

Instituto Venezolano de Investigación de PROUT
PROUT Research Institute of Venezuela

Volunteer Internship Orientation Manual



Instituto Venezolano
de Investigación de Prout

Prout Research Institute
of Venezuela

Updated: January 11, 2010

The Mission of the Prout Research Institute of Venezuela is to empower all people to improve their quality of life and live in a more just society by fostering the development of worker cooperatives, self-reliant communities, environmental protection, universal ethics and spiritual values.

The Vision of the Prout Research Institute of Venezuela is to be an independent model institution, recognized in the national and international community for its research, training, conferences and publications. We will study the potential of each area and analyze current policies, applying the dynamic principles of the Progressive Utilization Theory (Prout) to measurably improve the standard of living and the quality of life of the citizens we serve.

We strive to strengthen worker cooperatives, so that people, by working together, become a strong force to create true economic democracy and regional self-reliance. By promoting high quality education and by raising consciousness, we work to enable communities to determine their own economic future.

Prout's goal is to achieve the maximum, rational and sustainable use of natural resources as well as to develop the physical, mental and spiritual potential of people for the ever progressive well-being of all living beings. The Institute will develop specific proposals that promote land, fiscal and monetary reforms and other positive initiatives. We are dedicated to working cooperatively with other governmental and non-governmental organizations in Venezuela, Latin America and the world for the country's integral and sustainable development.

Values Statement

We believe that all people deserve:

- The right to live in dignity with the minimum requirements guaranteed: food, clothing, housing, education and medical care.
- The right to an honest job with just wages and a clean, sustainable environment
- The power to make decisions over their own resources, environment and working conditions
- Fair and sustainable trade

We oppose:

- corruption
- violations of human rights
- ecologically unsustainable business practices
- economic rules that adversely impact communities, national governments and entire regions of the world
- Concentration of ownership of land and natural resources in the hands of a few

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. THE PRI-VEN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM.....	5
Introduction to the Institute.....	5
Benefits - PRI Venezuela will.....	5
Welcome by Dada Maheshvarananda.....	6
Facilities.....	7
What is the role of the volunteer intern?.....	7
Your Photo and Resume for the PRI-Ven Webpage.....	7
Venezuelan News.....	7
The 40-hour work week.....	8
Meetings.....	8
Working with locals.....	8
Learning Spanish.....	8
B. LIFE AT QUINTA PROUT.....	10
Welcome – Norms and Rules of the House.....	10
General House Schedule	10
Conduct.....	11
Coming and Going.....	11
Sleeping Arrangements and Rooms.....	11
Yoga and Meditation.....	12
Yoga	12
Meditation.....	12
Cleaning Routine.....	13
The Office	13
Clothing.....	14
Cooking Routine.....	15
The Kitchen.....	15
The Garden	15
Bathrooms	16
Washing Clothes	16
Directions to Centro Madre (AMURT) in San Jose de Barlovento.....	16
Norms for Centro Madre.....	17
Possible areas of Interest and Assistance.....	17
Publicity.....	17
Academic Discourse.....	17
Additional Background Information.....	19
C. LIFE IN CARACAS.....	23
Introduction to the City	23
Geography.....	23
Political Polarization.....	23
Passport	24
Changing Money	24
Cell Phone	24
Shopping.....	25
Exiting the Country.....	25
Health and Dental.....	25

Culture Shock.....	26
Working Together.....	27
Visa Renewal and Immigration.....	28
Transportation.....	29
Parks, Gardens and Excursions	30
Entertainment and Culture.....	30
Cafes, Bars and Restaurants.....	31
Recommended Reading.....	31
Check list for what to bring:.....	32

A. THE PRI-VEN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Introduction to the Institute

WELCOME!

As an intern of The Prout Research Institute of Venezuela, you are committing yourself to assisting cooperatives, rural development and economic democracy in Venezuela, to make cooperative economics a reality. We live and work collectively in a research and action environment.

This is an opportunity to experience and discover what is really happening in Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution. There are successes and failures, and it is important to keep your eyes and ears open to both, while we strive to develop alternative solutions.

Benefits - PRI Venezuela will

- train you in the basics of Prout
- teach you how the Institute and the larger Proutist Universal network functions
- work collectively, where every idea counts. With time, your role in the team will evolve into what suits you.
- provide your food and transportation to work sites.
- provide a working environment that is clean, fair, safe, respectful of all, and free of any kind of exploitation.
- try to fairly resolve any problems, grievances or difficulties you may have while you volunteer with us.
- provide a spiritual environment to inspire you in your personal development.

Welcome by Dada Maheshvarananda

“Namaskar” is a yogic greeting in Sanskrit which means “I greet the divinity within you with all the charms of my mind and the love of my heart.”

The Prout Research Institute of Venezuela is the passion of my life. It is the first of its kind as almost no Prout workers or Proutists have been able to concentrate their full time to researching, writing and teaching Prout.

I am honored to be working with our “dream team,” because collectively we can do so much more together than we can working alone. In addition to our international volunteers, we also collaborate with Proutists in other countries on projects, share our resources and inspire one another.

When the founder of Prout, Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, visited Venezuela in 1979. He said: “Venezuela needs good spiritual political leaders. If Venezuela can produce spiritual political leaders, it will be not only the leader of Latin America, but also the leader of the planet.” Of course he gave similar messages to Proutists from every country – still these words are very inspiring to us and to all Venezuelans.

President Hugo Chávez is calling for a Socialism for the 21st Century, but he admits he doesn't know what that means. Sarkar said, “Our Prout is Progressive Socialism,” and in fact, Venezuelan audiences appreciate the rational outlook and common sense principles of Prout. We have consistently found that doors are open and government officials are receptive to Prout's ideas. I believe that this is a historical opportunity to put Prout into practice.

I personally enjoy growing organic vegetables and more fruit trees in our garden. We have planted and harvested mangoes, bananas, lemon, chico (sapodilla), papaya, tomatoes, spinach, oregano, ginger, turmeric, lemon grass, and we're planting more.

One of our strengths is a model of Prout in practice, Centro Madre, two hours from Caracas. Directed by Didi Ananda Sadhana for the past 10 years, it is an exemplary Ananda Marga Master Unit Community Center. In 2009, the agricultural institute of the government (CIARA) inspected Centro Madre for the second time, and again rated it as **excellent**, a national model of small scale sustainable agriculture. Groups come every week to see and learn from Centro Madre. There is also a Neohumanist Kindergarten in Caracas filled with beautiful children.

Another great strength we have is a national, regional and global network of Prout supporters who give us continual feedback and advice. Our house was purchased by those supporters and given to us to use forever.

We chose you from amongst other applicants because we believe that your time and skills will help us achieve our Mission: “To empower all people to improve their quality of life and live in a more just society by fostering the development of worker cooperatives, self-reliant communities, environmental protection, universal ethics and spiritual values.”

Facilities

We strive to provide an example of sustainable living through recycling, the use of free software (Linux), and promoting a healthy and spiritual lifestyle. Because we strongly feel that our efforts for world peace are integrally related to our personal example, we encourage the daily practice of yoga and expect all interns to meditate twice daily. Only vegetarian food will be served in the Institute.

We are pioneers. The institute is still new and developing. You are expected to be self-motivated and ready to work as a positive team member in a collaborative environment.

What is the role of the volunteer intern?

As an institution that promotes cooperativism and neohumanism values, the implementation of our vision and determining short and long term goals is the result of an open and respectful collective decision-making process. Each person has a unique wealth of experience and knowledge to contribute to our mission of educating people and communities about PROUT and implementing PROUT theory in practical, creative and dynamic community-based projects.

An important part of a collective living environment is the shared responsibility in performing all household activities, such as the cooking and cleaning routines.

Your Photo and Resume for the PRI-Ven Webpage

Before your arrival or immediately thereafter, please submit a photo and a short resume about yourself and your interest in PROUT for our webpage, maximum 250 words, in both English and Spanish. Check the other staff resumes at:

<http://www.priven.org/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=6>
<http://www.priven.org/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=6>

Venezuelan News

Every intern is expected to be informed about what is happening in the country.

Three good sites are:

Venezuelan Analysis (English): www.venezuelanalysis.com

Agenica Bolivariana de Noticias (government): www.abn.info.ve

El Universal (opposition): www.eluniversal.com

The 40-hour work week

The office working hours are generally from 9am – 6pm. To create an integrated and efficient work flow between all members it is expected that each volunteer do his or her best to complete the 40-hour weekly commitment from Monday to Friday according to this schedule. However, the schedule is flexible to an extent and exceptions to these norms can certainly be discussed, such as taking a day off midweek and working on Saturday instead. Volunteers are expected to track their hours and share their plan of work as well as progress each day at our office meetings. We can provide you with sample time sheets.

Meetings

All interaction between members and guests of Quinta PROUT is to be guided by a profound respect for others, positive communication and active listening. Meetings are generally held at 9:00 in the morning, but this depends on the availability of all members so evening meetings are also not uncommon.

Working with locals

We strongly encourage you to invite people that you meet to help us with our projects.

Learning Spanish

Having a comfortable command of the Spanish language is an imperative part of living or working in Venezuela. Interns are expected to devote some time every day to studying Spanish in the ongoing effort to reach fluency. No intern can really start to work until they can speak Spanish. Until you can communicate well with the public, make phone calls, write articles in Spanish, you will not be able to do much practical work.

People do not learn languages automatically. After learning the basics, keep studying until you reach university level proficiency. (Actually, even after achieving fluency, you should keep learning more!). Enroll in a basic language course to learn the practical grammar. Read books, listen to CDs, ask your friends and colleagues to correct you when you speak. Our library is equipped with numerous Spanish grammar books and self-study guides to get you started.

The Universidad Bolivariana de Venezuela (UBV) offers free Spanish courses during certain times of the year. You must register in person at the UBV campus. A great idea is to put up small ads or hand out flyers at the Universidad Central Venezuela (UCV) and other university campuses. Offer to do a “language exchange”, meeting once a week for an hour or two, splitting the time during each session between English and Spanish. It’s a great way to practice, help others and meet new people.

Volunteers working on their Spanish for 5 or more hours a week, can count 5 hours of language practice toward their 40-hour work week.

Spanish-English dictionaries can be purchased very inexpensively in Caracas, so you may wish to purchase one to carry with you when you go out, as well as a notebook. Many language learners try to learn at least 5 new words every day. We include space in your time-sheets to note your new vocabulary.

Two free one-phrase Spanish lessons that can be emailed to your box each day:

www.spanishdict.com/wordoftheday/

www.bitesizedlanguages.com

Best online Spanish-English dictionary: www.wordreference.com

When translating an article into Spanish, some find it easier to first "zap it" with a translator program, and then correct it sentence by sentence. Sites that translate texts for free include:

<http://translate.google.com/#>

www.freetranslation.com

www.worldlingo.com

This link provides a great introduction to Venezuelan Spanish and is complete with a detailed list of local slang and colloquial terms: www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venezuelan_Spanish

One of your first language exercises should be to develop a 2 minute explanation of the following:

1. What is Prout?
2. Why did you want to come to work here?
3. What you are currently working on?

Practicing these two-minute explanations will both help you improve your Spanish and help you to interest local people that you meet in our work.

B. LIFE AT QUINTA PROUT

Welcome to Quinta PROUT! Here is your new address and a list of key phone numbers: **Please memorize them!**

Quinta PROUT
Avenida Sanz, Calle Terepaima con Mosen Sol
(op. Colégio María Santísima y el seminario)
Urbanización El Marques
Caracas, Venezuela, 1070

Main Office: (0212) 238.86.65 Emergency: 171
Dada's Office: (0212) 886.23.23 José's Cell: 0412.616.55.70
Dada's Cell: 0426.710.98.25 Mariah's Cell: 0416.826.57.92
Reliable Taxi: (0212) 953.40.40

When you use a landline to call the office you do not need to use the number in parenthesis, however if you use a cell phone to call the office you will need to use the numbers in parenthesis. When calling cell phones, you always need the 4 digit prefix. Calls to cell phones from a landline are quite expensive, so please keep them as short as possible.

Welcome – Norms and Rules of the House

The collective living experience we enjoy in Quinta Prout offers unique opportunities for personal and group development as well as productive and motivated working hours. Life here enjoys a healthy balance between work, leisure and time for spiritual practices such as yoga and meditation.

General House Schedule

(The schedule changes from time to time, but this gives you a general idea of the day's workflow.)

6:30 - 7:00	-	Yoga on the top floor
7:00 - 7:30	-	Collective meditation on the top floor
7:30 - 8:30	-	Breakfast and personal clean up
8:30 - 9:00	-	Cleaning duties
9:00 am	-	Office meeting and Start of working hours
1:00 – 2:00 pm	-	Lunch
2:00 pm	-	Continuation of working hours
6:00 pm	-	Optional Collective meditation
Evening	-	OPEN
10:30pm	-	Quiet time

Conduct

Many of these rules are reiterated throughout the descriptions of specific topics, but due to their importance they are simplified and presented here.

- Keep your bed, bags and room neat and clean. This does not count as part of the morning cleaning schedule.
- Each person must contribute at least 30 minutes per day to the common cleaning according to the rotation system provided.
- Wash all your own dishes after eating and do not leave dirty dishes or cups in your room or anywhere else in the house. Leave the kitchen cleaner than you found it.
- No alcohol, non-prescription drugs, smoking, meat, fish or eggs are allowed in the house.
- No sexual relations or pornography in the house. Please respect your colleagues and keep romances outside of the office and Quinta Prout.
- If you do not return at night for any reason, you **MUST** phone to inform us where you are and that you're okay. If not, all work programs stop and everyone starts to search the city for you!
- Do not invite strangers to the Institute. Obtain permission before inviting new people to the Institute.

Coming and Going

You will be provided with a key to the front door of the house and the gate leading to the street. Please be very diligent about making sure the street gate is always firmly closed and locked behind you. Always call to let someone know if you're coming home uncharacteristically late or if you decide not to come home for the night. In non-working hours you are free to spend your time as you choose, we ask this only for your safety and the institute's liability.

Sleeping Arrangements and Rooms

The second floor is for males, and volunteers sleep in the bunk-bed room. Females stay on the third floor. Please wear modest pajamas or other clothes when you go to bed. We will provide the necessary linens, including pillow and pillow case, sheets and blankets. It is your responsibility to wash these items. Keeping sleeping quarters clean and tidy is also an individual responsibility and this work falls outside of daily cleaning duties. Please avoid keeping food in your rooms, all food should be stored in the fridge or the cupboards in the kitchen. Please put your name on any food that you want to reserve in the kitchen. Any food that is unlabeled is available for anyone to eat.

Yoga and Meditation

Collective meditation and yoga are an important part of the daily schedule

at Quinta PROUT and time is dedicated each day to their practice.

Yoga

Yoga postures (“asanas”) are a coherent, scientific system to empower you and promote your general well being. These gentle movements are performed slowly and combined with deep abdominal breathing, to balance the glandular secretions, relax and tone up the muscles and the nervous system, stimulate circulation and the lymph system, stretch stiff ligaments, limber joints, massage the internal organs, and calm and concentrate the mind. Yoga helps to instill confidence and serenity, to control negative and disturbing emotions and to overcome stress. If you wish, postures can be prescribed individually to help you gradually overcome specific health issues and become a healthy inspiration to all.

Meditation

Meditation is a profound practice dating back thousands of years. It was developed by mystics as an aid to those who want to find peace within. The process is simple: by closing your eyes, sitting up straight and still, breathing deeply and concentrating the mind according to special techniques, you can gradually achieve deep peace and fulfillment.

Meditation is a form of deep reflection on who we really are, a procedure for revealing hidden aspects of our identity and expanding our consciousness. It is known as the science of intuition, because it develops our higher levels of awareness. By penetrating beneath the social conditioning of everyday thoughts, meditation frees the mind from repressive dogmas. It also helps us see through the veil of legitimacy that exploiters and opportunists use to cover their destructive and selfish deeds.

Meditation offers many personal benefits too: overcoming anger and aggression; cultivating willpower and self-control; improving self-esteem and mental health; increasing memory and concentration; surmounting insomnia, depression and loneliness; overcoming inferiority, superiority, fear, guilt and other complexes; calming the mind; expanding understanding and tolerance; developing a balanced, integrated personality; and awakening wisdom, compassion and love.

Meditation is a proven method of improving and protecting your health regardless of your religious beliefs and everyone here is required to practice meditation at least 30 minutes a day.

Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, the founder of Prout, was a spiritual master whose goal was the creation of a spiritually-based society. To this end he established the social and spiritual organization of Ananda Marga, which in Sanskrit means “The Path of Bliss.” Ananda Marga monks and nuns (called “dada”, brother, or “didi”, sister) dress in orange, a color which symbolizes service and sacrifice for humanity. They offer personal instruction in meditation free of charge.

Many people at the institute also practice Kiirtan. **Kiirtan** means “mystical chanting of a mantra” to prepare the mind for meditation. “Mantra” is a Sanskrit word – “man” means mind, “tra” means liberate, so it means “a word or words upon which you concentrate to free your mind from its problems.” Yoga uses

Sanskrit for all mantras because it is the root language of most languages including Latin, Greek, Spanish and English, and because its sounds were developed thousands of years ago by yogis because of their harmonic effect on the human body and mind.

We use the universal mantra, **Baba Nam Kevalam**, which simply means “**Love is all there is.**” Singing kiirtan can release stress and improve concentration. Singing also helps to raise one's consciousness as it creates a beautiful feeling. While singing you should keep your eyes closed as much as possible, and concentrate your mind in your top psycho-spiritual energy center (chakra) which is at the top of your head. Kiirtan also includes a simple mystical dance which helps prepare the body and mind for meditation.

Ananda Marga collective meditation or “Dharmacakra” is held each Sunday morning from 10am-12:30pm in the Didi's “Jagrti” (center for spiritual awakening). It is open to anyone who wants to participate, and attendance is never required. Didi Ananda Amegha lives there. The address is: Edificio Rio Claro Apt. 1, Calle Los Manolos (no number on this and most addresses), off Avenida Andres Bello. La Florida, Caracas. Tel/Fax +58-212-782-2103. Generally at least one of us goes there on foot at around 9:00am on Sunday mornings.

Cleaning Routine

Each member of the house is expected to contribute at least 30 minutes of household cleaning, which normally is to be done in the morning between 8:30 and 9am according to the cleaning schedule provided.

The Office

We have two internet-equipped computers available for institute and personal use, and wireless access in the office, if you've brought your own laptop. Please keep the computer area tidy and free from clutter and avoid storing personal items in the area. Please avoid downloading during non-sleeping hours as this slows down the connection for others, attracts viruses to our network and can bog down our network. Please especially avoid downloading during working hours or in the evenings when other volunteers may be trying to use the internet to communicate with their families. Please be selective when printing anything that's not intended for institute use as paper and toner are quite costly. Make sure all computers and components are turned off at the end of the night if you are the last one to use them. Feel free to make local calls to landlines, either institute related or personal, on the fax phone and the kitchen phone, there's no need to ask. Calls to cell phones are expensive, please keep them as short as possible.

You are welcome to receive calls on either phone number. Please keep personal calls to a minimum during office hours.

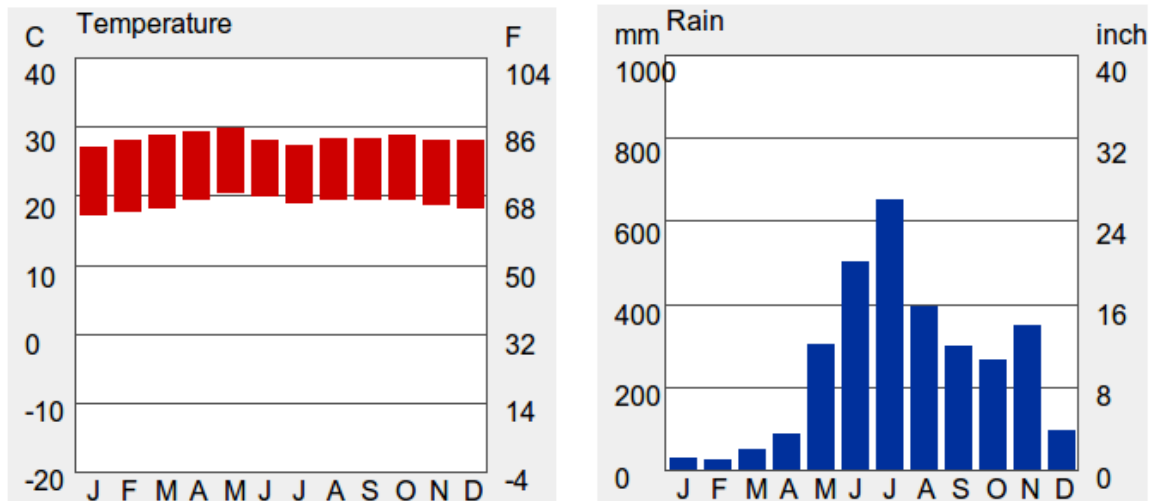
Many volunteers use skype to call home in the evenings and Dada Maheshvarananda has used a service called nonoh.net for many years.

Clothing

The Institute will provide staff members and volunteers with 2 official IVIP shirts to wear during office hours and/or at events where we wish to show our presence. Venezuelans are very particular about how people are dressed and if you go to someone's office, you should wear office attire. Also, you should wear office attire if you invite someone to the Institute for a meeting, because if they see you dressed casually they may think that you are not serious about the meeting. If you are meeting with Venezuelans, you should never wear the same clothing two days in a row. (If something is still clean, hang it up for a day before using it again.) Please also wear office attire on weekdays if you are in the office working and the Institute is having guests. Alternatively, if you are going out to simply do some shopping, you may wish to wear jeans and a t-shirt so as to not attract attention. In the office, some people choose to wear shoes, socks and light weight clothing that covers them to prevent mosquito bites. Men, please wear your shirts at all times in the office. If there is an item of clothing that you don't already have, but think you might want, you may wish to wait and purchase it here, with the exception of shoes. High quality shoes at reasonable prices are hard to find in Caracas.

Below are temperature and rainfall charts to help you plan. Keep in mind that these are historical averages and Caracas is being affected by global warming.

Temperatures in Caracas range from 17.35 to 30.0 (Celcius). Rainfall in Caracas varies from 27.0 to 657.0 (mm/month).



Some volunteers choose to purchase small personal fans to help keep mosquitoes away and the air circulation feels nice on hot days.

Cooking Routine

Breakfasts and the evening meal, which is normally just a lighter snack, are usually prepared individually. Each member of Quinta PROUT is expected to

prepare or help prepare one to two meals a week and this will obviously vary according to each person's weekly schedule. If you are inexperienced in the kitchen, don't worry, after helping out for a while you'll soon learn all kinds of easy and delicious vegetarian recipes! Please make sure the fridge door is always closed tightly and that no food is left out over night.

The Kitchen

Part of maintaining a clean and healthy environment is keeping our kitchen clean and not inviting unwanted bugs and cockroaches to live with us. To do this we need to eliminate sources of food and water for the insects. This means keeping a very clean environment.

Please wash dishes as you are cooking.

Please wash every part of every dish with soap and water, both inside and outside. As you are rinsing the dish, run your hand over the surfaces to be sure that all food particles have been removed. Dry your dish thoroughly with a clean towel before putting it away. If you wish to let dishes air dry, be sure that the air can easily flow to all parts. For example, leaving a clean glass in the dish drainer will allow it to air dry and you can put it away before the next meal. Leaving a glass flat on the counter does not allow for airflow to dry the inside of the glass, so it should be avoided. Please use the rack or a towel on the left side of the sink.

Put clean and dry dishes away before you begin cooking a new meal or making a snack.

Please do not leave dirty dishes in the sink for even a few minutes as others need to be able to get water and make their own meals.

Please put dishes that you are preparing to wash on the right hand side of the sink instead of in the sink.

Wash and dry the counters off when you are finished. We don't want bugs to want to live in our kitchen.

The Garden

We are very fortunate to have such a lovely garden to act as a peaceful refuge in the midst of an often chaotic and noisy city. Yard work such as raking and sweeping leaves and tending to the vegetable garden are encouraged as part of your contribution to the collective maintenance of Quinta PROUT. Being outside and working in the fresh air is also a great way to calm and refresh your mind and get in touch with nature, so take advantage and enjoy! As part of the 8 hour workday, volunteers have the option of taking a break from their projects and working in the garden for an hour or two in the late afternoon.

Bathrooms

A list of norms for the bathroom use is posted on the inside of each bathroom door. Remember to store toiletries in your room and hang towels on

the drying racks outside of the bathroom. Please contribute to their upkeep by replacing garbage bags when full and replenishing toilet paper when empty. Generally the bathroom on the second floor is reserved for men and the inside bathroom on the third floor for women. The outside bathroom on the 3rd floor is rented out to our tenant, please avoid using it and respect the tenant's privacy. The bathrooms on the main floor are shared use and guests usually prefer to use the toilet that is accessible from the garden.

Washing Clothes

Washing clothes in the machine should be done between 6am and 10pm as the water pump upstairs is very loud. Soap is kept under the outside sink. In order to conserve water and energy, we suggest hand washing with the buckets when only washing a few items. Clothes are to be dried on the lines in the upper garden or in the tool shed. Please remove your clothes as soon as they are dry to make space for others.

Directions to Centro Madre (AMURT) in San Jose de Barlovento

Take metro to LA HOYADA station. Follow exit signs to NUEVO CIRCO. Walk 5 minutes to the terminal. Ask people which bus goes to RIO CHICO (the twin town just 2 km. after SAN JOSE). Wait in line, then board the bus. After it starts the conductor will collect about 11 BsF from each passenger. The journey takes 2 hours. After all that time on the highway, the bus will enter two small towns and stop at the central plaza of TACARIGUA and then MAMPORAL. Your destination is about 10 minutes after the second town, between the villages of MADRE VIEJA and LOS GALPONES. Landmark: Bus will take a long curve to the left and then cross a small bridge with a steel structure over the road. Then the road is straight for 2+ kilometers. On the left is a white sign that says CENTRO MADRE. Tell the driver to stop there, cross the highway (carefully!) and walk down the driveway to the house.

Alternatively, the much cheaper state-run red buses (2 BsF) leave from in front of Parque del Este (Parque Miranda), but their departure schedules and routes are less predictable and less frequent. If you don't spend too much time waiting this option is usually faster. The first bus leaves after 9:15am and others leave between 2 and 4pm. Take the metro to MIRANDA station and line up with the others on West side of the park entrance, past the metro station. If one of the buses is going to SAN JOSE or RICO CHICO then just follow the steps above for getting off at Centro Madre. If the bus is going to HIGUEROTE, then you need to get off in TACARIGUA and catch a propuesto bus from Plaza Bolivar going to SAN JOSE. Plaza Bolivar is only two blocks from where the bus drops you off, just ask for directions. This bus also passes through MAMPORAL so follow the same instructions to arrive at Centro Madre.

If you totally miss the center, the bus will stop 4 kilometers later in the bus terminal of SAN JOSE. Get down and call Didi and ask her to please pick you up. Telephones: 0234.511.85.49, 0416.400.36.28.

Norms for Centro Madre

This is a women's center directed by a nun (Didi Ananda Sadhana), so please be respectful. Male visitors should not go up to the second floor without Didi's specific permission, and should always wear a shirt. As in Quinta PROUT, please keep the room where you are staying clean and neat, and please contribute time each day cleaning and cooking.

Possible areas of Interest and Assistance

Publicity and Academic Discourse

Publicity

Effort to publicize our successes are ongoing and most of us participate in these activities in an ongoing basis. Taking pictures as well as writing up and sending out press releases can be a big help. However please be sure to share them with the group before you send them out. Your words will be representing all of us. Please download pictures of our efforts onto our hard drive and label them well so that we can find and use the pictures even after you leave.

Academic Discourse

To help bring Prout further into the public domain integrating Prout into academic discourse is also a vital contribution to our efforts.

If you are interested in doing this and wondering where to start, consider where your joys and passions lie? How does Prout uniquely contribute to these areas? Now think about what the sources are that inform these areas of your work. Of course we can discuss your answers with you.

One of the easiest ways that we can bring Prout into the academic discourse is to publish in academic journals and present at conferences. Young Proutist academics can approach published authors ask them to co-author papers that use Prout. Having a published author as a co-author dramatically increases the chances of getting published or being asked to present at conferences.

If you are doing academic work, please be sure to cite Proutists when ever possible because search engines, like google scholar, track authors and sources. These search engines are one of the primary ways that young scholars are introduced to new ideas.

In addition to citations, please also mention Prout in your blogs and contribute to your favorite information sources on a regular basis. Invite colleagues to join in your effort so that they also gain a stronger understanding of Prout. Share Prout with friends in other activist groups. Share Prout with policy makers.

Repetition is a key part of helping other people to adopt Prout.



Additional Background Information

In 2009 Spencer Bailey, an intern at the Institute, presented a talk entitled “Challenges to Implementing Prout in Venezuela” at the Global Prout Convention in Copenhagen, Denmark. Here is the text from his presentation:

What challenges do we face as an institute working to raise awareness about PROUT and implement its ideas in Venezuelan society? What makes the realization of PROUT’s vision for a new world so challenging? And conversely: What characteristics of the dominant culture and social systems make them so resistant to change? This is not creating an “us or them” construct, it is merely recognizing PROUTs international character and the fact that many of us are working in foreign countries...

CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Historical Legacies

Looking first at the cultural uniqueness of the Venezuelan society we find ourselves asking who are the people that we are trying to help? Who are the people with which we are sharing this space and time.

1. Distrust of outsiders and foreigners
2. Lack of initiative and motivation
3. Low self-esteem that debilitates individual capacities
4. Lack of unity and willingness to cooperate

Our experiences: In a recent initiative to organize the agricultural producers in the region we found it very difficult to unite community leaders. Despite the commitments that were made to attend a meeting, not one person showed up. Residents of two small, neighboring villages showed suspicion, distrust and general apathy towards one another other. This story speaks simultaneously about the particularities of the society and the challenges to building partnerships and trust with local communities, which is really universal since any grassroots development of this sort takes time, patience, understanding and sensitivity.

Nepotism, Bureaucracy and Corruption

...are small thorns in our sides, making processing documents and other more mundane civil matters very time consuming and tedious and bribes are often expected. There is a very real external social pressure to abuse positions of power and privilege and those who refuse to conform to this mentality are seen as ignorant.

The Modern Venezuelan

Understanding the nature of the modern Venezuelan is of great importance to our work, for example, in the planning and development of a basic PROUT course, where we want to ensure that it resonates with the participants and that it brings them forward at such a pace and in such a manner that is appropriate to their circumstances.



We find ourselves asking: what is ***machismo*** and how does it affect society? Machismo being the dominant masculine energy that is expressed through sexism, social competition and relaxed attitudes towards work, relationships and family. Venezuela has an extremely high birthrate and there are many single mothers with children from multiple fathers, which speaks to a low awareness or respect for birth control. These are not uniquely male or female issues, but rather there is a mirroring process going on. A dynamic network of expectations exists in society that is telling people how to act and behave, so these behaviors are perpetuated. Also, this is a matter of not knowing anything else, any other way of acting. Venezuelan society needs more role models. There are some shining lights, but it is a society that desperately needs more.

POLITICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Political Sensitivity and Hostility

Turning now to the political we see this realm of activity characterized by:

1. Extreme lack of communication between divergent political groups.
2. Climate of suspicion, hostility and animosity.

In spite of many benefits that have come with recent social and political changes, the triumph of the political Left has created deep divisions in Venezuelan society. Cooperation and communication between people and groups can sometimes be limited to those who share your political beliefs, which is normally a question of being “Chavista” (pro-government) or “Oposición” (anti-government). In this type of environment, maintaining the neutrality of the institute is important to avoid been politically labeled and thus isolated from any one sector of society.



Staff Changes in Government Ministries

Ministers and their immediate staff are regularly shuffled around, making it difficult to establish solid, ongoing relationships with the government offices that relate to our work. For example, over the years we’ve had to constantly reestablish our relationships within SUNACOOOP, the government department that supports cooperatives. When I visited their office to present them with a copy of our documentary, which involved the collaboration of the ex-director of education, none of the current staff knew anything about us or the project.

Social Characteristics

The challenges within the social sphere are based on the expressions of the dominant capitalist culture and the supremacy of oil in Venezuelan society. Consumerism in Venezuela is highly irrational and excessive. We also see deeply distorted social priorities and although it is reducing slightly due to new government programs, there is still an extreme gap between rich and poor that divides the social family. With it is resentment, greed and isolationism.

The discovery of oil brought with it the “**Dutch Disease**” (which is the neglect of non-oil manufacturing and industries, as well as agriculture) and a wealth of psychological effects. I ask, what does it do to the psyche of a people knowing that the same lifeblood that is propelling global capitalism forward, that is contributing enormously to the threat of environmental collapse is the same lifeblood that literally brings food to your table, politicians to power and doctors into your country? Venezuela is a nation whose survival depends on fueling the unbridled expansion of global capitalism and I believe that on a subconscious level many people have internalized the acceptability of unlimited growth based on polluting behaviors. Abundant oil wealth has also created the expectation that the state should be able to provide people with everything they need, which can lead to dependency and reduce initiative and motivation. We also see very low levels of environmental consciousness. There are severe problems with garbage and littering, recycling is non-existent and engines idle all day long. Those of us who are foreigners working and living in Caracas at times are faced with situations that challenge us personally, such as communication barriers, pre-conceptions of foreigners, crime and security and the effects of culture shock. I have been affected by all of these and can say that I’ve grown a lot because of those experiences.



THE CRITICAL DISHARMONY

Consciousness

Turning back to our original questions of what makes implementing PROUT in Venezuela so challenging and what is it about the local society that resists this change. I feel that the critical disharmony

arises from a lack of consciousness that is rooted in a very particular relationship with global capitalism.

The supremacy of oil, which has come at the expense of the development of other industries and other modes of survival, makes it hard for Venezuelans to conceive of the need or the possibility for new and alternative development models. Global capitalism doesn't want the oil boom to end, it only seeks to consume and exhaust the supplies, so the message being transmitted to Venezuelans is that unlimited growth and consumption are not only okay, but unproblematic, even a national destiny.

There is still a tendency in Venezuela and throughout the world to wrongly equate anything with "socialist" ideals with the real life socialist experiments of the past and present and because of this opposition groups are quick to label us as 'Chavistas'.

As is true in the spiritual quest, something really only makes sense once it is felt, knowledge only becomes wisdom once it is resonating deeply inside of you. Similarly, the ideas of Prout often fall on the deaf ears of those whose core identity is still so deeply rooted in the dominant capitalist culture that such new ideas appear threatening and hostile to their best interests. For all of these reasons we Proutists have to remain vigilant, determined, yet patient because consciousness is the most difficult thing to change, but the struggle and the results of this path certainly yield the greatest rewards.

Thank you.

C. LIFE IN CARACAS

Introduction to the City

Caracas is a great place to live and a necessary headquarter for the type of work we are involved in. It is the political, economic and cultural centre of Venezuela and here you will have access to a lot of amazing opportunities in all three of these areas. Between social forums, cultural fairs and musical performances you will find there is always something lively and fun or intellectual and engaging happening somewhere in the city. With nearly 6 million people in greater Caracas, at times it can seem a little overwhelming. Traffic, noise, congestion, pollution and seemingly endless lines all contribute to this feeling, but don't get discouraged, there are plenty of wonderful havens of tranquility peppered throughout the city and the amazing Avila mountain ridge that looms over the city from the North, a constant reminder that the purity and rejuvenating powers of nature are merely minutes away.

Geography

Caracas is basically a long and narrow valley running East to West. The northern limit is the Avila mountain range, so it's always easy to orient yourself anywhere in town. The main metro line (line 1) follows this same orientation, with Palo Verde being the Eastern most stop (and the direction you take to get home – “green = go home”) and Propatria being the Western-most stop. Lines 2 and 3 run South off of line 1.

Political Polarization

If you haven't figured it out already, Venezuela is very polarized politically and numerous Venezuelan's have lost friends or have strained family relationships because of it. Approximately 60% of the country is supportive of the Chavez government, while many of the remaining 40% passionately hate him! Sadly, there is little dialogue between the two groups. We can learn from both. It is very important for the Institute's independence and credibility that we do not become associated with either political group. If asked, we explain that the Institute is trying to learn from both the successes and the difficulties that are currently being experienced. If you wish to share your own opinion with someone, please be very clear that it is your personal view and not that of the institute.

Passport

You should arrive with several photocopies of your passport photo page and other important documents. Laminate one of the copies of your passport to take with you every time you leave the house. We need two additional copies for our files. (We have to maintain records of our volunteers and would need the two photo-copies of your passport if there was ever an emergency.) The UniCentro Shopping Centre has two places that offer these services if you haven't already made copies.

Changing Money

We recommend bringing Euros or dollars in a money belt under your clothing. If you wish, it can be kept, along with your passport in the safe here at the house. Bringing cash will give you the choice of exchanging at the official rate or at the parallel rate. Additionally, you can not count on your credit card/ debit card working in the ATMs or at the banks here. Some volunteers have experienced great difficulty, others have not had any problems. Thus even if you plan on using your cards, you should still have some cash on hand to meet immediate needs.

It is also important to understand that there is usually a large difference (more than 100%) between the official rate for euros or dollars and the "parallel rate" or "black market rate". (For example, the currently official rate is Bs.F. 2.15 for \$1, while the parallel rate at the time of writing is Bs.F. 5.7 for \$1.) If you use a bank or Western Union to get money – it will be at the official rate. This means that whatever you buy in Venezuela with a credit card or debit card, and any cash advance you take from an ATM machine, will cost you more than twice what it would using Bolivares changed at the parallel rate.

Two websites that track the parallel rate are:

<http://venezuelafx.blogspot.com/>

<http://bonosvenezuela.blogspot.com/>

Money changers usually offer .1 or .2 lower than listed on these websites.

Also, be aware that the country experiences radical inflation for various goods as most things are imported and currency values can fluctuate. For this reason, many Venezuelans spend their Bs.F. as quickly as possible.

Cell Phone

We recommend getting a cell phone immediately after your arrival. It is how you will connect with other Venezuelans (many people send text messages instead of calling) and it will make it easier for you to be aware of delays, etc... Thus having a cell phone will both improve your security and social life.

At the time of this writing, MovilNet offers the cheapest cellphone in the country, but not all of their stores carry this model. Your best chance is at the Centro Comercial El Recreo (metro "Sabana Grande") since it has multiple stores. The shopping centre is located just southwest of the metro station. Don't

bother signing up for a contract (at least initially), just buy phone cards with credit minutes from any MovilNet store or kiosks. If you bring your cell phone with you, you can buy a SIM chip with a Venezuelan telephone number from Digitel and replace the SIM chip in your phone.

Shopping

Have your laminated copy of your passport ready as many stores will need it when you make a purchase. If you are making a purchase for the institute, you can give them the Institute's RIF (Registro de Informacion Fiscal) J-29412410-0. As most shopping centers have guards, many Venezuelans will simply go to the mall to walk around, window shop, and perhaps have a coffee or an icecream.

Exiting the Country

As of January, 2010: When leaving Venezuela by land or sea, you must pay a Bs.F. 54 departure tax. When leaving by air the departure tax is Bs.F. 137.50. This is usually not included in your ticket, and sometimes they are increased without notice. If you pay with a credit card or dollars, you will be charged at the official rate (Bs.F. 2.15 to the US dollar). You can safely change money at the parallel rate in the airport terminal by standing just outside one of the official money changers in the arrival lounge. It usually takes only 3 seconds or less for someone to approach you and ask if you want to change money! If it is late at night, ask one of the official porters, and they will bring you to someone who can change dollars for you.

Health and Dental

One of the benefits of living in Venezuela is free basic health and dental care provided by the Cuban doctors and dentists through the Barrio Adentro Program. If you want, you can choose to purchase additional insurance in case of serious illness, injury or medical evacuation to your home country.

The closest clinic, which handles basic medical and dental, is between Quinta PROUT and the La California metro station. When you turn left onto Avenida Sanz walk towards the metro and take a left at the next street, right before the weird little "police perch". Walk uphill about 200 meters and you'll find it on the right hand side right across from some government billboards and murals on the cement wall on the left hand side. Hours are supposed to be 8am – 2pm, but they seem to close early if nobody is waiting. Get there early as people start lining up around 7am. Bring your passport.

The nearest big clinic is just West of the Los Dos Caminos metro station. Exit the metro and head West on Avenida Francisco de Miranda past the huge grey and glass shopping complex. Cross at the first traffic light still heading West and it's the first building on your left.

Culture Shock

Culture shock is the physical and emotional discomfort one may suffer when living in foreign country. Many people will go through some degree of culture shock when they come here. It is a natural process. Things are not the same as at home. This is neither good or bad per se, just different.

Why do people experience culture shock?

Different language, different food, getting lost, missing friends and family, sleeping in common rooms without privacy, you are always a “foreigner”, nervous about crime.

What are some symptoms?

Sadness, frustration, mood swings caused by little things or for no apparent reason, irritation because of people's habits, diarrhea (even though you drink only filtered water and eat hygienically-prepared food, just because the food is different) or constipation, headaches, lethargy, tiredness, insomnia, depression.

Some people pass through different stages of culture shock:

The Honeymoon Stage	Everything is new and exciting and one feels as though he/she is on vacation.
The Hostility Stage	One may have problems in the host country and start to criticize the culture or the city. This happens when a person is trying to adapt to a new culture. Things are no longer new and exciting.
The Depression Stage	Your negative feelings reach a climax and one feels lonely and negative. Boredom sets in and working full-time becomes difficult and one doesn't want to be involved in the community. The transitions between old methods and new ones can take time.
The Acceptance Stage	One realizes the good and the bad about the culture. One starts to become more comfortable, makes more friends and better understands the local culture. This stage usually occurs 3 or 4 months after living in a new culture, but everything depends on the person.

So what can be done?

The great thing about collective living is that you are part of a wonderful network of support and the friends you live and work with are never far away. Our library has a great book called *Venezuela: Culture Shock* that can help you to understand the nuances and attitudes of the Venezuelan people, allowing volunteers from overseas to maintain a healthy perspective on life as a foreigner in this country. Also, the opportunities to learn and practice meditation and yoga are excellent ways to stay physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and remain grounded to more easily endure the difficult times when they arise. Making an extra effort to establish strong relationships with the people that you meet here in Venezuela will also to help lessen any effects of culture shock.

Surprisingly, many people experience some “reverse culture shock” when they return to their home country after growing accustomed to the new one!

Working Together

The Institute functions with both local and international volunteers.

Local Volunteers

Local volunteers have deep understandings of their communities and resources. Locals often have a lot of good advice to share and can save you immense amounts of time and money. If your goal is to help the local community, locals are the only ones who can tell you what they perceive their problems to be. We will do our best to help you meet local people and we also encourage you to help introduce us to new local people that you meet.

International Volunteers

As an international volunteer you can contribute vital additional information, resources and perspectives. Your hard work and dedication to your projects can have lasting benefits both throughout your lifetime and for the people that you work with.

Fostering Relationships

Relationships are a key component of successful project development. Usually it is easier to do something that we know is in our best interest if we are emotionally invested or have a relationship with someone who cares. For most of us, it is far easier to run a mile and we are much more likely to actually do it when we are running with a team or at least know we have someone to talk about our run with each time. Always work with local volunteers and share your efforts with our team.

Dialogues are a key part of creating and maintaining relationships. Dialogues require lots of active listening. International volunteers can practice asking questions that generate long answers.

For example, memorize the following questions in Spanish:

What do you think about ...?

Why do you think ...?

What have you heard other people say about ...?

What are your problems?

Who else suffers from these problems?

How do you think international volunteers can contribute to your community or country?

Write down the answers to these questions and follow up with your colleagues. Use these conversations to also help foster a personal connections between community members. Community members are most likely to want to work on issues that they perceive as addressing their own problems. We often talk about teaching a man to fish instead of just giving him a fish. However, if he isn't worried about eating ... he probably won't fish after you leave. Thus is it important to support local identification of problems as well as development of solutions.

Visa Renewal and Immigration

If you are in the country on a 90-day tourist visa there are two options for renewal. First, simply leave the country for a 24-hour period and re-enter, at which time the border officials will issue a new stamp, which acts as your new 90- day visa. The closest and easiest route is heading West into Columbia. The two main “visa run” destinations in Columbia are Cucutá in the Andes and Santa Marta along the Caribbean coast. The border crossing procedure is relatively quick and painless. You are let off the bus to walk across the border, just make sure to have your passport stamped in the immigration offices of each country. Expect to pay a fine of around Bs.F. 100 if your visa is expired, but if it has only been a day or two some innocence and pleading will probably get you through okay.

To get to Cucutá you have to take a bus to San Antonio de la Táchire, which is the last city on the Venezuelan side. From there, different buses leave to Cucutá and destinations further into Columbia. The bus leaves from the terminal “La Bandera” (metro “La Bandera” – transfer to line 2 at metro “Plaza Venezuela”). Follow the people with luggage to know where to exit the metro. Cross the main street directly in front of you as you exit the metro and follow it left about 300 metres, past a gas station and the terminal will be on your right. Many companies travel similar routes, but prices are almost always identical. All such trips to Merida and beyond are overnight travel only and usually leave between 6 and 8pm. Tickets can only be purchased on the day of travel so show up at least 30 minutes before the bus leaves to get a ticket. If you're traveling Friday or Sunday evenings arrive an hour early. Bring warm clothes and a blanket or sleeping bag onto the bus as they claim there's only one setting for the AC: freezing cold! Fare to San Antonio de Tachire is around Bs.F. 90.

The buses to Santa Marta and other destinations along the coast leave from “Terminal Oriente”. Arrive at metro “Petare” around 4:30 or 5pm and take a propuesto bus (Bs.F. 2.5) heading South on the road that dissects both exits from the metro. There'll be a line up of people with luggage stretching down the side of the road and the bus will have a sign in the window for “Terminal Oriente”. Fair to Santa Marta is Bs.F. 270.

Transportation

Outside of rush hours (and there can be a lot of them) getting around Caracas is usually quick and efficient. The metro is the fastest and it is safe. It runs from 5:30am until 11-11:30pm every day.

In the metro, the blue seats on the car at both ends of the train are reserved for elderly, handicapped and parents with small children. In other cars, passengers are expected to give up their seats to these people as well. Usually there less crowds at the ends of the trains, and if you need to stand, the center of each car will be the coolest place.

After 11pm, a few bus routes operate until early morning hours, but they can be unpredictable. Buy a “multiabono” pass for the metro (Bs.F. 4.5), which gives you 10 unlimited rides or a “multiabono integral” (Bs.F. 6), which also lets you ride the Metro Buses as part of the same trip. Metro Buses start and stop from just outside most metro stations and the bus stops have signs indicating their destinations. The other “por-puesto” buses are more common and reach more places. They do have regular, unmarked stops, but it is possible, depending on the driver, to hail one down from any old place. They post little signs in the window indicating their route, but always ask when getting on the bus because sometimes they forget to change their signs. Fare is usually Bs.F. 1,50 and some drivers prefer you pay when you board, while others will ask you to pay when getting off.

When returning to the Institute from the metro, you may decide to walk or take a shared taxi. The line for the shared taxi's is on the sidewalk in front of the PDV gas station, across the street from the mall. When you arrive at the line, greet the “dispatcher” and tell him that you want to go to “Colegio María Santísima cerca del seminario” Then go to the end of the line. The dispatcher creates the groups of 5 people that share the taxis. It is usually Bs.F. 4 or 5 per person. Be sure to thank the dispatcher when he puts your group together.

If you are taking a private taxi, taxis aren't regulated or metered, so you have to negotiate the price. If possible, ask 2 or 3 locals how much a taxi ride should cost before approaching a taxi driver so that you can negotiate a fair price. Before getting in, smile and tell the driver where you want to go and ask how much. If you don't know the rate, just keep smiling and suggest a price 50% less than the driver's first price. Act patient, there's millions of taxis. As a general rule, a trip back to Quinta PROUT from the Plaza Venezuela area should cost around Bs.F. 35, but it all depends on traffic, in rush hour it will be more. Also, the older the taxi, the easier it will be to bargain low.

Calling a private taxi and having them pick you up can cost twice as much as finding one on the street. However, you should avoid standing alone on a street for a long period of time; if possible, wait near a group of people or inside a shop.

Parks, Gardens and Excursions

Caracas is blessed with many parks and gardens and almost all are free of charge or minimally priced. The Avila is by far the most spectacular of these and a detailed map showing park entrances and highlights is on display in the lobby of Quinta PROUT. A wonderful way to meet locals and get to know the area better is to participate in some of the hikes and trips that are offered by Centro Excursionista. <http://www.centroexcursionistacaracas.org.ve/> They have hikes and/or camping trips almost every weekend.

Here is a list of some other parks/gardens in Caracas and what they offer:

- **Parque del Este** or “Parque Miranda” (metro “Miranda”): Located right outside the metro station it is the biggest park in the city and always busy with capoeira groups, football (soccer) and basketball games and family picnics. Plus, a free zoological area with various South American reptiles, birds and mammals on display. A great place for a jog or to join a group of Venezuelans in a football game.
- **La Estancia** just 100 meters after Altamira Metro Station: It used to be a rich person's home, now the house is an art gallery with extensive lawns and flower gardens. There are often free concerts there on the weekends. Stop by to pick up a free copy of the schedule.
- **Parque Los Caobos** (metro “Bellas Artes”): The park entrance is adjacent to Plaza Los Museos. Rarely busy, unless there's a bookfair or some other cultural event, so it's a great place for reading or conversation.
- **Botanical Gardens** (metro “Plaza Venezuela”): Take the exit for UCV, and just before the University entrance is the entrance to the Gardens on the right. P.R. Sarkar, Prout's founder, visited this park, and there's a beautiful tree that is great for meditation there.

Entertainment and Culture

- **Bellas Artes** and around is the hub of cultural activity, with two museums (Science and Fine Arts) and multiple theatres for films, plays and dance, most notably the Teatro Teresa Careño across from the Hotel Alba. Plaza Los Museos has something or other at least twice a week and is always full of young people and artisans, sitting around playing guitar and hackysack. There is a theatre inside the Museum of Fine Arts that offers free movies every week.
- **Centro de Arte La Estancia** (metro “Altamira”): Offers free live musical concerts almost every Sunday morning as well as various classes. A schedule of events is posted on a mural at the entrance or you can ask inside for a free copy of the schedule.
- **Movie Theatres:** Movie theatres are always located inside malls or shopping complexes. The closest one is right in the UniCentro shopping centre at La California. There are also two in the Sambil shopping complex (metro “Chacao”).
- **Beaches:** The closest beach is in Vargas State near the international airport (on the other side of El Avila), about one hour by bus. There are beaches just 10 km. from Centro Madre in Barlovento (Miranda State). Other nice beaches are more distant.

Cafes, Bars and Restaurants

Nighttime entertainment is basically concentrated between Chacao and Sabana Grande metro stops. Also, check out Las Mercedes, a more upscale area near metro “Chacaito” that is lined with endless cafes, bars, restaurants and ice cream parlors. The website www.rumbacaracas.com has information on most places offering nighttime entertainment, but here’s some suggestions:

- **Café Boo** (metro “Chacaito”): A very fun and lively open-aired bar with a large outdoor patio. No dancing, just lots of people sitting around tables. Large tv screens show music videos to western and latin pop/rock songs. Exit the metro and start heading South towards urbanización Las Mercedes. Get onto la Avenida Principal de Las Mercedes and continue South underneath the overpass. Once in Las Mercedes just ask for further directions, people are usually super helpful. Porpuesto buses to Las Mercedes are also available near the Chacaito metro station.
- **Heladería 4D** (metro “Chacaito”): A very popular deluxe ice-cream parlour. A little on the pricy side, but well worth it. Packed with groups of young locals, it is just across the street from Cafe Boo.
- **El Maní Es Así** (metro “Sabana Grande”): Live salsa dancing and a great environment. You must be drinking to sit at a table. No enforced dress code, just look acceptable and don’t show up in shorts. North of metro “Sabana Grande” just off of Avenida Francisco Solano Lopez.
- **El Gibo** (metro “Sabana Grande”): A great two story café/pub with an outdoor area in the alleyway out front. Both the décor and the people tend to be artsy and leftist. A great place to meet other resident foreigners involved with non-profit work or social and cultural projects. Between metro “Plaza Venezuela” and metro “Sabana Grande” on Boulevard de Sabana Grande. It’s down one of the little alleyway streets off the South side of the main Boulevard. Many other danceclubs and cafés/pubs in the area.
- **Trenchtown** (metro “Sabana Grande”): Live music specializing in reggae.

Recommended Reading

Articles:

Is Venezuela Heading Toward Prout by Andy Malinalco –
<http://www.priven.org/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=65>

Books:

Taking Power by Greg Wilpert
Cowboy in Caracas by Charlie Hardy
The Chavez Code by Eva Gollinger
Bush vs Chavez by Eva Gollinger
After Capitalism by Dada Maheshvarananda

Check list for what to bring:

- Invitation letter, including our address. Immigration authorities may want to know who invited you and where you will be staying.
- 3 photocopies of your passport photo page. Laminate one copy when you get here. Memorize your passport number.
- 2 copies of a letter from your home authorities stating that you do not have a criminal background.
- 2 copies of the lab report saying that you are HIV negative and free of Hepatitis. (If it is expensive to do this in your home country, you can wait and do it here very inexpensively during your first week here.)
- Proof that your vaccinations are up to date. The US based Center for Disease Control provides recommendations for vaccinations depending on your travel plans. <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/venezuela.aspx> If you plan on traveling, you may need proof of your yellow fever vaccination, or other vaccinations. (Currently vaccines for Yellow Fever are available at the Caracas International Airport for free. Yellow Fever vaccines are not needed for Caracas, but a good idea if you are planning to travel to other parts of South America.) Double check what your home country requirements are.
- Copies of any other important health records.
- Euros or dollars, at least enough to get you started.
- Clothing including office attire, and modest workout clothing and pajamas.
- If there are specific personal products that you enjoy you may wish to bring a supply of them as brand names are often expensive or difficult to get in Venezuela.
- Favorite vegetarian recipes if you cook. (You can check with us before hand to see if we can easily get any specific spices or kitchen tools that you enjoy or if you should bring them with you.)
- Print outs of pictures of your friends and family back home. You may have fun sharing them with your new friends here.
- Laptop, headphones/headsets, mp3 player. (Be sure to leave a backup copy of your data in your home country.)
- Anything that makes you happy.

As is the norm when traveling, please do not bring anything that is illegal, violates the house rules, is sentimentally irreplaceable, or extremely valuable. We want your experience here to be as enjoyable as possible and you will reduce your stress level by traveling in a smart manner and leaving unnecessary items in your home country. Thank you!