



Masaya & Los Pueblos Blancos

Includes ➔

Masaya	67
Parque Nacional	
Volcán Masaya	73
Nindirí	74
Reserva Natural	
Laguna de Apoyo	75
Los Pueblos Blancos ...	76
Catarina	76
San Juan de Oriente	77
Diriá & Diriomo	78
Niquinohomo	78
Nandasmo	78
Masatepe	78
San Marcos	79
Carazo	80

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ San Simian (p75)
- ➔ Centro Ecoturístico Flor de Pochote (p79)
- ➔ La Mariposa Spanish School & Eco Hotel (p79)

Best Festivals

- ➔ San Juan Bautista (p77)
- ➔ Santa Ana (p77)
- ➔ Virgen de la Candelaria (p77)

Why Go?

Nicaragua's *meseta central* (central plateau) offers a picturesque patchwork of lagoons, steamy volcanic peaks and sleepy colonial villages. Not many people stay here for more than a short day-trip from nearby Granada, leaving plenty of room for exploration and singular encounters with the region's remarkable natural, cultural and artistic imprint.

While trawling Masaya's well-stocked artisan market is obligatory, real fans of the craftsmanship on display should get out to the Pueblos Blancos. The Laguna de Apoyo is another must-see: its clear turquoise waters and laid-back waterfront lodges offer a splendid natural respite.

Towering over all of this is mighty Volcán Masaya, where hiking trails take you to lava-filled craters and bat-infested caves.

Sloping down from the *meseta* are the Carazo towns – pleasant stopovers on the way to a wild and remote stretch of coast.

When to Go

Thursday evenings rock in Masaya with the Jueves de Verbena. Stay the evening to sample local food, watch folkloric dances, and stroll through the large crafts market and museum.

December through August is the dry season. Coming around this time makes hiking around Volcán Masaya or skinny dipping in Laguna de Apoyo all the better. Come early in the season for green everywhere.

Sunday is the traditional market day throughout the region. It adds a brimming energy you won't feel other days of the week. There's also a good chance you'll find yourself smack dab in the middle of a religious or cultural festival.



Masaya & Los Pueblos Blancos Highlights

1 Shop till you drop at the country's most famous handicraft market, the **Mercado Artesanías** (p67), in Masaya

2 Watch history repeat itself as potters in the workshops of **San Juan de Oriente** (p77) continue the centuries-old craft of ceramics production

3 Take a dip in the **Laguna de Apoyo** (p75), said to be the cleanest water in the whole country

4 Peer into that gorgeous lagoon from the spectacular lookouts at **Catarina** (p76) and **Diria** (p78)

5 Drive to the 'gates of hell,' then take a full-moon hike up

gassy, tempestuous **Volcán Masaya** (p73)

6 Pioneer virgin waves in lost beach towns like **La Boquita** (p82) and **Casares** (p82)