symptoms are high fever, fatigue, headache, pain in the eyes, rash and muscle pain. The virus often spreads more during the rainy season (the autumn) and it normally affects the local population. No vaccine exists to prevent this virus, but you can protect yourself by putting on mosquito repellent and use a mosquito net. The mosquitos are most active during sunrise and sunset, so this is the most

important time to put on mosquito repellent and/or wear long-sleeved clothes. If you are worried about having Dengue Fever you should see a doctor right away.

Malaria is not considered a problem in León, and it is therefore not common for the local population or visitors to use malaria prevention pills. Some students that have planned to visit malaria-contaminated areas have taken the pills though. It's up to each one of you to choose if you want to take these pills, but be aware of the side effects. Consult a doctor before you go traveling.

Roommates have a certain responsibility to show some extra care when one of you are sick. This means for example to help your roommate to get to the doctor, help with food and to help buying medicine. If you can't do it yourself, we would like your roommate to inform the staff so that we can follow up. **It is important that the staff knows about your condition so they can help you and update your family if they get phone calls from home.** If you are in a clinic/hospital, we help you by getting in contact with the insurance company for you.

In the houses we have a list of doctors and specialists that we usually use in León. The majority speaks English and are able to make home visits if necessary. We usually only get students with minor health problems here in León, but when you are far away from home, it can feel more dramatic than at home. Remember to take care of each other, and to contact the staff if you don't feel safe.

Culture Shock

To stay in a foreign country for a long time is usually a wonderful experience, but you should expect some difficulties during your stay. Most people go through phases characterized by alternating mental ups and downs. This phenomenon is common enough to have its own term, "culture shock". It may be a good idea to share these experiences with your co-students so you can help each other to see your reactions in a bigger perspective. Culture shock is often divided into 3 phases:

Tourist phase - you have just arrived in the country and everything is new and exciting. **Sentencing phase - the reaction phase**, you've come across the first "top". What is new and different is not that exciting anymore, so you are more vulnerable to the frustration of the things you are not accustomed to - the language is different, differences in behavior and way of thinking, customs. You may experience to feel tired and sad and less sociable and to have strong homesickness. This may lead to you being less patient and more irritable. **Reorientation phase** - you start to get used to and accept cultural differences. Instead of criticizing, it is easier to appreciate the differences and understand how to navigate in the new society.

Reverse culture shock

It sounds strange, but after having lived overseas for several months, one can often experience a reverse culture shock when returning home. You have finally begun to get used to life in the host country. When back home, everyday life feels different. Things have changed, or you have been given a new look at things. You may feel that you have difficulties to fit into society again. It is often difficult to share the experiences with family and friends, as they do not really understand what you have experienced. It can be useful to get together with others who have been travelling too, and share experiences and personal challenges from time abroad.

The end

Every semester in León is different from one another. Like previous Kulturstudier students, you will form a part of how the students will be perceived by the local population. It is also up to the group and each individual student to choose how you will spend your months in Nicaragua. It is easy to just stay together as Scandinavians or tourists. With Kulturstudier you will get a soft landing and a steady study pace, but if you want to experience Nicaragua, you have to explore it by yourself and look for friendships and experiences on your own.

We look forward to getting to know you, and wish you good luck with your stay!