



## FAQ's for Prospective Student Teachers

### 1. What **PASSPORT / VISA** information do I need?

Our Visa Information document online outlines everything you need, but here's a recap of a few essentials.

If you don't have a passport, see [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for application instructions. Getting a passport usually takes 4-5 weeks, or 8 business days if expedited for a fee.

To enter the country, you need only a passport (in good condition, good for at least 180 days, with two blank pages) and a **return or continuing ticket to leave the country**. Entering like this, the office of *Migración* at the airport will usually stamp your passport with permission to be in the country for 90 days without a visa, called *Permiso de Ingreso y Permanencia (PIP)*. If you will not be here any longer than that, that's all the visa information you need!

If you expect to be in the country between 90 and 180 days, you can do so without a visa, but before the 90 days expire you will need to apply for an extension, which costs **\$90.000**. If you are coming for at least 180 days, you will need a visa.

### 2. Where are the **SCHOOL YEAR** calendars, for deciding on travel dates?

You can find them on the Potential Teachers/Staff page, both this year's and the tentative one for next year. School starts August 7 (a holiday), with **New Teacher Orientation** starting **July 23** and All Teacher Orientation starting **August 27**, 2018.

Because of the **high altitude**, we suggest visitors consider coming a day or 2 before they need to get going full steam – you never know if you'll find yourself just tired or sluggish the first several days. Drinking lots of water seems to help some.

### 3. Is there a way I could get **HEALTH INSURANCE** when I am there?

Unless you're an ECA employee with a national ID card, we cannot offer you Colombian health insurance. We normally ask visitors to count on their U.S. health insurance or invest in travel insurance for the duration of their stay. Most U.S. insurance policies cover you internationally for 60 days each time you leave the States. When that's not adequate, we require visitors to get travel insurance, sending us scanned proof of coverage before they come down.

### 4. **HOUSING** – Where would I live?

We have several host homes with staff or friends of ECA. For those who would like to experience living the culture and language, we could arrange staying with one of our families. Most of our foreign staff live near a huge mall with a modern food court, visible on this map: <https://goo.gl/BnwMSh>

Here is a link to the **Housing Rules** with some general information: <https://goo.gl/W5FyM4>

5. How much does **HOUSING COST** and when/how do I pay for it?

As stated in the Housing Rules, monthly rent is **\$450.000** (450 thousand pesos), due to your host by your 5<sup>th</sup> day as a tenant, then due before each new 30-day period begins if staying longer than a month. If less than a month, it is **\$15.000** per night. Some hosts welcome payment in dollars, which could be a transfer to their U.S. bank account. Rent covers utilities including hi-speed Internet. Read the **Housing Rules** for more details.

6. How much would **FOOD COST**?

A good place to start is our online document [Budget for Foreign Staff](#) (Menu / Get Involved / Potential Teachers/Staff / Getting to Bogotá), which gives a general idea of the minimum our staff can expect to pay for various expenses.

You are welcome to eat the cafeteria lunches every teacher workday for half price: normally \$10.300, so **\$5.150**. They prefer that you pay in advance for a month, but weekly is OK if need be. With lunch being the main meal of the day, it's rather substantial with 2 choices of protein, plenty of starches, and a decent salad bar. Breakfast and supper at home could be pretty simple.

7. What about **TRANSPORTATION COSTS**?

You are welcome to ride the teacher van to/from school for free. You'll have about a 10-minute walk to the pick-up point. If you miss the van, there are buses that go out to the school, which cost **\$2.200**. To get around town there's also taxis and *Transmilenio*, with minimum fares of **\$4.400** and **\$2.200** respectively.

8. How do I get **CASH**?

It's easy to use a bankcard to withdraw cash from any **ATM** here. There will be some bank fees, but most foreigners here go that route rather than bring cash and get it exchanged. There is a money exchange store conveniently located in the large shopping mall not far from where you would be living, but traveling down with a large amount of cash is not the best option.

9. What is the **EXCHANGE RATE**?

Here's a link that gives you up-to-the-minute exchange rates for COP (Colombian pesos): <http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=1&From=USD&To=COP>. It's helpful to know that \$150.000 is a hundred and fifty thousand pesos – the period is not the decimal place; the comma is. Officially it would be \$150.000,00, but with the smallest coin being 50 pesos, decimal places aren't usually shown for COP's.

10. What about **RIDES** from/to the **AIRPORT**?

We will arrange for rides both ways, usually asking parents of our students to make the airport runs. Sometimes the parents (or their driver) don't speak much English, but they will be prepared with an ECA sign and know exactly where to take you. A few days

before your arrival you will receive a copy of the email we send them, with all the necessary data in both English and Spanish. Traveling with a phone that can make/receive calls or WhatsApp messages internationally can enhance your experience but isn't necessary. Be sure to read the [Arrival in Bogotá](#) document on our Potential Teachers/Staff page the week before you fly down.

11. How do I **GET ACCLIMATED** to Bogotá?

Your host will help you out, plus you will be assigned a **buddy** who will accompany you to get cash from an ATM, show you where you can buy food and other necessities nearby, and help you navigate public transportation, among other things.