



Student Delegation FAQ

When does the delegation take place?

June 17 – July 2, 2027

What will I do while on Ometepe Island?

Developing relationships between our sister islands is a foundational part of the delegation so spending time with your host family and community members in your town is important. It's an opportunity to share about your respective communities and cultures, form new friendships, try traditional foods, and develop your Spanish. Students are clustered in small towns and spend most of the day together, working on a multiday community project, visiting with other host families, and participating in daily check-ins and occasional outings (past trips have included kayaking through mangroves, a guided hike up Maderas Volcano, and swimming in Lake Nicaragua). Students take part in island life through the community project and other volunteer activities, soccer games, festive meals, and an outing with host families to the local springs or other special locale.

How much Spanish do I need?

The more Spanish you know, the more sophisticated conversation you can have. That said, we've had students with only Spanish 1 enjoy warm and satisfying relationships with their host families. Yes, skill and vocabulary matter, but so does attitude. Students who embrace a trial-and-error approach (and use body language and facial expressions when words fail) do well. Humor and hand motions go a long way.

Is it safe?

Yes. Students are accompanied by responsible adults: one or two chaperones, who have deep experience leading trips, working with youth, and traveling in under-resourced countries, and one medical chaperone, who is a licensed medical professional. In past years, there have been 3-6 students per chaperone. Students receive training in water purification and self-care.

Students are also supported by the deep connections between our two communities cultivated over decades of cultural exchange and friendship. BOSIA maintains an office on Ometepe with a full-time manager from Nicaragua to facilitate all aspects of the partnership, including the delegation, and an office assistant from Bainbridge Island, typically a recent college graduate.

Nicaragua, like many countries across the globe, experiences shifts in political power. Our friends on Ometepe and our Bainbridge volunteers, who visit regularly (some of whom live part time on Ometepe), keep us attuned to the political climate, both nationally and locally. The delegation does not run in time of heightened political instability.

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As with any international travel, there is an element of risk—roads and vehicles might be poorly maintained, there is exposure to viruses and insects, and there is an active volcano on the island. Taking on risk is a personal decision but should be weighed in the context of the risks we assume in life on Bainbridge Island and through other travel experiences and what steps we can take to mitigate it.

How are the host families chosen?

Families are screened in person in their homes by our office staff, town leads, members of the Student Delegation Committee, and Ometepinos who are active in the Sister Islands Association. Many families have children who received college scholarships through BOSIA or have volunteered on BOSIA-sponsored community projects and are not strangers to the program. Families are not paid. It is considered an honor to host a student from Bainbridge Island. Families receive training in water purification, safe food preparation, and the cultural differences they will encounter in hosting a student from Bainbridge Island.

Many students remain in close contact with host families and return to the island on their own.

Where will I sleep? What will I eat?

You can expect a bedroom of your own in the family home. Nicaragua is an under-resourced country, and your accommodations will be simple (certainly no AC). Your host family will prepare your meals, typically plenty of rice and beans, fresh fish, plantains, and an abundance of fruit. It is not uncommon for families to serve students far more than they leave for themselves.

What kind of commitment is required of delegates?

In addition to the actual trip, students commit to participating in monthly meetings covering topics such as health and wellness, cultural sensitivity, host families, and packing and designed to cultivate responsibility and collaboration in the group. Students also help plan the BOSIA fundraiser.

Students must be approved for travel by their doctors. With the help of parents, they also complete medical paperwork, receive required vaccinations, fill prescriptions, and secure a passport in a timely fashion to ensure a smooth and safe experience for all.

Many students choose to continue their involvement after the delegation is over as volunteers, student members of the BOSIA board, and years down the road, as the BOSIA office assistant on Ometepe.

Does my involvement in BOSIA count toward BHS National Honor Society volunteer hours?

Yes. Hours spent on the community project, planning the BOSIA fundraiser, and serving on the BOSIA board count toward this requirement.

How much does it cost and is there financial aid?

BOSIA is a nonprofit and run entirely by volunteers. We charge only what is needed to cover the cost of the trip, typically about \$2,800. Financial aid is available.

Where should I go for more information?

Visit www.bainbridgeometepe.org.