



Free & Easy Traveler - Travel Prep Guide

20 Days in Nicaragua: The Secret of Central America

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The Basics

Duration: 20 Days

Start/Finish: Managua

Adventure Type: Backpackers (age 18 to 27)

Trip Size: 15 – 22 (+2 group leaders)



Epic Experiences

Included in the Price

- Surf a wave
- See baby turtles hatch (season dependant)
- Revolution Tour explaining the history of Spanish colonial city León
- Walking tour around the postcard perfect Little Corn Island
- Meet a local Nicaraguan farm family and have the chance to donate toys and school supplies to the kids
- World class surf breaks on the Pacific Coast
- One surf lesson and 1 day board rental

Optional Activities

- Hike a volcano and ride down it
- Sunday Funday Pool Crawl in San Juan del Sur!
- Fishing
- Yoga
- Scuba diving
- Sail the pacific coast
- Snorkelling

Trip Details

What's included?

- All Taxes (GST, PST, Airport tax)
- Return international flights (in/out Managua) and airport transfers***
- Accommodations for your 20-day Free & Easy experience
- Group travel between destinations
- 2 knowledgeable and fun Free & Easy leaders
- Free and Easy Travel Guidebook
- 15 years of trip leading experience

***Land Only prices do not include your international flight, airport taxes or transfers

What isn't included?

- All meals and drinks (except those mentioned above)
- Activities outside of the ones listed above
- Any Visa or Visa fees

Travel Budget

Your personal spending in Nicaragua will include your food, drinks, shopping, entertainment and any activities outside of those included your FNEZ adventure.

For the entirety of your 20 Day Nicaragua Trip -- "The Secret of Central America", we recommend a budget of \$800 - \$1600. Any travel budget will fluctuate between personalities, so ask yourself: "What type of traveller are you?"

The Hippie

Brings about \$800-\$1000 for the 10 days. Eats local food, bargains well at the market, finds good prices on drinks and picks, and chooses their optional activities wisely! This traveler is often likely to continue travelling after their FNEZ trip is complete.

The Backpacker

\$1000-\$1300 spending money. A bit more frivolous, but is aware of their budget. Takes in most activities they are interested in, without going too extravagant. Likes to party, but always looking for a good deal.

The Rock Star

\$1300 - \$1600: Not too worried about their budget, they'll do almost everything, including lavish amounts of shopping and partying often. There won't be too much holding them back from activities, as this is their trip and don't want to let anything pass them by.

To help you work out your own budget, here are some examples of how much things cost in Nicaragua.

Food and Drink

Beer or Highball at the Bar: \$1.5

Bottle of Rum from the Store (750ml): \$10

Bottle of Rum at the bar (750ml) \$15

Dinner at a Restaurant \$7-\$15

Entertainment & Activities

1 Day Surfboard Rental: \$10

1 Day Paddle Board Rental: \$20

Yoga: \$8- \$10

Booze Cruise Sailing Trip: \$50

Fishing Trip: \$20-\$50

Guided Volcano hike: \$10-\$15

Guided Kayak trip: \$30

Guided Volcano Boarding trip on Volcan Cerro Negro: \$30

Scuba Diving in Little Corn 2 tank dive: \$65

Open water Scuba Course (4 days): \$305

Guided Snorkelling tour: \$30

Souvenir Hammock: \$10

Trip Leaders

Every Free & Easy trip is accompanied by at least two leaders. We like to call them “Leaders” and not “Guides” because they are essentially your well traveled, experienced friends! We hire local guides whenever knowledge of culture, history or safety are necessary (ie; temple tours or jungle treks). Our Leaders main goals are to ensure everyone on the trip is having the best time possible. Our leaders will arrange the group transportation between destinations, sort out rooms at the accommodations, plan any group meals or activities and assist in any additional activities that anyone may wish to take part in, and ultimately show you the best that each destination has to offer. They know the trip locations well, and have great relationships with all our contacts in each destination. Not to mention they are all extremely fun and easy going people who continue to showcase the essence of what makes us Free & Easy!

Flying to Nicaragua

Upon registration you can chose between booking your own flights or requesting Free & Easy to book flights for you.

If you book flights with Free & Easy

- A flight itinerary will be emailed to you approximately 2 – 3 months before your trip’s departure. (Assuming you have paid enough money on your account)
- One or both of your leaders will be at the airport in Managua to pick you up and arrange transport back to the hotel.
- Transportation will be arranged for you to get from the guesthouse at the end of the trip to get to the airport to catch your flight.
- You can also ask for any custom flights, and our flight team will give you a price quote for booking this for you.

If you don’t book flights with Free & Easy

- You will contacted with information on meeting up with your group for the start of the trip in Managua.

Meals

The ability to experience local food, whether it’s from a street vendor, a home stay, or a restaurant, is a huge part of travelling. You’ll be able to ask your guides for great options to check out at every destination we go, but for the most part, the journey finding the food, tends to be just as good as the food itself! There will be times that meals will be provided for you, if you have any allergies or food preferences, i.e. vegetarian, please let your guides know!

Allergies!

If you have any allergies, especially food allergies, it is good to be prepared before coming to Nicaragua. When you try to make special requests when ordering at a restaurant it doesn't always go as planned. Best thing to do is check out Killer Peanut, where you can choose from a variety of food allergies and get it translated into Spanish. Simply print out the translation and then show it to the server when ordering food. This will make your life way easier when you arrive in Nicaragua!

Types of Transportation on this trip

- Minibuses: Seat from 8-15 people. We use minibuses to pick you up from the airport and take you to San Juan Del Sur. These are also used for travelling to each new destination. Pump some tunes, read a book, sleep, party...who knew a minibus could be so much fun!
- Sailboats: Need we say more?
- Ferries/Speedboats: the only way to get to the islands of Ometepe and Little Corn!
- Airplane: We also have a short flight from Managua to Big Corn Island.

Accommodations

We have a wide range of accommodations on this trip from beautiful beach bungalows to cozy cabins and hostel/hotels with optional A/C. We have chosen each of our accommodations based on quality, location, and relationships with the establishments. Plus there is so much to do on this trip you won't be spending much time in your room anyway!

All our accommodation is based on at least two-person occupancy. If you wish you have your own room you can pay an additional fee in order to do so. Please contact travel@fnez.com before your trip begins if you are interested.

Solo Travelers

Lots of solo travelers come on our trips and it's a great way to step outside your comfort zone and make lots of new friends. Since all our accommodation is based on at least two-person occupancy you will be rooming with other members of the same sex in your group.

Packing Suggestions

For a trip to a tropical country, you really don't need any heavy clothing. Also, keep in mind that the shopping is cheap in Nicaragua so you may want to only pack half of your backpack, leaving room to buy new stuff once you arrive. Most people end up regretting how much they packed when they realize how easily they could have bought new clothes once they arrived.

In general, you want to avoid packing things that you really don't need to have. There are definitely certain luxuries that are good to have, but you don't want to lug something

around unless you are going to use it. Also, consider that the weight of your bag will likely be INCREASING throughout the trip, and having a lighter backpack simplifies life immensely. On our domestic flight as well we have a restriction on the amount of weight we can bring on. People who exceed this limit will have to pay an extra baggage charge. Honestly, look at what you have and cut it in half and you're probably good to go. You're gonna buy lots of new stuff.

Here's some ideas for what you might want to pack:

Travel Essentials

- Passport (digital and hard copies)
- Travel insurance (digital and a hard copy)
- Airline tickets (digital and a hard copy)
- Credit or debit card
- Any entry visas, additional passport photos or vaccination certificates required
- Cover for backpack/ziplock bags for travel essentials
- Large backpack and small backpack to be used as a day bag

Electronics/Entertainment

- Alarm clock
- Headlamp
- iPods, tablets
- Books, eReaders
- Camera (bring a few memory cards)
- All Chargers (Central America has the same outlets as North America)
- Speakers

Clothing

- Swimwear
- Shoes
- Good pair of socks
- Shorts
- Church/Temple attire (something to cover your knees and your shoulders)
- Shirts/T-shirts
- Rain jacket
- Underwear
- Sarong (travel towel)

First-aid kit

Toiletries

- Girls bring feminine hygiene products as they can be hard to find.

Laundry

Laundry facilities are offered by some of the places we stay. Ask your leaders to point out the best places to get laundry done. There will be times when there are no laundry facilities, however your leaders will tell you this in advance.

Travel Essentials

There is nothing more important than your health and safety so make sure you read this carefully!

Passports

Everyone **MUST** have a passport for international travel. If you already have a passport, double check to make sure that it is still valid for at least 6 months from the return date of your trip. If it is not valid for a full 6 months from the day you plan on returning to your passport's issuing country, you'll have to apply for a new passport before you leave.

The application process for getting a passport may seem simple, but for most people it ends up taking longer than it first appears. Sometimes it can take a few weeks to complete the entire process, so we definitely recommend not leaving it to the last minute.

Insurance

Everyone **MUST** have Travel Medical Insurance of some kind and bring proof with you for this trip. You might not need to purchase a medical insurance policy though because you may already be covered through some other way:

- Your parent's work health plan.
- With a credit card.
- Through a student or work health plan.
- Through private insurance.

While you are away traveling with us, if you decide to extend your plane ticket, you also have the ability to purchase an extension to your insurance policy. **PLEASE NOTE:** It is your own responsibility to be making any extension to your insurance so you cannot expect this will automatically happen when you extend your plane ticket.

If you need to extend your TIC insurance please call 1-800-670-4426

PLEASE NOTE: At this time we can only provide Travel Medical Insurance for Canadian citizens

Immunizations

There are no immunizations that are 'required' for entry into Nicaragua. For your own safety, there are some shots that are always recommended for travel to tropical countries.

- Hepatitis A.
- Hepatitis B.

- Typhoid.
- Tetanus.
- Diphtheria.
- Yellow Fever*

We also want to warn you that sometimes travel clinics are over cautious to the extreme and try to sell you everything under the sun. If you want a second opinion about something, do some more research online or contact us. Often they will say that you should take malaria pills. We suggest you try to learn more about the exact locations of any malaria danger before you commit to taking the pills. We can say truthfully, that currently none of the Free & Easy staff or owners take malaria medication when we are on any of our adventures. The feeling amongst many people is that the side effects of the pills are not worth the minimal risk in the regions we travel to. Rather than subject ourselves to the medications we choose to be cautious with mosquito repellent whenever they are present. Since we are not medical professionals we urge you to do your own research and make your own informed decision.

*PLEASE NOTE: There is NO risk of Yellow Fever in Nicaragua. However, their government does require Yellow Fever vaccinations for travellers arriving from countries with risk of yellow fever transmission. If you are planning on traveling before you arrive to Nicaragua, please double check that those countries do not have risk of Yellow Fever, or you have proof of Yellow Fever vaccination. You can check country risk of Yellow fever and requirements [here](#).

Banking & Money

The easiest way of getting and carrying your money is to simply use the bank machines in the country you are travelling. You can use your regular bank card, using your regular pin number, and the money will come out in the local currency (You need to make sure that you have “cirrus” or “plus” written on the back of your card). At nearly every destination on our trips, you’ll have easy access to a bank machine. This also means you won’t have to get local currency before you leave. Once you arrive, you can just use a bank machine right there at the airport.

Every time you need to make a transaction your account will be charged approx. \$5 fee from your bank and then a possible fee from the local bank. It can get a bit pricey if you’re making withdrawals every few days—so it makes more sense to take out a large sum and then just watch your spending! Although theft does happen sometimes we have found that it is quite rare. So we, ourselves, practice this method.

Be aware if you are pulling money out on your credit card that this counts as a “cash advance” and you will immediately be charged interest on this amount and not have a grace period or get reward points like you typically would with other credit card purchases. Additionally, you will still be charged those \$5 fees from your bank and the

local bank. With this in mind the best option is always to pull out money using your debit card instead of your credit card.

Another suggestion we would like to reinforce is we highly recommend that you have online banking during the trip. It allows you to check your balances, transfer money, and monitor your transactions from any internet café. In case of any issue with your bank card, online banking always simplifies a situation since you can easily transfer money to another traveler in your group who could then pull out money for you.

Another little helpful hint is signing over power of attorney to someone you trust (i.e., a parent). This means they can have access to your accounts while you are away. This can help if you lose your bankcard, or there is a problem with it while overseas. It is also useful if you need someone to pay your bills, or make money transfers while you are away.

Nicaragua Travel Visas

Upon entry into Nicaragua most countries are automatically granted a 30-day tourist visa. This visa costs \$10 USD so ensure you have correct change when landing in Nicaragua. Also have your departure flight printed off and ready to show should they ask for it. For this 20-day trip it is NOT necessary that you obtain a visa before departing for Nicaragua

You must have 6 months validity on your passport from your arrival in the country right through your planned departure back to your passports issuing country, as well as blank pages. Your travel visa will be issued to you upon entry into Nicaragua (applies to Canada, Australia, United Kingdom and the United States - prices of Visa may vary).

Please visit this [link](#) to double check if a Visa is required.

Communication + Payment

Questions

Phone: 1-800-403-5208

Email: travel@fnez.com

Communication

So you have signed up for a Free & Easy adventure and we hope to help make this the easiest travel experience of your life. We want to help you out with anything you need help with. However, there are always things that you will need to take care of yourself and we will make it as easy as possible to explain these things. So we need to have a bit of cooperation from your part and it start with actually **READING** our emails :). Please, make sure you read the emails we send leading up to your trip because we are sending them to make sure that you are as ready as you can possibly be for this travel adventure.

Most of the information we send will be coming through your “Your Trip” account. Please make sure that you have all of the requirements taken care of prior to your trip as well you can also view your account and balance owing and a place for us to give you your downloads and hear news of the upcoming trip. You should receive an email in your inbox notifying you when we do post something on there. Please notify us if you find that you’re not getting the notifications.

Making Payments

Follow this [link](#) for a full outline of our payment options.

Check here for the payment schedules for all our trips.

The \$200 deposit reserves your placement on a trip. For all the trips, we have arranged the payment dates to allow you the maximum time to pay for your trip. If you would prefer to pay for the entire trip all at one time, that is no problem. You can also make larger payments earlier whenever it is convenient for you. The payment dates that we have listed are just guidelines that state the last possible date by which payments should be made.

We would greatly appreciate that all payments be made on time. Meeting this simple request makes our job much easier because it allows us to always be looking forward and preparing for the trips, rather than figuring out who and where we need to collect money from. If you expect that a payment will be late, please email us to explain when we can expect the payment. Payment schedules for each of the trips can be reached by clicking the link above.

PLEASE NOTE: All additional costs (for flights, insurance, fees & extras) will be added to your statement of account on the ‘your trip’ page. Please, ensure that you add any additional charges to your final payment unless we require it sooner.

Cultural

Quick Facts on Nicaragua

- Soccer was not always the most famous sport in Nicaragua. Baseball in the mid-20th century was once the most popular sport in Nicaragua.
- Nicaragua is a very large country. It is considered one of central Americas “Tropical Paradise.” If, you get the chance to visit you will surely agree that Nicaragua offers diverse wildlife, culture and history.
- Nicaragua has two Ocean coasts. Each, on opposite sides of the country. So, you can take a morning swim in the Atlantic Ocean. Then in the Evening take a relaxing dip in the Pacific Ocean.
- Nicaragua is larger than Ireland and Portugal put together.

- The most famous Latin America singer, Luis Enrique is from Nicaragua with many hits including “mi mindo”
- Nicaragua s baseball team took 2nd in the 1996 Olympics held in Atlanta.
- The last time John Paul II visited Nicaragua as pope was in 1983
- The oldest city in Central America is located in Nicaragua called Ruins of Leon Viejo. It is the oldest city in all of central America that is still in use today much as it was 1500 years ago.
- Nicaragua is the birthplace of Ruben Dario one of the 20th century s most notable poets.
- Nicaragua hosted the 20th baseball world championship in early 1972
- The largest natural lake in all of Central America is located in Nicaragua. Called lake Nicaragua it is a major tourist attraction and water supply for many people.
- Nicaragua had the first elected woman president of any central America country. She served from 1991-1997. Also she is the first democratic woman president of any democratic country in the world.
- Miss Nicaragua was slated to become the winner of the Miss Universe pageant but came in runner up instead. She is famous for her positive statement about her outlook on life. I quote “I am a young woman with a lot of charisma, and one of my greatest virtues is my positive outlook on life”
- The regional currency of Nicaragua is the Cordoba
- Central America most famous dance originates from Nicaragua called the “Palo De Mayo.”
- The Main religion in Nicaragua is Catholicism. There are many other religions in Nicaragua and freedom of religion is practiced.
- The Official Language of Nicaragua is Spanish. There are also natives that still speak some of the original Mayan Language that has been in the area for thousands of years. These Native Indian tribes are disappearing quickly due to the influence of western culture.
- Nicaragua is home to the world's only “Dual Volcano” The Volcano is in a small mountain range and is fed underground by two separate magma flows. It is the only volcano in the world that can erupt with two diverse magma channels underneath it.

Quick Facts Source [here](#)

Ideas for Reading

Buying some sort of guidebook on Nicaragua, would also be a good idea because it'll have lots of information on culture, history, and geography. It'll have maps and in-depth information on traveling the country. Books like the Lonely Planet or the Rough Guide are especially good if you are planning to travel on your own after the trip. These books have all sorts of info on how to get around, where to stay, what to do, and how much things cost. There are also other books like National Geographic and the Insider Guide that have lots of pictures and are better for giving a more in-depth background on the country

in general. If you don't need the practical travel information, a book like this might be better.

A good place to start is Amazon, Chapters-Indigo or your favourite local book store!

Trip Locations

Day 1: Managua

Day 2- 4: San Juan Del Sur

Day 5&6: Playa Hermosa

Day 7&8: Playa Gigante

Day 9-11: Ometepe Island

Day 12&13: Leon

Day 14-18: Little Corn Island

Day 19-20: Laguna De Apoya

Day 21: Managua

PLEASE NOTE: The above itinerary is tentative. You will receive your confirmed Free & Easy Traveler trip itinerary with the exact routing at least 30 days prior to your departure.

Please be advised we are constantly keeping an eye out for warnings and are well informed on the happenings in the places we go. Our ground team is frequently sending us first hand updates, ensuring the destinations we bring our groups to are safe!

Community Forests International (CFI)

Free & Easy Traveler has joined forces with Community Forests International (CFI) to turn the joy of world travel into an act of global conservation. Travel is an extremely important part of our lives, getting to see and experience the world is what keeps us all connected and reminds us that we all live in the same world and deal with the same problems. But traveling around the world comes at a price and we are well aware of the many buses, planes, ships, etc. that we use to travel that harm the environment. Greenhouse gas emissions are driving increasingly dangerous climate change to the point that some of the places we love most are under threat and we don't want to contribute to the continuing destruction. So we decided to take action.

We Travel Carbon-Free

By tracking the flights of our staff members and calculating the resulting greenhouse gasses, we support CFI to go out and protect and manage a forest in Canada to pull those gasses back out. These emissions become securely stored at CFI's Whaelghinbran Farm. Read more about how CFI offsets our carbon here.

One Traveler, One Tree

But we didn't stop there. Much of the work that CFI does supports community tree planting efforts in Africa and Canada. This work is having incredible results, and we wanted to strengthen their efforts so we decided that for each traveler that comes on a trip with us, we'll provide CFI with the support to plant a tree to help offset that traveler's carbon emissions.

These trees are being used as tools of environmental and social restoration. In Canada, some of these trees were planted along a degraded watercourse and will go on to provide habitat for salmon, trout, hawks and king fisher, just to name a few. In Africa, where CFI was born, these trees were planted as a part of ongoing restoration of degraded lands on the island of Pemba, Tanzania. These trees rebuild the soil that was too poor to grow crops, allowing for trees like mangoes and cassava to thrive and produce food.

We look forward to continuing our relationship with CFI and, along with your help, making the world a greener place to live and travel in! If you want to offset your travel emissions with CFI, or want to support tree planting around the world, find out how here.