

# Destination Nicaragua

## FAST FACTS

Area: 129,494 sq km  
(largest in Central America)

Population 5,785,846  
(least densely populated in Central America)

Capital: Managua

Primary language: Spanish

Secondary languages: Miskito, English & others

Money: córdoba; US dollar widely used

Number of animal species: 1400

Number of cell phones: 2.123 million

Percentage of roads paved: 12

Voting age: 16 years

Sprawling from the Pacific to the Caribbean, its head crowned by the mists of the northern highlands while its toes dangle in the jungle-shrouded waters of the Río San Juan, Nicaragua's geographic diversity is topped only by the range of cultures living within its borders.

Creole-speaking islanders? Check. Blackberry-toting city dwellers? Check. Indigenous tribes speaking Spanish as a distant second language? Check. Artsy, goatee-wearing university students? Check. Surf bums, cowboys, diehard revolutionaries and traditional craftspeople? Check, check, check and check.

What hits you is the harmony – these people have been through dictatorships, revolution, civil war and economic collapse, and seen their governments carve the country up and hand it out like cake or simply take the money and run, but *still* they get along.

If there's one Spanish phrase you're guaranteed to hear while you move around Nicaragua, it's '*¿Cómo no?*' – why not? Nothing sums up the optimism of a country that's just coming into its own like these two simple words. Scuba diving in a volcanic crater... *¿Cómo no?* Sleeping in a centuries-old farmhouse on an organic coffee plantation... *¿Cómo no?* Spanish class in the morning and world-class surf in the afternoon... *¿Cómo no?* Volcano treks, colonial masterpieces, dancing till dawn, jaw-dropping sunsets, deserted beaches and a million other things... *¿Cómo no?*

You'd have to be a jaded traveler indeed not to fall for the romantic streetscapes of Granada, or the fiery underdog charms of its rival León. And there's not much that can prepare you for sights like the volcanic skylines of the Maribios chain or the mythical Isla de Ometepe, whose twin peaks rise above the waters of Central America's largest lake.

But while many are drawn by images of charming towns and virgin forests and tales of perfect waves crashing onto empty beaches, what stays in their hearts is the inner beauty of Nicaraguans themselves. There's no question that these people are doing it tough, but from the sound of laughter ringing in the plazas and the carefree attitudes of nearly everyone you meet, you'd never guess just *how* tough.

Nicaragua's had a bad reputation for some time, but if you're still thinking guerillas, revolution and shady arms deals, it's time to update your imagery. The ceasefire went into effect nearly 20 years ago, and these days the only khaki-clad youths creeping through the jungle are hikers, out experiencing some of Central America's most pristine wilderness.

The country has its share of problems, no doubt. Jobs are scarce, the economy's shot, politicians are questionable and some days it seems the only business that's booming is the Colombian-based import-export trade out on the Caribbean.

But such dramas are far, far from the average visitor's experience – whether you're taking an afternoon stroll around a lovely plaza, gazing down from atop a volcano or meandering along a far-off river in a wooden canoe, chances are you'll feel that time spent in Nicaragua is like living in a dream – and a very good one at that.

# Getting Started

Where to go and what to do? Nicaragua offers everything from homestays and hiking trails through chilly cloud forests to relaxation and a fair amount of decadence in luxury beachfront resorts.

But – unless you consider this part of the fun – this is one region where planning ahead isn't absolutely necessary, as crowds are thin, except during *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) and Christmas–New Year, and there are things to see and do all year round.

## WHEN TO GO

Nicaraguans pack the beaches and hotels during *Semana Santa*; apart from that, you don't really have to worry about tourist-season prices or crowds. The exceptions are Granada and southwestern Nicaragua, which both observe the traditional Central American high season (late November to mid-March) with more gusto.

Tourists flood Nicaragua this time of year for the weather – *verano* (summer) falls between November and May, and is the best time for back-country hiking in the interior and sunbathing on the Pacific coast. The Caribbean coast is less predictable (not to mention wetter) – it's worth checking the forecast before deciding which way to head.

*Invierno* (winter) runs roughly May to November. Expect afternoon downpours for a couple of hours and higher humidity, and beautiful greenery in the usually dry tropical forests of the Pacific coast. Uninterrupted days of rain and flooding do occur, but rarely. The entire Caribbean coast braces itself for hurricane season – technically June to November, with the worst storms in October and November.

## COSTS & MONEY

Nicaragua is inexpensive, and serious budget travelers who limit time in pricier destinations can realistically travel on US\$20 per day. Staying in midrange hotels, eating in fancier restaurants and taking the occasional guided tour could easily push that figure to US\$60.

While single-room rates are often 80% the price of doubles, families or groups luck out, as each additional bed often only costs US\$5 to US\$10 above the double-room price. Taxi travel and car rental work well for groups, too; it's much cheaper than private shuttles and sometimes not that much pricier than catching the bus.

In Nicaragua, US dollars are the alternative currency, although using the córdoba is cheaper and easier. Traveler's checks are almost extinct – it's more convenient to bring debit and credit cards. For more advice on the financial scene, see p294.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Every town has its *fiestas patronales*, or patron saint–day festivities. Details vary, but count on parades, folkloric dance and live music, including marching bands (and fireworks) at 5am. Sweet.

**National Baseball Championship Series** (March 26 to April 4) Nicaragua's national pastime comes to a head.

**San Marcos** (April 24, San Marcos) The saints of Carazo get together in San Marcos for the department's biggest party.

**Palo de Mayo** (May, Bluefields) A little more sparkle than you may be used to around the big pole.

See Climate Charts (p292) for more information.

## HOW MUCH?

Surfboard rental per day  
US\$10-15

Museum admission US\$2

Bus ride per 2hr US\$2

Internet access per hr  
US\$0.70

Típica breakfast US\$1.50

For more on costs, see the  
Lonely Planet Index on  
the inside front cover.

**DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...**

- A flashlight (torch) for exploring caves (and your room when the electricity goes out).
- Insect repellent containing DEET (p309) for wet-season travels. Think about malaria medication (p307), too.
- Bathing suit and other beach gear for the coast; light jacket, sweater and warmish pants for the highlands.
- Your spirit of adventure.
- Flip-flops (thongs) for slouching around town and dodgy shared showers.
- Documents; photocopy your passport and other important documents, including air tickets and credit cards, and stash them in at least two places.
- US\$100 in small bills for emergency use.
- An open mind.
- Contact lens solution, tampons, sunscreen and favorite toiletries (as required), all of which can be maddeningly hard to find.
- Photos from home (a great conversation starter) and small, unique souvenirs from your country for gifts to host families or other special locals you meet.
- This book.

**Virgen del Carmen** (July 16, San Juan del Sur) Carmen blesses boats around the bay.

**Santa Ana** (July 26, Nandaime) For more than 400 years, ever since she saved Nandaime from Volcán Mombacho, this saint's had one of the country's best parties.

**International Fishing Tournament** (September 14 to 15, San Carlos) How big was that tarpon again?

**San Jerónimo** (September 30, Masaya) The longest party of the year; for more Masaya mayhem, see p100.

**4x4 Expedición de Montaña** (late October, Jinotega) This off-road jeep, truck and motorcycle rally draws 3000 competitors and 50,000 fans, with live music every day and night.

**Noche de Agüizotes** (last Friday in October, Masaya) Even cooler than Halloween.

**Carnaval Mitos y Leyendas** (November 1, León) Same concept, wider variety of costumes.

**National Garífuna Week** (November 12 to 19, Pearl Lagoon) Live music, dancing in the street and yummy food – what more could you want?

**Lavada de la Plata** (December 6, El Viejo) Wash the Virgin's silver while you pray.

**La Gritería (Día de la Purísima Concepción)** (December 7) Nicaragua's most important Catholic holiday; if anyone asks, *¿Quién causa tanta alegría?*, just answer, *¡La concepción de María!*, and you might get a treat.

**TRAVELING RESPONSIBLY**

Responsible travel in Nicaragua often comes down to using your common sense. Littering, disrespecting local customs and supporting unsustainable or harmful industries (such as souvenirs or menu items made from endangered species) are obvious no-nos.

Nicaragua's tourist industry is relatively young. Please be aware that industry professionals and community leaders are watching your habits and preferences closely. If you can, make the effort to visit a national park or reserve (see the boxed text, p56), try some community-based tourism (where proceeds go direct to the community, not to middlemen or tour operators), or go all out and do some volunteer work. For more on reducing negative impact and making a positive difference during your stay, see our Green Nicaragua chapter, p59.

# TOP PICKS



## MOVIES

There aren't a whole lot of films about Nicaragua, but there are some good ones...

- *Fire from the Mountain* – based on the book of the same name, this is an award-winning documentary about the Contra War that includes interviews with the book's author.
- *Under Fire* – starring Nick Nolte and Gene Hackman, this is the Hollywood version of the revolution, built up around the murder of ABC journalist Bill Stewart, which was captured on film.
- *Men with Guns* – written and directed by John Sayles, this allegorical tale is set in an unnamed, war-torn Latin American country, where one doctor comes to terms with conflict's physical and psychological carnage.
- *Pictures from a Revolution* – A documentary about a photojournalist whose first assignment was to cover the Sandinista revolution. The film picks up when she decides to return 10 years later and track down some of her subjects.
- *Walker* – Directed by Alex Cox (*Sid & Nancy*). Ed Harris plays filibuster/President William Walker – see the boxed text, p29. Some of the symbolism is a bit heavy handed, but the film was shot on location in Nicaragua and there are some wonderful, sweeping landscape shots.
- *Carla's Song* – Ken Loach's romantic drama about a Glasgow bus driver and a Nicaraguan refugee switches between Scotland and Nicaragua. Some of the dialogue captures Nica Spanish well, and there are some great shots of northern Nicaragua and Managua.
- *The World Is Watching* – a documentary covering the media feeding frenzy during the Contra War.
- *When the World Stopped Watching* – a follow-up documentary, featuring many of the same people, about what happened when the reporters took off for the next war.

## GUIDED TOURS (THAT ARE ACTUALLY WORTH THE MONEY)

We know. Guided tours have a certain stigma attached. They're expensive and quite often you can do it yourself. Sometimes, though, it pays to have someone leading the way. Our favorites:

- Sandboarding on Cerro Negro (p179). Unless you've brought your own board, how else do you plan on descending at 70km/h?
- Any of the hiking and homestay options in the Área Protegida Miraflores (p208) are well worth the money, both for the local knowledge and the fascinating commentaries along the way.
- Kayaking on the Río Istiam, Ometepe (p156), 'cos these guides know how to call up a caiman, and sometimes that's exactly what you want.
- Tours of Laguna Silica (p287) – unless you'd like to rent your own boat, wend your way through narrow rivers and hack your own path through the jungle.
- Gioconda Tours, Granada (p124). A traditionally garbed opera-singing guide? Irresistible.
- Trips to Aguas Frecas (p286). Several El Castillo-based operators (p285) will take you to this spot in the Reserva Biológica Indio-Maíz, and they're all worth it.
- Volcano Treks on Isla de Ometepe (p145). Sure, you could break the law, go alone, get lost and maybe die, but is that *really* what you were planning for this trip?
- Sport fishing? Randy Poteet at Casa Rosa (p257) is the president's go-to guide – why shouldn't he be yours?
- Any of the options mentioned in the Community Tourism itinerary (p25).
- George Fox Tours (p260) offers unforgettable outings around Pearl Lagoon with plenty of history, culture and cuisine thrown in.
- Putting your life in the hands of a 10-year-old at the San Jacinto hot springs (p189) as he tells you where to step and where not to – and then does an impersonation of a tourist who didn't follow the advice.

## TRAVEL LITERATURE

It's been a while since anybody wrote a good travelogue about Nicaragua, but below are some classics. While Granada and San Juan del Sur both have excellent English-language bookstores, it's generally best to get what you need before you arrive.

*The Jaguar Smile* by Salman Rushdie is part travelogue, part (very friendly) examination of Sandinista government policies during the 1980s. It makes for a good, if heavily biased, read.

*The War in Nicaragua* by William Walker (see the boxed text, p29) is an often tragic look into the mind of the man who just couldn't leave Nicaragua alone. It was written in 1860, just before his final, fateful invasion attempt.

*Travels with Mr Brown* by Mark Twain is well worth tracking down – Twain spends very little time in Nicaragua, but his lyrical descriptions of Ometepe and the Río San Juan still ring true today.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

There are thousands of websites dedicated to Nicaraguan tourism, culture and history on the web – here are a few good ones to get you started.

**IBW Internet Gateway** ([www.ibw.com.ni](http://www.ibw.com.ni)) A solid portal; also check out Xolo ([www.xolo.com.ni](http://www.xolo.com.ni)).

**Intur** ([www.visitnicaragua.com/ingles](http://www.visitnicaragua.com/ingles)) The official government website is in English and Spanish, with lots of cheerful, vague information and an awesome photo gallery.

**Latin American Network Information Center** ([www.lanic.utexas.edu/la/ca/nicaragua](http://www.lanic.utexas.edu/la/ca/nicaragua)) An excellent portal with academic and tourism-oriented offerings.

**Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)) A good online overview of the country for travelers.

**Nica Living** ([www.nicaliving.com](http://www.nicaliving.com)) Expat network and chat room with answer-filled archives for your oddest inquiries.

**Vianica.com** ([www.vianica.com/transportation](http://www.vianica.com/transportation)) Log on to this interactive map and click on your route to find Nicaraguan road conditions, travel-time estimates, bus fares and more.

# Itineraries

## CLASSIC ROUTES

### THE BIG LOOP

#### One Month to One Lifetime / Managua to Managua

Fly into **Managua** (p71) and take in the view from **Sandino's silhouette** (p76). Once you're done there, hit the markets of **Masaya** (p102), stopping off to catch a view of the lush **Laguna de Apoyo** (p104) from nearby **Catarina** (p107). Make time for **Granada** (p113), a graceful colonial beauty, before heading south to sunny **San Juan del Sur** (p157), Nicaragua's liveliest beach town. A short hop away is the iconic **Isla de Ometepe** (p145), a volcanic lake island. Catch the ferry to southern **San Carlos** (p274), gateway to the **Islas Solentiname** (p277) and the jungle-covered Spanish fortresses along the **Río San Juan** (p282). Head north for the awesome diving and white-sand beaches on the **Corn Islands** (p263) then back inland and up into the mountains for the urban bustle of **Matagalpa** (p224), the peaceful beauty of **Jinotega** (p218) and some revolutionary culture and cloud forests in **Estelí** (p202). Just down the road, don't miss Granada's historical rival **León** (p170), which has an unrivalled collection of churches and poets, plus volcanoes and some great beach spots just out of town. From there, it's an easy hop back to Managua.

Take in the best the country has to offer – beaches, markets, rivers, islands, colonial towns and mountains – on this epic 1500km loop. Hopefully the San Juan–Bluefields ferry is running by now.



**SOUTHERN LOOP** 10 Days to Three Weeks / Managua to San Juan de Nicaragua

Arriving in **Managua** (p71), set aside a day to check out the view from **Sandino's silhouette** (see p76) and the historical perspective offered by the **Huellas de Acahualinca** (p79).

Then it's time for some colonial splendor in the museums, churches and art galleries of charismatic **Granada** (p113). Spend the day kayaking through the 365 islets just offshore or hiking **Volcán Mombacho** (p132). Take a day trip (at least) to **Masaya** (p97) and the **Pueblos Blancos** (p106). For *laguna* views, **Catarina** (p107) is the most popular, but nearby **Diriá** (p107) is far more relaxed. If you like what you see, you can spend the night waterside at the **Laguna de Apoyo** (p104).

It's time to head south and hit the beaches around **San Juan del Sur** (p157), with nesting sea turtles at **Refugio de Vida Silvestre La Flor** (p166) from July to January and plenty of perfect waves at easily accessible beaches like **Playa Maderas** (p164) and more isolated (but equally popular) ones like **Playa Guasacate** (p143). A short bus or taxi ride from San Juan gets you to the ferry for **Isla de Ometepe** (p145), where you could easily spend a day or a week.

Your next stop: **San Carlos** (p274), a breezy nine-hour ferry ride away. Check the boat schedules in San Carlos and decide where you want to go first. It's a bit tricky to get out to the isolated island-art colony of the **Islas Solentiname** (p277), which has some of the most scenic souvenir shopping you'll ever enjoy, not to mention one very pretty church. Then it's down the mighty Río San Juan, through some of the wildest rainforests remaining in Central America, to the Spanish fortress at **El Castillo** (p284); real adventurers could take it all the way to **San Juan del Norte** (p287).

This 600km meander through many of the country's highlights is a comfortable jaunt that you can easily turn in to the adventure of a lifetime by taking a few detours.



## THE HIGHLANDS TO THE CARIBBEAN

### Three Weeks to One Month / Managua to the Caribbean Coast

Check out the action (or don't) in **Managua** (p71) for a day or two, then grab a bus to **León** (p170), a culture-junky haven of museums, galleries and churches. Climb a **volcano** (p187) or hit **Playa PoneLOYa** (p184)

From León, go east to **Estelí** (p202), perhaps stopping in **San Jacinto** (p189) for a mud facial or **El Sauce** (p189) for an amazing church en route. After your cigar tour in Estelí, you'll have to decide which cloud forest to visit: **Área Protegida Cerro Tisey-Estanzuela** (p209), with volcanic views and goat cheese, or **Área Protegida Miraflores** (p208), where you can stay in a farmhouse and help make breakfast. Adventurers will want to see newly 'discovered' **Cañon de Somoto** (p212) or the wonderfully chilly wilderness around **Jalapa** (p216).

Take the dirt road to **Jinotega** (p218), the beautiful City of Mists, being sure to stop in scenic **San Rafael del Norte** (p217). Wend your way back down the mountains to **Matagalpa** (p224), enjoying the **Ruta de Café** (see the boxed text, p222) as well as the city's more urban attractions. From there, head south to the excellent **Museo Precolombiano de Chagüitillo** (p232) before making your way to **Boaco** (p250) and some hot-springs action at **Aguas Claras** (p251).

Heading for the coast, you'll want to break the journey at lovely, unspoilt **Juigalpa** (p253), as much for its mosaic-covered church as for its important **archaeological museum** (p253), before pushing east. If you're looking for an excuse to hang around the region, make a detour to the gold-mining towns of **La Libertad** and **Santo Domingo** (p255) for hiking and mine tours. Back on the main road, it's a straight shot to **El Rama** (p256), where regular boats leave for **Bluefields** (p257), gateway to the **Pearl Lagoon** (p260), **Corn Islands** (p263) and other Caribbean destinations.

An 800km mosey through the stunning hill country of the north and out to the steamy Caribbean flatlands and the turquoise waters that lap their shores, this one takes you through a range of landscapes and cultures.





## TAILORED TRIPS

### MUST-SEE FESTIVALS

If you're looking for regional festivals and unique celebrations, you'll be spoilt for choice in Nicaragua.

If you're going to be in Managua in early August, you'll no doubt catch some of the **Santo Domingo de Guzman festival** (p80), the highlights of which include horse parades and mind- (and ear-) blowing fireworks displays.

With at least 16 major religious festivals (vaguely Catholic, with a whole lot of indigenous thrown in) per year, Masaya and Los Pueblos Blancos are probably your best chance of catching a regional spectacle without the need for heavy planning. See p100 and p106 for dates and details. Highlights include Masaya's **Festival de San Jerónimo**, an eight-day extravaganza starting on September 30, featuring mock battles, drag queens, marimba concerts and plenty of fireworks. In mid-May, Masatepe's **Domingo de Trinidad** is another must-see with one of the biggest horse parades in Nicaragua.

Granada's **International Poetry Festival** (p124) in February is a must-see for poetry lovers. The town heats up again in late August, celebrating the **Assumption of Mary** with fireworks, concerts in the park, bullfights and horse parades.

On the Isla de Ometepe in late July, Moyogalpa's annual **festival** (p149) sees things get decidedly un-Christian, with indigenous dancing and ceremonies timed around the solar calendar. Neighboring Altagracia has a **festival** (p152) in a similar vein in mid-November that features the pre-Colombian Baile del Zompopo (Dance of the Leaf Cutter Ant).

In southerly San Juan del Sur, the **Procession of the Virgin of Carmen** (p161) takes the Virgin on a tour of the bay, blessing the boats in mid-July.

In El Viejo on December 6 you can see a truly unique festival, the **Lavada de la Plata** (p194), where the faithful flock to the church to wash the Virgin's silver.

León is another big festival town, but if you're only going to be here for one, make it the **Día de la Purísima Concepción** (p179) on December 7 – kind of like a street party and Halloween mixed into one.

Corn fans shouldn't miss Jalapa's **Feria de Maíz** (p216), when the food, altars and even clothing are made from this sacred grain. Jinotega's **Festival de Música Vernácula** (p220) in mid-October shows off the area's German heritage with folk-music groups busting out polkas, mazurkas and the like.

Juigalpa doesn't let its cowboy spirit slip for its **fiestas patronales** (p253) in mid-August, when locals and visitors show off their horse-riding skills in parades and shows that draw crowds from all over the country.

On the Caribbean side, Bilwi has a great range of **festivities** (p246), including the mock battle of the **Dance of El King Pulanka**, celebrated by the Miskito in January and February; **Emancipation Day**, celebrated by Creoles and Afro-Caribbeans on August 28; and **Día de la Hispanidad**, celebrated by the Spanish on October 12.

If you're here in November, try to catch some of **National Garífuna Week**, based in Pearl Lagoon (p261), with live music, dance and other cultural activities, all coming to a head on November 19.

Bluefields's **Palo de Mayo** (Maypole Festival; p258) is one of the biggest in the country, an extravagant Rio-style street show/dance party that lasts for weeks, climaxing on May 31.



## COMMUNITY TOURISM

Wanna get off the track? Make sure your money goes directly to the people who need it most? Community-based tourism projects are springing up all over Nicaragua, allowing visitors a unique glimpse into the everyday lives of the people you normally whiz past on a bus.

Just outside Granada, some of the longest-established community tourism groups in the country are nestled in the foothills of Volcán Mombacho. **Nicaragua Libre** (p134) is the most accessible and offers fascinating tours through the coffee plantations and on horseback to regional attractions. **La Granadilla** (p134) is just down the road and offers volcano hikes, ox-cart rides and bicycle tours. The little towns of **La Nanda and Aguas Agrias** (p134) can arrange hikes to the otherwise inaccessible Reserva Natural Lagunetas de Mecatepe, a wild wetlands nature reserve.

Also accessible from Granada is the **Isla Zapatera** (p134), where islanders offer food and accommodation and can take you on tours to see the petroglyphs and statues that date from pre-Colombian times.

Way down south, the little fishing village of **El Ostional** (p167) is also in on the community-tourism tip – they take you for boat rides, horseback trips and wildlife-watching tours, including turtle-watching in neighboring Refugio de Vida Silvestre La Flor.

The coffee country in the northern highlands is packed with community-tourism options. In Matagalpa look up **Cecosemac** (p227), a grass-roots operation that can find you accommodation and tours on small cooperative coffee farms. Just down the road from San Ramón, the small villages of **La Pita, La Corona and El Roblar** (p231) offer rustic sleeps, hikes in the countryside and seminars on their experiences as small coffee producers in the global market.

The most organized setup in the highlands is the **Ruta de Café** (see the boxed text, p222), which is actually four separate routes – you can stay everywhere from 100-year-old homesteads to tiny cooperative-run farmhouses.

The **Área Protegida Miraflores** (p208) is probably the best-known and longest-established of the community-tourism options and offers a wonderful range of attractions including waterfalls, orchids, cloud forest, monkey troops and hiking trails.

**Finca Esperanza Verde** (p231) deserves a mention, too – for its sweeping views, great accommodations and the fact that profits go to constructing drinking-water systems and schools in nearby San Ramón.

Get away from the coffee and hit dairy country, where the village of **La Garnacha** (p210) turns out some spectacular cheese, as well as offering tours of the area and some sweet, off-the-beaten-track accommodations.

One of the north's true highlights, the **Cañon de Somoto** (p212) is much easier to explore now that locals have opened up their homes to tourists – they provide boat and hiking tours of the canyon as well.

Just out of Bonanza, the Mayangna capital of **Musuwas** (p240) offers a pricey, but very worthwhile opportunity to get away from absolutely everything and experience everyday life with this little-known indigenous group.

Community-based tourism is only really just starting on the Atlantic side, but a couple of good places to start are with **Fundesos** (p258), which organizes stays in the small villages around Pearl Lagoon, and **Amica** (p245), which can show you around the Miskito Keys Biological Reserve.



# The Authors



## **LUCAS VIDGEN** Coordinating Author, Managua, Masaya & Los Pueblos Blancos, Granada, Southwestern Nicaragua, León & Northwestern Nicaragua

Lucas has been rambling around Latin America for about 15 years now, working (when he has to), traveling (when he wants to) and sitting still (when he's got nothing better to do). He is currently based in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, where he publishes *XelaWho*, a monthly culture and nightlife magazine. Lucas has contributed to various editions of *Central America on a Shoestring*, *South America on a Shoestring* and *Argentina*. He is the sole author of the *Guatemala* guide. To make it though this trip, Lucas ate an estimated 31.5kg of *gallo pinto* (rice and beans) and drank at least 37.8L of fruit juice. *Calala* (passionfruit) remains his favorite.

Lucas also wrote the Destination Nicaragua, Getting Started, Itineraries, History, The Culture, Food & Drink, Environment, Green Nicaragua, Nicaragua Outdoors, Directory and Transportation chapters, and contributed to the Language chapter.



## **ADAM SKOLNICK** Northern Highlands; Caribbean Coast; San Carlos, Islas Solentiname & the Río San Juan

Adam Skolnick became travel-obsessed while working as an environmental activist in the mid-'90s. A freelance journalist, he writes about travel, culture, health, sports and the environment for *Lonely Planet*, *Men's Health*, *Outside*, *Travel & Leisure* and *Spa*. He has co-authored five previous *Lonely Planet* guidebooks, *Southeast Asia on a Shoestring*, *East Timor*, *Mexico*, *The Carolinas*, *Georgia & the South Trips* and *Bali & Lombok*, and he is the author of *Phuket Encounter*. To get around Nicaragua he took 11 buses, 28 boats and seven planes, and hired, hitched and drove 35 cars. You can read more of his work at [www.adamskolnick.com](http://www.adamskolnick.com).

## CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

**Dr David Goldberg MD** completed his training in internal medicine and infectious diseases at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City, where he has also served as voluntary faculty. At present, he is an infectious diseases specialist in Scarsdale, NY, and the editor-in-chief of the website MDTravel Health.com. Dr Goldberg reviewed the Health chapter.

### LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are passionate, dedicated travelers. They don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage, so you can be sure the advice you're given is impartial. They travel widely to all the popular spots, and off the beaten track. They don't research using just the internet or phone. They discover new places not included in any other guidebook. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, palaces, trails, galleries, temples and more. They speak with dozens of locals every day to make sure you get the kind of insider knowledge only a local could tell you. They take pride in getting all the details right, and in telling it how it is. Think you can do it? Find out how at [lonelyplanet.com](http://lonelyplanet.com).

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'