

Destination Information Guide

Nicaragua



The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.

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Welcome to the World of Big Five!

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



Managua, Nicaragua Elevation: 164 feet Latitude: 12 09N Longitude: 086 10W
Average High Temperature Years on Record: 15

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
°F	89	88	90	92	93	92	88	87	88	87	87	88	87

Average Low Temperature Years on Record: 15

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
°F	73	70	71	73	75	76	75	74	74	74	73	72	71

WEATHER

Nicaragua is a tropical country with little variation in climate from region to region, but with progressively more rain the further east you travel. It's cooler in the northern mountains. The rainy, winter season in most regions is from May to November. Some rain, however, may reasonably be expected in the dry summer season. Also, rainless periods can happen during the rainy season – particularly on the Atlantic coast. Although some very remote roads are impassable in the wet season, Nicaragua is much prettier during the green season of the rains, the exception is the rain forest regions and Caribbean coast for which the dry season is preferable. The most beautiful months country-wide are Nov-Jan.

TIME ZONE

Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) –6 hours. Nicaragua uses daylight savings time.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passports: For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing at least two blank pages is necessary. While in Nicaragua, you are required to carry your passport or tourist card with you at all times. A photocopy with your photo, passport number and entry stamp will usually suffice, however, if stopped by officials.

Visas: U.S., Canadian and western European citizens do not require visas in advance. Citizens from other countries, consult the nearest Nicaraguan consulate. Should you require a visa prior to traveling to other countries with us, Big Five has appointed Zierer Visa Service (www.ZVS.com) to process required visas for our passengers. The Visa Application Kit is included with your pre-trip confirmation packet. You can also download the necessary forms from the website, where you will enter the visa section for Big Five Tours & Expeditions. Here you will find a list of country-specific forms. You will also discover useful hints such as how to obtain a passport, adding passport pages, and other tips.

Important: Please look at your passport prior to travel to insure that:

- 1) Your passport is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

International flights arrive at Managua International Airport. Upon arrival, proceed through immigration and baggage claims and customs. Once you are outside customs, Big Five personnel or their representatives will assist you with your baggage and escort you to your hotel. They will also help with hotel check-in. **Arrival Tax:** All foreigners pay US\$5 per person for a tourist card at the immigration desk. **Departure Tax:** Currently, the tax is US\$32 per person on international flights, which is included in the price of your ticket. All taxes are generated by each government and are subject to change without notice.

NICARAGUA CUSTOMS

No customs duties are charged on personal luggage, which includes an array of items for personal and professional use, as long as they do not appear in quantities that suggest commercial intent. A US\$500 limit is placed on goods brought in.

Nicaragua law requires that baggage may be examined and that travelers submit customs declarations listing all articles acquired abroad, including fruit, vegetables, meat, meat products, biological products such as vaccinations, serums, etc. Families need to fill out only one declaration for all family members.

Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

U.S. CUSTOMS

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. There are limits on some items. Regulations frequently change. For a list of exempt items and more information contact your nearest Customs office or write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Currently, no vaccinations are required for travelers coming from the US and Canada. International travelers should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician, several weeks in advance, about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary are advised to take the latest medical advice at least three weeks prior to departure.. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. Be prepared to take precautions against sunburn with sunscreen and lip balm.

Yellow Fever: Yellow fever inoculation is required if one of the following applies:

- If you are coming from any area other than the United States, Europe, or Canada.
- If you plan on visiting more than one country. A yellow fever vaccination certificate, however, is required from travelers over one year of age coming from countries with infected areas.

Cholera: Following WHO guidelines issued in 1973, a cholera vaccination certificate is not a condition of entry to Nicaragua. However, cholera is a risk in this country, especially after outbreaks in 1999 in Jinotega, Managua, Nueva Segovia and RAAN areas. Precautions are essential. Up-to-date advice should be sought before deciding whether these precautions should include vaccination, as medical opinion is divided over its effectiveness; see the Health appendix.

Typhoid: Immunization against typhoid is recommended.

Malaria: Risk of malaria, predominantly in the benign vivax form, exists throughout the year in 119 municipalities, with the highest risk in Chinandega, Jinotega, Nueva Segovia, RAAN, RAAS and San Juan. In the other 26 municipalities, in the departments of Carazo, Madriz and Masaya, transmission risk is low or negligible. Malaria risk is higher during the rainy season. Chloroquine chemoprophylaxis is recommended.

Other Risks: Amoebic and bacillary dysenteries, diarrhoeal diseases, typhoid fever and hepatitis A are common throughout the country. Cutaneous and visceral leishmaniasis occur. Dengue fever may occur. There are occasional cases of leptospirosis. Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay.

Health Care

Each department of Nicaragua has a public hospital. These do not charge for emergency services, but will charge for supplies and medicines. There is an extensive network of health posts and health centres in rural areas, however, their resources can be limited. There are about 10 private hospitals/clinics in Managua. Many doctors and hospitals will require payment in cash before treatment, although some private hospitals may accept credit cards.

Please note: If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription

medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage.

Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel. Please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. Or, visit the CDC Internet home page at <http://www.cdc.gov>

CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.*

In general, light weight, fast-drying clothing is preferable. Many people choose all cotton but cotton/synthetic blends are also cool to wear and don't wrinkle as much. Bring a jacket for cool, windy conditions at high elevations, but you may also need sunscreen if you have a calm, sunny day because it will be hot up there.

If going to remote areas, bring enough of each item to last at least half the trip because you can't count on laundry service everywhere and sometimes hand washing is hard to dry in humid areas.

Generally, Nicaraguan dress very casually, even in Managua, although somewhat dressier attire is the norm for Leon and Granada. It is inappropriate to wear shorts in the towns and villages for men. Women in shorts are fine, though no matter what women wear they should be prepared for the male Latin reactions of blatant staring, whistles and comments, which are best ignored.

Because one pair of boots/ shoes always gets muddy or wet to some degree, it is important to have dry footwear to change into. Consider bringing a pair of slip-on or river sandals (which fasten at the ankle and were originally designed for rafting) for wet boardings and landings and for showers. Comfortable hiking boots with thick soles and deep tread are best for forest trails.

LUGGAGE

*For general baggage information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials.*

Luggage restrictions change frequently for individual carriers as well as in the industry as a whole. In this security conscious era, they may change without notice. It is always best to call the specific airline prior to

