

# Volunteer Internship Orientation Manual



Instituto Venezolano  
de Investigación de Prout

Prout Research Institute  
of Venezuela

Authors: Mariah Branch, Dada Maheshvarananda, Brian Landever, Spencer Bailey

Updated: July, 2013

## Table of Contents

A. THE PRIVEN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM.....	4
Welcome by Dada Maheshvarananda, Director.....	4
Internship.....	4
Our Mission, Vision and Values .....	5
Facilities.....	6
The Role of the Volunteer Intern.....	6
Orientation.....	6
Learning Prout.....	7
Your Photo and Resume for the PRIVEN Webpages.....	7
Venezuelan News.....	7
The 40-hour Work Week and Planning Meetings.....	7
Publicity.....	8
Academic Discourse.....	8
Learning Spanish.....	8
B. LIFE AT QUINTA PROUT.....	10
Telephone Numbers.....	10
The House Routine.....	10
Conduct.....	10
Coming and Going.....	11
The Office .....	11
Clothing and Climate.....	11
The Kitchen.....	12
Bedrooms and Bathrooms.....	13
The Garden .....	13
Yoga.....	14
Meditation.....	14
C. LIFE IN VENEZUELA.....	16
Introduction to Caracas.....	16
Venezuelan Politics.....	16
Culture Shock.....	17
Centro Madre.....	17
Directions to Centro Madre (AMURT) in Barlovento.....	18
Neohumanist Preschool.....	18
Working Together.....	19
Passport .....	20
Please Contact us to Plan Bringing Money .....	20
Cell Phone .....	20
Public Transportation.....	20
Shopping.....	21
Health and Dental Care.....	21
Visas, Immigration and Exiting Venezuela.....	21
Parks, Gardens and Excursions .....	22
Entertainment and Culture.....	23

Cafes, Bars and Restaurants.....	23
Recommended Reading.....	24
Checklist for what to bring.....	24

## A. THE PRIVEN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

### *Welcome by Dada Maheshvarananda, Director*

“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, where 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 called for a Socialism for the 21st Century, but he admitted he didn't know what that meant. 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 fruits in our garden. We have planted and harvested mangoes, bananas, lemon, chico (sapodilla), papaya, tomatoes, spinach, oregano, ginger, 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 since it began in 2000, 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 since 2003 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. Welcome to your new home.

Brotherly, Dada Maheshvarananda

### *Internship*

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***

- House you in the beautiful Quinta Prout in Caracas.
- Offer you delicious and nutritious vegetarian meals.
- Facilitate your studies of the Progressive Utilization Theory (Prout) with access to many resources.
- Help you connect with people and projects doing economic justice and spiritual work within the larger Proutist global network.
- Work in a place where your ideas count. Over time, your role in the team will evolve into one that suits you.
- Support your intellectual development and contributions to scholarly work.
- Support your community outreach and education efforts.
- Provide the opportunity to improve your language skills in an international office setting.
- Provide practical experience and a forum for improving and expanding your skill set.
- Provide a working environment that is clean, fair, safe, respectful of all and free of any kind of exploitation.
- Encourage your spiritual development with a library of literature as well as daily meditation and yoga classes.

***Our Mission, Vision and Values***

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.

### ***Facilities***

The headquarters of our Institute is the Quinta Prout, a large three-story house close to the national park El Avila and with an enchanting 360-degree view of Caracas and the mountain. We strive to provide an example of sustainable living through recycling 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. The Institute hosts volunteers and sponsors who sincerely want to see and understand the social transformation that Venezuela is living and contribute to the process using Prout theory. IVIP also hosts guests and delegations visiting Caracas who seek a family atmosphere and a quiet place to stay, study or work.

### ***The Role of the Volunteer Intern***

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. 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 a process of making most decisions in an open and respectful collective way.

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

### ***Orientation***

When you first arrive, one or more members of our staff will gradually explain different aspects of the Institute, the house, and the city of Caracas. This orientation will include visits to the Neohumanist kindergarten and Centro Madre. You'll receive a checklist of all the important parts of orientation we want to cover during your first two weeks. You will also spend time studying about Prout and Venezuela, and working on a variety of short-term jobs that are needed, some physical, some intellectual and some social. This is a time for you to get to know us and for us to get to know you.

After this period of orientation we will plan together your long-term projects. This will include your Prout research studies and your work project. We will try to balance your interests with the needs of the Institute.

### ***Learning Prout***

Prout is the acronym for Progressive Utilization Theory, a new socio-economic model based on self-reliance of each region, cooperatives, environmental balance and universal spiritual values. Prout was founded by Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (1921-1990), Indian philosopher, author of over 400 books, composer and spiritual teacher. He gave more than 1,500 pages about Prout.

Every resident of the Quinta Prout signs an educational contract that includes a promise to study Prout at least three hours each week and to submit a short written review of what you've learned.

A logical place to start is by reading the introductory book, *After Capitalism: Economic Democracy in Action* (2012) by our director, Dada Maheshvarananda, which is available in both English and Spanish.

We have prepared a list of 74 research questions about Prout and Venezuela. You can choose one or several or design your own. A plan of studies would normally include:

- 1) Define your purpose.
- 2) Study the writings of P.R. Sarkar on this subject.
- 3) Study the writings of other Proutists and other authors on this subject.
- 4) Make a list of research questions.
- 5) Design a research plan: where will you go to find the answers to your questions?
- 6) Do the research.
- 7) Report your research in written and/or oral presentation.
- 8) What policy implications or proposals does your research support?

### ***Your Photo and Resume for the PRIVEN Webpages***

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://priven.org/about/staff/>  
<http://priven.org/about/previous-volunteers/>  
<http://prout.org.ve/acerca-del-institute/equipo/>

### ***Venezuelan News***

Every intern is expected to be informed about what is happening in the country. Some good sites are:

Venezuelan Analysis (English): [www.venezuelanalysis.com](http://www.venezuelanalysis.com)

Google news headlines about Venezuela (Spanish):

[https://news.google.com/?edchanged=1&ned=es\\_ve&authuser=0](https://news.google.com/?edchanged=1&ned=es_ve&authuser=0)

Agencia Bolivariana de Noticias (government): [www.abn.info.ve](http://www.abn.info.ve)

El Universal (opposition): [www.eluniversal.com](http://www.eluniversal.com)

### ***The 40-hour Work Week and Planning Meetings***

The office working hours are generally from 9am – 6pm, with lunch 1 - 2pm. 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 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 planning meetings, which are generally held at 9:00 each morning. Any volunteer work you do for Centro Madre or the Neohumanist Preschool is counted as part of your work done.

All interaction between members and guests of Quinta Prout is to be guided by a profound respect for others, positive communication and active listening.

### ***Publicity***

We try to publicize the successes of the institute. 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***

It is our hope that the Prout Research Institute of Venezuela and the Prout model can become known in academic circles. If you are interested in publishing academic articles or presenting at conferences and wondering where to start, consider where your joys and passions lie.

We can help you approach published authors and ask them to co-author papers with you. Having a published author as a co-author dramatically increases your chances of getting published and being asked to present at conferences. We can also point you to the editors of academic journals in Venezuela and elsewhere who are sympathetic to our work. In Venezuela it is also possible to present proposals to groups of activists and sympathetic policy makers.

We hope you will cite Proutists in your academic work, because search engines, like google scholar, track authors and sources, and these search engines are one of the primary ways that young scholars are introduced to new ideas.

### ***Learning Spanish***

Having a comfortable command of the Spanish language is an imperative part of living and working in Venezuela. Interns are expected to devote some time every day to studying Spanish in the ongoing effort to reach fluency. Communicating well with the public, making phone calls, reading and writing emails and articles in Spanish are important skills in doing practical work here.

Adults 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, watch TV or Youtube, 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 3 or more hours a week, can count 3 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.

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

[www.spanishdict.com/wordoftheday/](http://www.spanishdict.com/wordoftheday/)

[www.bitesizedlanguages.com](http://www.bitesizedlanguages.com)

Best online Spanish-English dictionary: [www.wordreference.com](http://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](http://www.freetranslation.com)

[www.worldlingo.com](http://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](http://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**

### ***Telephone Numbers***

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  
(Diagonal al Colegio María Santísima y el seminario CEMS)  
Urbanización El Marqués  
Caracas, Venezuela, 1070

Main Office: (0212) 238.86.65,

Emergency: 171

Dada's Office: (0212) 886.23.23

Lawyer (speaks English): Nelson  
Pietrantoni 0416.538.3762

Dada's Cell: 0426.710.98.25

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.

### ***The House Routine***

This is your 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.

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

6:00 - 7:30	Yoga-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	Collective lunch
2:00 pm	Continuation of working hours
5:30 – 6:30 pm	Yoga class
Evening	Free time
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.
- Venezuelans are very conscious about personal cleanliness, and yogis are, too. Each person must shower each day and wear clean clothes.
- 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. Be sure to sign out when you are leaving mentioning where you are headed and when you expect to return, and sign in when you do return. 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 you to inform us of this only for your safety and the institute's liability.

### ***The Office***

We have two internet-equipped computers available for institute and personal use. We also have 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. 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 if related to the institute, there's no need to ask. Please keep personal calls to a minimum during office hours. Many volunteers use skype to call home in the evenings.

### ***Clothing and Climate***

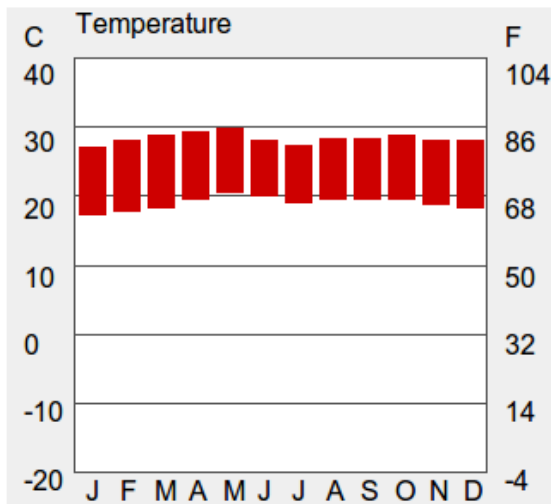
The Institute will provide staff members and volunteers with an official IVIP shirt to wear during office hours and/or at events where we wish to show our presence. Venezuelans are very particular about how people are dressed and if you go to someone's office, you should wear office attire. Also, you 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. Men, please wear your shirts at all times in the office.

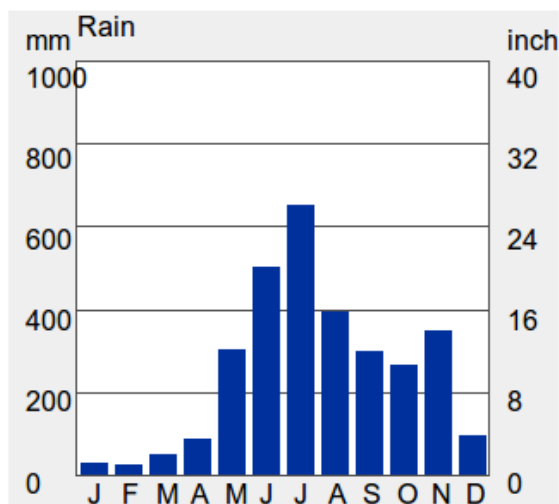
Mosquitos are often a problem; each bedroom has a fan which keeps them away. In the office, some people choose to wear shoes, socks and light weight clothing that covers them to prevent mosquito bites. If there is an item of clothing that you don't already have, you may wish to wait and purchase it here, 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).



### ***The Kitchen***

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.

Part of maintaining a clean and healthy environment is keeping our kitchen clean and not inviting unwanted bugs to live with us. To do this we need to eliminate sources of food and water for insects. This means keeping a very clean environment. After eating, please keep any leftovers in plastic containers and put them in the refrigerator.

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.

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.

### ***Bedrooms and Bathrooms***

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. You may be asked to switch rooms when a delegation of visitors comes.

Please avoid keeping food in your rooms.

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 bathrooms on the second floor are reserved for men and the bathrooms on the third floor for women. The bathrooms on the main floor are shared use and guests usually prefer to use the toilet that is accessible from the garden.

This house, like most buildings constructed in Latin America, has small-diameter sewage pipes. Flushing toilet paper down will block the toilets. Instead drop your dirty toilet paper in the waste basket and help us to empty it each day.

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.

### ***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.

### ***Yoga***

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 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. 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.

## **C. LIFE IN VENEZUELA**

### ***Introduction to Caracas***

Caracas is a great place to live and a necessary headquarters 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 conferences, cultural fairs and musical performances you will find there is always something stimulating, lively or fun happening somewhere in the city.

With 3.5 million people living in greater Caracas, at times it can seem 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.

Caracas is basically a long and narrow valley running East to West. The northern limit is the Avila mountain range that looms over the city, the "Soul of Caracas", so it's always easy to orient yourself anywhere in town. One entrance to this national park is just a 20-minute walk from our house.

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.

A separate "Security Brief" with important tips will be given to you separately when you arrive.

### ***Venezuelan Politics***

There are many positive achievements since Hugo Chávez became president in 1999, like providing the minimum necessities of life to everyone; there are also serious problems, like inefficient bureaucracy, corruption and crime. The challenge is to listen carefully to both chavistas and opposition representatives, because we can learn something from everyone. This may seem straightforward, but it can be difficult in practice. Some Venezuelans have lost friends or have strained family relationships because of it. Many Venezuelans are eager to talk about politics, and most will tell you either that "Chávez was great" or "Chávez was terrible." Often enough, both sides will seem logical.

It's easy to feel confused by this, but the important thing to remember is that you do not necessarily need to, nor should you, come to a definite conclusion. As in most complicated situations, the truth most likely lies somewhere in the middle of these two extremes. We can learn from everyone. The problems Venezuela faces are certainly complex, and the solutions are not simple.

The Institute is an independent foundation. If asked, we explain that we are trying to learn from both the successes and the difficulties that are currently being experienced. If you wish to share your own political opinion with someone, please make it very clear that you are expressing your personal view and not that of the institute.

In 2009 Spencer Bailey, an intern at the Institute, wrote an excellent article entitled "Challenges to Implementing Prout in Venezuela". He listed the political, economic, social and cultural obstacles that we face. It is available on the Resources menu of our web page:

<http://priven.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Challenges-to-Implementing-Prout-by-Spencer-Bailey2.pdf>



## ***Culture Shock***

Culture shock is the physical and emotional discomfort one may experience 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.

Our director, Dada Maheshvarananda, says, “I left my country of origin in 1978 and have lived all the remaining years in different countries of the world. I have experienced some kind of culture shock almost every day of my life during all these years. It's a natural part of living in different parts of the world. One secret to reduce culture shock is adopting a positive attitude. Personally I love Venezuela and its people with all my heart. I hope that you can learn to love this place as much as I do.”

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* and others 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!

## ***Centro Madre***

***Sustainable agriculture:*** On only 3.5 hectares (8.5 acres) of fertile land, this holistic farm integrates fruits, vegetables, medicinal plants, bee-keeping, fish ponds, and a commercial guava nursery. For five years renowned Cuban agronomists have dedicated numerous hours each week to this flourishing project. Centro Madre produces guava, passion fruit, lemons, papaya, bananas, plantain, soursop, tamarind, oranges, tangerines, organic vegetables, tubers, oilseeds and medicinal plants.

The Center gets many visitors each day, including local farmers, university agriculture students and school classes. Banco de Venezuela acknowledged this progressive project by awarding a large donation to build a community store. The national and local governments have recognized Centro Madre as a model for small scale sustainable agriculture and food security.

***Community outreach programs:*** Barlovento, a district of Miranda State, is a region rich in natural and human resources. However, its population, which is 95 percent Afro Venezuelan, suffers from poverty, unemployment and historical exclusion.

Empowering women, adolescents and children is the goal of Centro Madre's dynamic

educational projects. Local volunteers visit families in the pueblos to lend children's books and share good parenting techniques. Neohumanism storytelling and gardening programs enhance local school classes. Centro Madre supports teenage mothers and women who raise children with physical and mental disabilities. Venezuelan professionals and graduate students have assisted in linking the cooperative social service projects of Centro Madre with various government ministries. Twice each year, in June and December, children's programs of creative expression are organized in the local communities.

Universities such as the Universidad Politécnica Territorial Argelia Laya-Higuerote and the Universidad Nacional Experimental Simón Rodríguez contribute through internships, classes and workshops.

**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.

### ***Directions to Centro Madre (AMURT) in 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 Bs.F. 30 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, take the metro one stop to PETARE station and walk to the terminal of the buses in going to SAN JOSE or RIO 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 Bolívar going to SAN JOSE. Plaza Bolívar 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.

### ***Neohumanist Preschool***

The founder of Prout, P.R. Sarkar, introduced the concept of Neo-humanism, which can be simply defined as "The practice of love for all creation including plants, animals, and the inanimate world." Neohumanist education strives to develop in children a sense of their own dignity and worth, to free them from inferiority complexes, and to create in them an awareness of their potential for contributing to society. The schools offer a

holistic curriculum, infusing knowledge with ecological consciousness. Every element in the Neohumanist program aims to develop all levels of a child's existence: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. The curriculum goes beyond common disciplines and includes group dynamics, cultural diversity, morality, meditation, relaxation, visualization, fantasy and cooperative games. Worldwide, Neohumanist Education is practiced in a network of schools and institutes that span over fifty countries with more than 1,000 kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and children's homes.

In 2003 Didi Ananda Amegha opened the Centro Universo Infantil Neohumanist Preschool which presently has about 35 children from age two to six that is open Monday to Friday from 7am to 5pm. The project aims for the holistic development of the child , daily quiet meditation , awakening ecological and social consciousness , developing academic, practical, social and personal skills , joyful learning through stories, arts and play, and the teacher being an ideal example. The school is located at Calle Chile con Calle Internacional, off Av. Victoria, Caracas, tel. 0212-633-0131. (From Los Simbolos metro station it is a 15-minute walk.)

### ***Working Together***

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

**Fostering relationships** are a key component of successful project development. We very much encourage you to invite the people you meet to help us with our projects. 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 every day 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 personal connections with community members.

### ***Passport***

You should arrive with several photocopies of your passport photo page and other important documents. Laminate one of the copies of your passport photo page plus your visa and/or arrival stamp 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.)

### ***Please Contact us to Plan Bringing Money***

We strongly recommend contacting us before you come to Venezuela to plan how much money you will bring with you. Credit and debit cards function **very differently** here than in most other countries. There are some issues you need to know so that you can make wise choices.

### ***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.

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 (located just southwest of the metro station “Sabana Grande”) since it has multiple stores. 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, but be careful when using an iphone or other expensive cellphone in public.

### ***Public Transportation***

Outside of rush hours getting around Caracas is usually quick and efficient on the metro. It runs from 5:30am until 11:00pm 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 are 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. 13.50), which gives you 10 unlimited rides or a “multiabono integral” (Bs.F. 13.50), 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 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. 5 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 station La California, you may decide to walk (about 20 minutes uphill) or take a shared taxi. The line for the shared taxis is on

the sidewalk in front of the PDV gas station. 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. 10 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. 50, 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.

### ***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.

### ***Health and Dental Care***

One of the benefits of living in Venezuela is free basic health and dental care provided by the Cuban and Venezuelan 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.

### ***Visas, Immigration and Exiting Venezuela***

Most visitors receive a 90-day tourist visa on arrival for free. If you plan on staying for a longer period, you can apply in your home country for a one-year student or business visa.

When leaving Venezuela by land or sea, you must pay a departure tax, which was Bs.F. 90 in June 2013. When leaving by air the departure tax is Bs.F. 110 + airport tax 137.50. This is usually included in your ticket, however sometimes it is increased without notice, and if you bought your ticket before the increase, you will have to pay the difference.

The simplest and cheapest way to renew a tourist visa is to simply leave the country for a 24-hour period and then re-enter, at which time the border officials will issue a new 90-day visa. The closest and easiest route to leave Venezuela is heading west to

Colombia. The two main routes are to Cúcuta in the Andes (slightly shorter and cheaper) and to Maicao and Santa Marta on the Caribbean coast (more scenic). The border crossing procedure is relatively quick and painless. Foreign tourists must pay the departure tax (Bs.F. 90) in exchange for official stamps for sale at the border. These stamps are given in exchange for your Venezuelan departure stamp. You are let off the bus to walk across the border, just make sure to have your passport stamped by the immigration offices of both countries.

To get to Cúcuta you have to take a bus to San Antonio del Táchira, which is the last city on the Venezuelan side. (If no seat is available, buy a ticket to San Cristóbal, the capital of Táchira state, and from that terminal you can take a local bus for 90 minutes to San Antonio.) The bus leaves from the Caracas 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.

Several companies travel similar routes, but prices are almost always identical. All such trips to Mérida 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 at least 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 air conditioning: freezing cold! The fare to San Antonio de Táchira is around Bs.F. 150.

The buses to Santa Marta and other destinations along the coast leave from the Caracas “Terminal Oriente”. Arrive at metro “Petare” around 4:30 or 5pm and take a por puesto bus for “Terminal Oriente”. The fare to Santa Marta is about Bs.F. 400.

### ***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 routes is here: <http://www.el-avila.com/rutas.html>. 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. They have hikes and/or camping trips almost every weekend:

<http://www.centroexcursionistacaracas.org.ve/>

•**El Sistema** (“The System”) is a publicly financed voluntary sector music education program in Venezuela, founded in 1975 by José Antonio Abreu. Now called Fundación Musical Simón Bolívar, a state foundation which watches over Venezuela's 125 youth orchestras, 31 symphony orchestras, and 370,000 children who attend its music schools around the country. From 70 to 90 percent of the students come from poor socio-economic backgrounds. The program has won numerous international awards and recognition from many world-famous classical musicians. In Caracas, the schedule of free concerts of Orquesta Sinfónica Simón Bolívar, Orquesta de Juventud Teresa Carreño, and many other groups can be found at

<http://www.fesnojiv.gob.ve/en/events-calendar.html>

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

•**Parque Miranda** or “Parque del Este” (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. There is a replica of the 19th Century sailing ship the Leander and a museum in honor of Francisco de Miranda. 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 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***

and <http://www.fundamusical.org.ve/es/perfil-sjtcv.html>

- **Bellas Artes** and around is the hub of cultural activity, with two museums (Science and Fine Arts) and the National Art Gallery 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.

- **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. Lines are often long, and there is a good chance that tickets will be sold out if you don't show up early.

- **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](http://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** (In Centro Comercial Líder and at 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.

## ***Recommended Reading***

### **Articles:**

"Evaluating the Legacy of President Hugo Chávez Using the Progressive Utilization Theory (Prout)" by Dada Maheshvarananda (2013)  
<http://priven.org/evaluating-the-legacy-of-president-hugo-chavez-using-the-progressive-utilization-theory-prout-2/>

“Challenges to Implementing Prout in Venezuela” by Spencer Bailey (2009)  
<http://priven.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Challenges-to-Implementing-Prout-by-Spencer-Bailey2.pdf>

“Is Venezuela Heading Toward Prout?” by Andy Malinalco (2007) –  
<http://priven.org/publications/is-venezuela-heading-towards-prout/>

### **Books:**

*Taking Power* by Greg Wilpert

*Cowboy in Caracas* by Charlie Hardy

*The Chavez Code* and *Bush vs Chavez* by Eva Gollinger

*After Capitalism* by Dada Maheshvarananda

### **Films:**

*The Revolution Will Not be Televised*

## ***Checklist for what to bring***

- Invitation letter, including our address and telephone numbers. You need to write this on your immigration form. If an act of God happens and nobody meets you when you arrive at the airport, you need to call us.
- Three photocopies of your passport photo page. Laminate one copy when you get here.
- Proof that your vaccinations are up to date. No vaccinations are needed for Caracas, but if you plan on traveling to other parts of South America, you may need proof of your yellow fever or other vaccinations. The US based Center for Disease Control provides recommendations for vaccinations depending on your



travel plans. <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/venezuela.aspx> (Yellow Fever vaccinations are available free of cost at the Caracas International Airport and elsewhere.

- Copies of any other important health records.
- Euros or dollars, at least enough to get you started. We *strongly* recommend that you contact us before coming to learn about exchange rates, credit cards, etc.
- Laptop, headphones/headsets, mp3 player. (Be sure to leave a backup copy of your data in your home country.)
- Summer clothing plus a light jacket or sweater, office attire, and modest workout clothing and pajamas. (See section on Clothing and Climate for the temperature ranges in Caracas.)
- 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.
- 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!