



Southwestern Nicaragua

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Best Surfing

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Best Places to Stay

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Why Go?

Packed with attractions, the southwest offers up some of Nicaragua's hallmark vistas and adventures. Surfers have been hitting this coastline for years, drawn by perfect, uncrowded waves and chilled-out surfing encampments. Most start their trip through the region in San Juan del Sur, where you'll find better accommodations, high-octane parties and a solid selection of restaurants catering to international appetites. Beyond this there are spirited fishing villages, sea-turtle nesting grounds and tough-and-true inland towns.

No trip to the southwest would be complete without a few days on Isla de Ometepe. The island itself is shaped like an infinity symbol, with bookend volcanoes dominating either side of a secluded universe where you'll discover waterfalls, wildlife, lost coves and enchanted forests. There's kayaking, swimming, hiking and biking, and many travelers extend their stay as they dive into paradise lost in the quiet spots and friendly traveler encampments that define this island escape.

When to Go

November through May is the dry season. It means less verdant foliage, slightly longer days, plenty of adventure opportunities and remarkable sunsets over the curving Pacific Ocean.

April to December is surf season and you get big barrels and double-overhead exposure. Book ahead for surf camps during this time. Beginners may consider other times of the year to avoid the wave traffic.

September to October is the peak season for sea turtle arrivals at Refugio de Vida Silvestre La Flor. You could see over 3000 turtles arrive on the same day!

South-western Nicaragua Highlights

1 Explore **Isla de Ometepe** (p112) – climb a volcano, kayak the wetlands or swim in a lagoon...or do all three

2 Welcome the thousands of nesting turtles that arrive at **Refugio de Vida Silvestre La Flor** (p137) – a not-to-be-missed experience

3 Ride giants at the world-class surfing (and sunbaking) spots north and south of **San Juan del Sur** (p127)

4 Watch a sunset. There are few places better on earth to say goodbye to the day than one of San Juan del Sur's **beachside bars** (p133)

5 Get to know the real pace of village life with community-based tourism in tiny **El Ostional** (p137)

6 Charge the waves and sip the surfer's never-ending summer at **Playa Gigante** (p125)

