



Nicaragua

505 / POP 6.1 MILLION

Includes ➔

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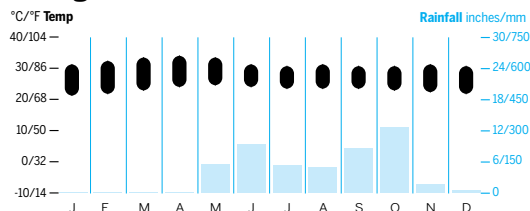
Why Go?

Affable Nicaragua embraces travelers with offerings of volcanic landscapes, colonial architecture, sensational beaches and pristine forests that range from breathtaking to downright incredible. Want 90-octane waves and beach-blanket-bohemia days on lost beaches? Nicaragua's got you covered with two long coastlines of peaced-out surf camps, hippie enclaves and remote fishing villages that are only now entering the tourist game.

Or are you thinking about diving into history, tromping through colonial villages and exploring the region's unique cultural patrimony? Well, Nicaragua's got that, too. Colonial cities like León and Granada offer crimson-hued snapshots of the past, while remote Caribbean fishing villages provide glimpses into present-day life in this diverse, proud and optimistic nation. Beyond that there are volcanoes to be climbed (and surfed down), lagoons to be explored, islands to be discovered – welcome to Nicaragua.

When to Go

Managua



Best Places to Eat

- ➔ El Tercer Ojo (p450)
- ➔ Café La Nicaragüita (p475)
- ➔ Barrio Café (p465)
- ➔ Café Campestre (p463)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Surfing Turtle Lodge (p477)
- ➔ Casa Oro Hostel (p465)
- ➔ Finca Magdalena (p462)

Nov–May High season means dry weather, sunny days, but slightly bigger crowds.

Mar–Nov It's rainy, but green, and you get the biggest, browniest waves for Pacific Coast surf safaris.

Sep–Nov Hotels are cheaper, but the tail end of hurricane season can screw up your plans.

AT A GLANCE

Currency Córdoba (C\$)

Language Spanish

Money ATMs are widespread in most midsize towns in Nicaragua.

Visas Generally not required for stays up to three months.

Time GMT minus six hours

Area 129,494 sq km

Capital Managua

Emergency ☎ 115 (fire), ☎ 118 (police), from cell phones ☎ 911

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	C\$21.18
Canada	C\$1	C\$22.35
Costa Rica	¢100	C\$5.34
Euro	€1	C\$32.36
Japan	¥100	C\$27.02
New Zealand	NZ\$1	C\$20.20
UK	UK£1	C\$40.73
US	US\$1	C\$28.65

Set Your Budget

- ➔ **Hostel Bed** US\$7–20
- ➔ **Evening Meal** US\$2–6
- ➔ **Bus Ticket** US\$1–4

Resources

- ➔ **Vianica.com** (www.vianica.com)
- ➔ **Intur** (www.visitnicaragua.com/ingles)
- ➔ **Latin American Network Information Center** (www.lanic.utexas.edu/la/ca/nicaragua)

Connections

Nicaragua's border with Honduras can be crossed at Las Manos, El Espino or El Guasaule. From Costa Rica, you can enter by road at Peñas Blancas or by boat via Los Chiles. From Potosí, you can hop on a small boat to El Salvador. For more detailed information, see Survival Guide p514.

ITINERARIES

One Week

If you've got limited time in Nicaragua, a trip through the southwest is big on awesome and small on hours in the bus. Kick off your trip in charismatic Granada. Spend three nights taking in the wonderful streetscapes, and visiting the museums and churches. From here, you can head out for day trips or overnights to the lush crater at Laguna de Apoyo, the lyrical artisan villages known as Pueblos Blancos, or to the Mombacho and Masaya volcanoes and protected wild preserves.

Two Weeks

Next head down the highway to San Jorge, from where you'll take the ferry across to the out-of-this world Isla de Ometepe with its twin volcanoes and endless outdoor activities. From there, it's across the isthmus to the Southern Pacific Beaches. Most people begin and end their beach time in the funky-out international beach village of San Juan del Sur, but definitely plan on spending a night or two on the surf beaches north and south of here. If you are headed north from here, you won't want to miss a stop off in León.

Essential Food & Drink

- ➔ **Where to eat** Budget eateries – generally *comedores* or *cafetines*, *fritangas* and market stalls – serve a limited range of filling dishes and set meals from US\$2 to US\$5.
- ➔ **What to eat** *Gallo pinto* (mixed rice and beans) is a staple. On the coasts, you can sample wonderful seafood, while the interior has some of the best grass-fed beef in Central America. Be sure to keep an eye out for local specialties, including *nacatamales* (banana-leaf packed with cornmeal and other goodness), *baho* (steamed beef, plantains and yucca), *rondón* (coconut seafood stew served in the Caribbean) and *quesillo* (cheese and onions wrapped in a corn tortilla and topped with sour cream).
- ➔ **What to drink** Fresh fruit juices are everywhere. Flor de Caña is the national rum, while local beers include Toña and Victoria, both light pilsners.