



FAQs for Prospective Student Teachers

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

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

If you do not have a passport, see 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 should 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 is 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 PIP expires, you will need to apply for an extension, which costs **\$90.000**. If you are coming for 180+ days, you will need a visa.

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

You can find them on our website under School Life / Calendars as well as under **Work With Us**. You can usually find the current school year and the tentative one for the next school year there.

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 will find yourself just tired or sluggish the first several days. Drinking lots of water helps some.

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

Unless you are an ECA employee with a national ID card, we cannot offer you Colombian health insurance. Most U.S. insurance policies cover their insured internationally for 60 days each time they leave the States. When that is 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 Colombian 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/Logistics** document: <https://goo.gl/W5FyM4>

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

As stated in the Housing/Logistics document, monthly rent is **\$450.000** (450 thousand pesos), due to your host by your 5th 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/Logistics** document for more details.

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

A good place to start is our online document [Budget for Foreign Staff](#) (Work With Us / Benefits / Budget for Foreign Staff), 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 \$11.500, so **\$5.750** (2019-20). It is preferred that you pay for a month in advance, but weekly is OK. With lunch being the main meal of the day, it is rather substantial with 2 choices of protein, plenty of starches, and a good varying salad bar. Breakfast and supper at home can be pretty simple.

7. What about **TRANSPORTATION COSTS**?

You are welcome to ride the teacher van to/from school for free. You will have a 10- to 20-minute walk to/from the pick-up/drop-off points. If you miss the van, there are buses that go out to the school, which cost **\$2.400**. To get around town there are also taxis and *Transmilenio*, with minimum fares of **\$4.400** and **\$2.400** respectively.

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

It is easy to use a foreign 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 flying down with a large amount of cash is not wise.

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

Here is 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 is 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 are not usually shown for COPs.

10. What about **RIDES** to/from 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) do not 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 an email we send to both you and your ride, 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 is not necessary. Be sure to read the [Arrival in Bogotá](#) document on our website the week before you fly down: Work With Us / Relocation Support / Airport Pick up.

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.