



NICARAGUA FACT SHEET

Official Name:

Republic of Nicaragua

Location:

Central America, between the Caribbean Sea (East), the Pacific Ocean (West), Honduras (North) and Costa Rica (South). Geographic coordinates: 13:00 North, 85:00 West.

Area:

130.668 km². Slightly larger than the state of New York, Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America.

Climate:

Tropical in the lowlands, cooler in the highlands. Temperatures vary from 27-32°C during the rainy season from May to October, and from 30-35°C during the dry season from November to April. The climate in the western region of the country between the lakes and the Pacific Ocean is dry and has little precipitation. The eastern part is hot, humid and rainy.

Topography:

The extensive Atlantic coastal plain rises to the central interior mountains, which drop off to a narrow Pacific coastal plain interrupted by volcanoes. Highest elevation: Mogotón 2.107 m. Nicaragua claims the largest expanse of tropical rainforest north of the Amazon, covering much of the northern and eastern regions. The mountains and the western part of the country are somewhat more arid. There are many lakes and rivers accounting for some 9.240 km² of the country's total surface area. Lake Nicaragua, Central America's largest, covers more than 8.000 km², while Lake Managua reaches more than 1.000 km².

Getting There: Most international visitors arrive to Nicaragua through the Augusto C. Sandino International Airport in the capital city of Managua and main land main borders.

International airlines with presence in Nicaragua offer connections to other destinations in North, Central and South America, as well as in Asia and Europe. The main airlines in Nicaragua includes: Spirit Airlines, Avianca, Copa Airlines, United Airlines, American Airlines and Delta Airlines.

If travelling by land, there are several bus services that offer trips to all of Central America. Currently, Nicaragua has three customs posts along the border with Honduras and two customs post in the border with Costa Rica. Trips to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and to San Jose, Costa Rica, may take approximately 8 hours.

Getting Around:

Getting around can be easy, enjoyable and safe throughout Nicaragua. According to statistics by Interpol and the United Nations, Nicaragua is one of the safest countries in the Americas, and the safest in Central America.

Colonial cities such as León and Granada are more pedestrian-friendly than larger cities such as Managua. Taxis are plentiful and relatively inexpensive throughout the country. It is advisable to use officially registered taxis, which have red license plates (the numbers should be legible), or licensed tour guides. Radio-dispatched taxis are available at the airport and major hotels. Major rental car companies are located at the airport and in other locations. Visitors can use a driver's license for thirty days after entering the country. Inter-city buses and rental cars are also plentiful.

Principal Cities:

Managua is the capital and the nation's largest city, with a population of 1.480.270. Other important cities include: León, Granada, Jinotega, Matagalpa, Chinandega, and Masaya.

Population:

Nicaragua's population of 6,4 Million, is concentrated mostly in the Western regions of the country. The largest ethnic population is mestizo, or mixed European and indigenous, with smaller groups of whites, blacks of Jamaican origin, and other indigenous minorities.

The culture of Nicaragua reflects the mixed Ibero-European and Indian ancestry of the majority of its people.

Language:

Spanish is the official language and is spoken by the vast majority of Nicaraguans. English and indigenous languages are used along the Caribbean coast and in parts of the Atlantic coastal plain.

Religion:

58% Roman Catholic; 42% other religions.

Currency:

Córdoba (C). Exchange rate: Approximately C\$ 27.00 per US dollar. Most establishments will accept payment in US dollars. Major credit cards are typically accepted in hotels, restaurants, and stores in both urban and tourist areas. Currency exchange can be

transacted at most banks and hotels. The Córdoba is sometimes also referred to as the Peso.

Electricity:

110 volts/60 cycles

Airports:

Managua International Airport and three domestic airports (Bluefields, Bilwi, Corn Island, San Carlos, Ometepe, Costa Esmeralda Airport in Tola). These airports are managed by the International Airport Management Authority (www.eaai.com.ni).

Taxes:

The entry tax is US \$10 payable in US dollars or Córdoba's. Checks and credit cards are not accepted. Sales tax: 15% on all purchases.

Tipping:

Airport/hotel baggage handlers: US \$1.00 per bag is acceptable. For restaurants and other services, 10-15% of value of service is customary but not obligatory.

Visa Requirements:

All visitors need a passport valid for at least six months to enter Nicaragua.

Water:

Tap water in Managua is considered safe to drink. Outside of the capital, bottled water is advised.

Banks:

Hours of operation:

Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Shopping:

Nicaragua offers a wide variety of shopping options, ranging from local arts and crafts to major shopping centers. Handicrafts and souvenirs may be found at Roberto Huembes Market in Managua, the arts and crafts market in Masaya, as well as in San Juan de Oriente and the Catarina Villages. Shopping centers such as the Galería, Metrocentro, Plaza Inter, Centro Comercial Managua, are located in the capital city. Duty Free shopping is available at airports and borders.