

# BorderLinks

## Delegation Orientation & Registration

620 S 6th Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85701

Telephone: 520-628-8263 Fax: 520-740-0242

E-mail: [program@borderlinks.org](mailto:program@borderlinks.org) Website: [www.borderlinks.org](http://www.borderlinks.org)

Dear BorderLinks Participant,

We are glad that you are considering a BorderLinks delegation to the US-Mexico border. As a bi-national organization, BorderLinks brings people together to build bridges of solidarity across North and Latin American borders and promote intercultural understanding and respect. To that end, BorderLinks delegations provide an opportunity to carefully examine questions related to immigration policy, free trade (NAFTA), labor conditions, human rights, environmental and health issues, US-Mexico relations, and the connections between economic structures, poverty, and environmental destruction. The border region is an area where many of the patterns of international economics and politics affecting all communities around the globe can be viewed in sharp focus. We hope that you will return to your community not only with a fuller understanding of the problems that face our world, but also with new energy to respond to those challenges.

This orientation packet contains information you will need when applying for your trip, including requirements of participants. Please read it carefully. You can type your responses directly into this form using (free) Adobe Reader Version 8.0 or higher. After you type in your answers, follow the instructions on the last page to print the necessary pages for your signature, then return these with your trip fees to your group leader or directly to our office. *Save* a copy of this application on your computer, then *email it to [program@borderlinks.org](mailto:program@borderlinks.org)*. (If need be, you can also print these forms out, fill them in by hand, and then either give them to your group leader or mail them to our office.) Be sure to contact us before your arrival if you have any questions.

This packet contains:

1. Orientation to the program and trip logistics
2. Health information
3. Payment information

We must receive all completed registration pages at least 6 weeks prior to the trip and the full payment at least 4 weeks before the trip begins.

You will not need to bring this packet with you when you come. Please do bring your curiosity, open mind, and flexibility. Do not hesitate to call our office if you have further questions.

*We look forward to seeing you at the border!*

The BorderLinks Staff

## Orientation for Educational Delegations

### **The Program**

BorderLinks facilitates experiential educational delegations along the border that focus on issues of globalization, economic policies, immigration, and community organizing. Delegation participants have the opportunity to meet with people of differing perspectives on a variety of social, political, economical, faith, and environmental issues. BorderLinks strives to coordinate visits and talks with people whose lives are directly affected by the politics of the borderlands.

BorderLinks delegations are based on popular education pedagogy. As such, we recognize that all participants bring unique perspectives and backgrounds. Throughout the delegation, reflection will be built into the schedule to allow the group to share thoughts and learning, formulate ideas, and discuss experiences. We are all learners and teachers and ask everyone to fully engage in visits, discussions, and reflections. BorderLinks works to combine theory, practice, reflection and action to provide enriching educational experiences for all participants in our learning community.

A typical day on a delegation consists of three to four meetings or site-visits that are held both in Arizona and Sonora, Mexico. While most of the time will be spent on the Mexican side of the border, groups should be prepared to spend some time in Tucson. Activities may include talks with activists and organizers working to bring about social change, tours of maquiladoras and discussions with factory managers and workers, and discussions with academics, artists, and service providers. The specific trip details and themes can be arranged with your assigned delegations trip leader. Due to the changing schedules of our contacts and special events, every delegation may look different, but will still address the same themes.

Participants should be aware that BorderLinks delegations can be challenging, as we move beyond tourism and critically analyze the implications of these issues on both sides of the border. We ask our participants to come prepared to be flexible and ready to learn. Plans may change from day to day, as it is sometimes difficult to stay on a fixed schedule in a dynamic environment like the border. Also, due to the diversity of visits during a delegation, there may be stretches of time spent traveling in a vehicle. Regardless of any trip changes that may occur, you will have an educational and memorable experience.

### **Living Arrangements**

Tucson: Delegations will stay in the BorderLinks dorm area, which comfortably sleeps 30-40 people. Please be prepared to share rooms and sleep on a bunk bed. All bedding is provided. Tucson is located in the desert, therefore we ask participants to conserve water whenever possible. Cleaning tasks will be shared by the group. Meals at BorderLinks in Tucson are vegetarian.

Mexico: Most groups spend several days in Mexico and accommodations may vary. Homestays with families in the community and nights spent at a migrant shelter are usually a part of each group's experience. Accommodations we may be used to, such as hot water—or even running water—heat, or air conditioning may not be available. In some situations you might sleep on the floor with a mat and a sleeping bag. Many groups stay a night or two at the BorderLinks community center in Nogales, Mexico, Casa de la Misericordia, which provides dormitory style housing and shower/bathroom facilities with running water. You can arrange special accommodations with the BorderLinks staff in advance of the trip if necessary.

### **Language**

It is not necessary to speak Spanish in order to take part in a BorderLinks trip. A BorderLinks staff person will be available to interpret for group activities and meetings. While this may make it difficult to verbally communicate with others, it will give participants a chance to explore alternative ways of forming bonds with the people you meet, especially during homestays. If you do speak Spanish, we welcome your assistance in helping others to communicate.

## **Personal Stress**

It is important to realize the trip will be physically and emotionally draining. As participants, each person will be expected to adapt quickly to living with people whom you may not have met before. Schedules may change. You will be bombarded with new information and experiences—much of which may be hard to fully understand and process. You may feel uncomfortable some of the time, but we believe that feeling uncomfortable often leads to new learning. We ask delegation participants to stick through the difficult parts and engage with other participants and speakers. This trip is a time for new ideas and relationships, for study and learning.

## **Cultural Sensitivity**

In many ways, the border region is a country unto itself. It is important to approach this time on the border, especially on the Mexican side, in an open-minded and respectful manner. Keep in mind that immigration, labor, and border politics can be extremely emotional and personal topics for many people. Our programs include speakers with a wide range of opinions, and you may not agree with everyone you meet. Participants are welcome to ask hard questions in a respectful manner. Delegations are a time for discussions and dialogues, which helps enhance knowledge and understanding and to create and maintain relationships.

## **Trip Logistics**

### **Weather**

You almost certainly will either be very hot or very cold during your time here. In the winter, count on winter coats, gloves and hats. Dress in layers! In the summer, wear lightweight pants, shirts, modest dresses or skirts. From about May through September, the weather is very hot in southern Arizona and northern Mexico. Nogales is at a higher altitude than Tucson, so it cools off quite a bit more at night. The typical rainy season is between June and August, with winter rains around January and February. From about November through April it can get quite cold, especially in Nogales, where it occasionally snows. Please pack accordingly. We suggest layered clothing since temperatures may vary as much as 60 degrees between day and night. In winter, you may feel much colder than you expect since heating amenities are sparse.

### **Dress**

Our trips are informal, but we may attend worship services at a church or synagogue, so you should bring one outfit you are comfortable wearing on such occasions. Please be mindful of your clothing while in Mexico; dress is slightly more formal than what is common in the United States. Bring shoes that are sturdy and comfortable for walking and travel.

### **Other Items to Bring**

We have some sleeping bags, but if you are part of a large group you may want to bring your own. Although we also have floor mats, we encourage you to bring your own backpacking-type sleeping mat (the kind that rolls up). In winter, you will need a quality sleeping bag; in the summer a sheet and light blanket should be plenty. You will also need to bring your own towel and washcloth. Participants will sometimes leave towels or sleeping bags as donations; we are always happy to receive them!

Please try to pack as lightly as possible. We will move all participants and their luggage, sleeping bags, and mats in the vehicle and there is limited space. Keep in mind groups may be staying at various locations while in Mexico, so having a smaller backpack or duffel bag will be much more manageable. Any larger bags can be left at BorderLinks Tucson while in Mexico.

## Packing list (\* particularly important items)

### In General

\*Towel and washcloth  
\*Flashlight  
Anti-bacterial gel  
Aspirin  
Pepto Bismol  
\*Personal water bottle  
Spanish-English dictionary  
  
Family photos  
\*Sleeping bag  
\*Floor mat  
Earplugs

### In Winter

Warm coat  
Gloves, hat, and scarf  
Thermal top and bottom  
Warm layers

### In Spring and Summer

T-shirts  
Closed toe shoes  
Skirt/Dress  
Light-weight clothing  
Hat  
Sunscreen

*We ask participants to be fully engaged in the delegation experience while with BorderLinks. Please leave ipods/mp3 players, DVD players and disc players at home and limit or avoid cell phone use while on the delegation.*

If you will be staying at someone's home, the best way to thank them for their hospitality is by sharing pictures of your family. Please do not bring gifts.

You may want to carry spending money for any additional purchases on the road. There is no need to exchange to pesos, since dollars are accepted on the border.

## Communications

In order to focus fully on your learning experience, please try to leave work and other concerns at home. In case of emergency, please advise family or friends to call the BorderLinks office at 520-628-8263. During our time in Mexico, our staff will have regular contact with the Tucson office and messages will be relayed to you. If a family or medical crisis arises outside of office hours, you may call 520-449-2104. NOTE: Arizona does not have Daylight Savings Time. During the winter we are on Mountain Time and in the summer we are on Pacific Time.

## Food

In January 2005 we implemented a Sustainable Food Program at the BorderLinks office in Tucson. Through the Sustainable Food Program, BorderLinks seeks to support local food production and educate participants on the importance of understanding the food system and making informed choices as consumers. We try to model a food system that reflects a just relationship between the consumer, the grower and the earth. **As often as possible, meals served at BorderLinks, Tucson consist of local, organic, vegetarian food.** This is made possible through BorderLink's partnership with local growers and production in our on-site garden. The Sustainable Food Coordinator is available to talk with groups about issues of food security and sustainability, particularly on US corn production and its social, economic, and ecological impacts, both domestically and across borders.

## Documents

If you are a U.S. citizen, as of January 2008, you must bring a current passport with you to use as proof of citizenship when we return from Mexico. If you do not have proof of citizenship with you, you will be unable to accompany the group to Mexico. If you are a citizen of another country, you must bring a current passport with an appropriate multiple entry visa and the accompanying paperwork you were issued when you entered the U.S. If you do not have appropriate paperwork, you will be unable to return to the United States. Please check with U.S. Customs and Border Protection for up-to-date requirements: [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov). Any participant who fails to obtain proper travel documents will have to remain at BorderLinks, Tucson while the rest of the group continues their trip. We will attempt to make the participant as comfortable as possible but we cannot be responsible for providing staffing, programming, or meals.

## **Discernment**

The BorderLinks staff reserves the right to remove participants from any or all activities in the event that his/her behavior is disruptive, inappropriate or dangerous to yourself or others. If you are asked to leave the program, you will be responsible for your own travel, food and lodging thereafter, and will forfeit all fees paid to BorderLinks. If you are a minor, you will have appropriate adult supervision, but will be separated from the group and arrangements will be made with your guardian to send you home.

## **Insurance**

We ask you to confirm that you have medical insurance that will cover you during your trip, or that you purchase appropriate short-term medical insurance to cover you in the event of an emergency, both inside and outside the United States. Prior to beginning your delegation, please submit proof in writing that you have obtained this insurance, or sign the waiver indicating that you accept responsibility for any health care costs incurred on the trip. Any travel agent should be able to help advise you on insurance information. BorderLinks assumes no liability for any health care costs. Except in the most extreme cases, participants who are ill or have been injured can be transported to the U.S. side of the border where their regular health insurance policy will cover them.

## **Preparing to Return Home**

Some of the concluding activities of your trip will revolve around addressing the question "What next?" We encourage group and individual reflection on how participants can integrate their BorderLinks experience into their lives, bringing about cross-cultural understanding and positive change in their home communities. With that in mind, we suggest that before you come, you begin brainstorming possibilities to educate or share your experiences and knowledge of border issues when you return.

## **Payment Information**

### **Delegation Fees**

The 2009 cost for BorderLinks delegations is \$125 per person per day. In 2010, the cost will be \$130 per person per day. The fee pays for your food, lodging, programming, and transportation once you reach the trip's starting location (usually Tucson). You are responsible for arranging your own transportation to and from Tucson. In most cases, your local trip coordinator collects fees and applications from each participant and sends them together to BorderLinks.

For a delegation to run, we need a confirmed minimum of 10 registered participants. If there are fewer than 10 participants, we either ask for the group to pay the difference, or we would need to cancel the delegation. If an individual or small group would like to come on a trip, there is often the possibility of adding onto an existing group. Please contact the Education Coordinator at 520-628-8263 or [education@borderlinks.org](mailto:education@borderlinks.org) for details.

Many groups, especially youth groups, raise the money for their trip in their own communities. If your group needs ideas for fundraising, call the BorderLinks office and speak with our Development Coordinator. Alternatively, you can email [development@borderlinks.org](mailto:development@borderlinks.org). We believe the process of organizing and raising funds for the trip can enhance the group's experience by investing them in the delegation preparation and bringing them closer together in the process.

### **Travel**

Groups are asked to make their own travel arrangements when traveling to and from Tucson. Please send your travel information to the Education Coordinator as soon as it is confirmed. Travel may be arranged directly to the Tucson airport where we will pick up groups in our van. Care should be taken to coordinate arrival times to minimize airport trips. Travel may also be arranged into the Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport, sometimes at considerable savings. BorderLinks can recommend a private shuttle service that your group leader can arrange to bring the group from Phoenix to Tucson.

## **Payment Schedule**

When calling to reserve a date for the trip, a \$500 calendar fee will be requested. The calendar fee goes towards the total cost of the trip. Please note, in the event of a cancellation, this calendar fee is non-refundable.

Please send your registration forms and fees to BorderLinks as soon as possible – at least six weeks before your scheduled trip date. The remaining balance is due 4 weeks prior to arrival.

## **Health Information**

As you may be aware, Mexico is a country that lacks some of the infrastructure that we take for granted in the United States. That reality brings with it a complex array of health-related issues. In Nogales, and other border cities, there are many neighborhoods that lack running water, electricity, basic sanitation measures, and safe drinking water. Also, they may not have access to such municipal services as regular garbage collection. Dust, contamination from maquiladoras and traffic, and other environmental issues all impact the health of borderlands residents.

The most common illness travelers to Mexico experience is traveler's diarrhea, which results from ingesting contaminated water. It is uncomfortable, but almost always self-limiting and rarely dangerous. It can usually be prevented by washing your hands before eating, drinking only purified water, and eating only foods that have been thoroughly cooked. Diarrhea can be treated by replacing fluids to prevent dehydration, continued eating, and if necessary, Pepto Bismol and antibiotics.

Other more serious illnesses, such as hepatitis A and B, typhoid, salmonella, intestinal parasites or encephalitis, might also be encountered. However, it is extremely rare for a trip participant to return home with anything worse than a queasy stomach.

## **Before You Come**

Please make sure that all your common vaccinations are up to date, especially your tetanus booster. Talk with your health care provider about where you are going and discuss any personal concerns you may have. Be sure to bring any medication, as well as prescriptions, that you need while in Tucson and Mexico.

Our advisor at the University of Arizona International Traveler's Health Service recommends that trip participants consider getting vaccinated against typhoid, Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. Vaccination for hepatitis A needs to be done four weeks prior to your trip. Hepatitis B and typhoid vaccinations take effect in 7-10 days. All of these vaccinations are recommended for international travel. Call your health care provider or local county health department for more information.

Good sanitation and hygiene prevent all three of these diseases. Although Hep-B and typhoid are rare in the US, Hep-A outbreaks do occur. We strongly recommend that participants get hepatitis A vaccinations (which with a booster lasts for years) or a single immune globulin shot, which is effective immediately and lasts for 3 months.

## **Health While You Are With Us**

Early in your trip, BorderLinks staff will go over guidelines about easy ways to choose safe food, protect yourself against diarrhea, and deal with cultural concerns about eating or drinking with our hosts. You will be able to discuss more in depth any health concerns you may have. Throughout your trip, BorderLinks will always have a supply of purified water available and will work with our Mexican hosts to assure safe food preparation and handling.

## **Guidelines to Keeping Healthy on Your Trip**

1. Always wash your hands before eating.
2. Drink only purified water, and use it also for brushing your teeth.
3. Watch out for “hidden water.” Avoid raw fruit or vegetables that may have been washed in unpurified water. Also watch out for unpurified ice and uncooked salsa.
4. Find a balance between protecting your health and being open to new experiences and cultures. Too much stress over health concerns can make you sick. Too little attention also can make you sick.

## **Health After Your Trip**

If you get sick after your trip be sure to tell your health care provider where you have been. Our medical advisor also suggests that trip participants receive a tuberculosis skin test annually.