

YService International: Colombia.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who is this trip for?

This trip is for volunteers and staff of the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities. It's going to be a life-changing experience for all participants.

- Every participant will be responsible for the trip fee and airfare.
- YMCA staff members will need to take PTO
- All participants are covered by insurance relevant to volunteer service to the YMCA.

How much money do we have to raise?

Each participant will be responsible for raising \$1500, plus flight costs. Flights are roughly \$900 round trip, though you can also use miles if you have them.

What does the cost of the trip include?

By raising \$1500 per person, YGTC DIG is able to cover all food, housing, transportation within Colombia, event and venue entrance fees, and building materials for our projects.

Where in Colombia will we go?

To the capital, Bogotá, and to the mountains just south of the city at YMCA Camp Bochica.

What will we do?

We will serve the Bogotá YMCA by building teambuilding elements that they have asked us to build, and sharing expertise in fundraising, social work, and camping development.

Our time will be roughly split in half, with the first half being spent at YMCA Camp Bochica and the second half in Bogotá.

Do I need to speak Spanish?

No, although it would be wise to put in some effort to learn common words and phrases.

Where will we be staying?

All nights will be spent either at a modest hotel near the Bogota Central YMCA or at YMCA Camp Bochica.

Tell me about flights.

Flights can be purchased centrally and at a discount through the YMCA's travel agent. If you are able to arrange a better deal through different means then by all means do so.

Should I bring my kids?

You may, however know that the trip will not be tailored to children. Some of the work we will see done by the Bogotá YMCA may give rise to delicate conversations. For instance, the Bogotá YMCA does incredible education work with children of sex workers in an area of town where prostitution is legal. Parents can use their judgment.

Can I bring my cell phone, laptop, etc...?

Cell service is generally good if you have an international plan and wi-fi can be found. However, we ask that you concentrate on leaving as much work behind you as is possible.

How many people will be going?

6 to 12.

Do I need immunizations for the trip?

Consult your local travel health specialist and refer to www.cdc.gov for the latest information.

Tell me about money in Colombia.

Most locations accept major cards, however it is a good idea to exchange some dollars to pesos for small purchases. That can be done at the airport. Some ATMS only permit withdrawals from debit cards.

What is the dress code?

Bring comfortable clothes and shoes good for walking. Temperatures range from chilly to quite warm and rain is common. One classier outfit would be a good idea for evening wear.

Can I take a shower every day?

Yes.

Who will be leading the group?

Alyson Gagner and Joe Cottew will be the primary contacts leading up the trip, and will team up with Bogotá YMCA staff to guide it in country. Alyson and Joe are

YMCA of the Twin Cities staff members.

Alyson and Joe are working with staff of the YMCA of Bogotá to plan the day to day itinerary. Once in the country the Bogotá team will guide the experience.

Alyson can be reached at alyson.gagner@ymcamn.org

Joe can be reached at joe.cottew@ymcamn.org

How safe is Bogotá?

The areas in which we will be travelling are safe when standard travel precautions are taken such as staying with the group, being careful at night, and remaining away from certain areas as advised by Bogotá YMCA staff.

We would not be organizing the trip if we believed we were putting participants at risk. While we cannot assure safety, we will do all possible to manage what risk there is.

Please review the State Department website for their observations about Colombia (<http://www.state.gov/travel/>)

Is there any recommended reading?

Several recent books could be of interest for those looking to put their visit in context:

In particular, *Born in Blood and Fire* (3rd Ed.), *Colombia: A Concise History*, *Short Walks from Bogotá*, and *100 Years of Solitude* all provide interesting perspective at varying geographic scope and spanning the fiction-nonfiction spectrum.

The Bogotá YMCA website is www.ymcabogota.org and the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities global page is at www.ymcatwincities.org/community_programs/global_services/