**Nicaragua Facts and Culture**

* [Food and Recipes:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Nicaragua/recipes.htm) Eating is complemented with pleasant conversation. Both hands (not elbows) should remain on or above the table at all times.... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Nicaragua/recipes.htm)
* [Family:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Nicaragua/family.htm) Family is the basis of society and influences an individual's life and decision making. A person has two family names. [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Nicaragua/family.htm)
* [Fashion:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Nicaragua/fashion.htm) Men wear clothes made from washable cotton cord or other lightweight material. Women wear cool, cotton dresses. There are also... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Nicaragua/fashion.htm)
* [Visiting:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Nicaragua/visiting.htm) Visitors are always welcome, as the Nicaraguans are very hospitable people. Dinner guests may take small gifts, such as flowers... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Nicaragua/visiting.htm)

**Nicaragua Facts**

Nicaragua stats

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital | Managua |
| Government Type | republic |
| Currency | NIO |
| Population | 5,788,531 |
| Total Area | 50,336 Square Miles 130,370 Square Kilometers |
| Location | Central America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Costa Rica and Honduras |
| Language | Spanish (official) |

Map of Nicaragua



**Nicaragua Geography**

**Terrain and geography**

The largest of the Central American Republics, Nicaragua borders Costa Rica to the south and Honduras to the north. It covers 57,143 square miles including the region’s largest fresh water lakes—Lake Nicaragua and Lake Managua which total 3,500 square miles. The country is divided into three geographic sections: the drier Pacific coastal plain to the west with its low mountain ranges near the sea; the wetter and cooler mountainous extension of the Central American Highlands which runs from northwest to southeast across the middle of the country; and the hot and humid flat Atlantic lowlands along the east coast.

Most of the population is located in western Nicaragua on the fertile lowland Pacific Plains which surround the lakes and extend north to the Gulf of Fonseca. This region is the political and commercial heart of the country. Lake Managua and Lake Nicaragua dominate the map of this area, and a series of young volcanoes, many still active, dot the coastal plain paralleling the Central American Highlands. The tallest volcanoes reach 5,700 feet, and two are visible from Managua.

The mountain highland provinces of Matagalpa and Jinotega, northeast of the volcanoes and lakes, are more sparsely populated and Nicaragua’s major coffee-producing areas. The easternmost section of the highlands receives the warm, wet Caribbean winds and is mainly sparsely settled rain forest, with a few operating gold mines near the town of Bonanza.

Eastern Nicaragua, with one-third of the total national territory which is an area about the size of El Salvador, has about 10% of the population and is tropical rain forests and pineflats. The region, largely ignored by the Spanish, was a British protectorate until 1860. Even today, many of the people along the Atlantic coast prefer to speak English.

Nicaragua offers appealing landscapes from the primitive Caribbean island beauty of Corn Island, to the lovely lake views near the colonial city of Granada, to the stark beauty of the semiactive volcano located between Managua and Masaya. Volcanic Lakes Xiloa and Apoyo, near Managua, are excellent for swimming and day sailing, and provide relief from the heat. Pacific Ocean beaches are nearby, and the cooler rainforest mountains of Esteli and Matagalpa are just a few hours drive away.

Managua never fully recovered from the 1972 earthquake, in which the entire city center was destroyed, and suffered further neglect through the 1980s. Today, it remains mostly deserted, with visible earthquake ruins. Managua is now a widely scattered collection of neighborhoods that rim an empty hub, with no centrally located business or shopping district. However, the area near the recently inaugurated Cathedral appears to be becoming the city’s new focal point.

**Geography - note**

largest country in Central America; contains the largest freshwater body in Central America, Lago de Nicaragua

**Nicaragua Geography**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Geographic Location | Central America |
| Total Area | 50,336 Square Miles 130,370 Square Kilometers |
| Land Area | 46,328 Square Miles 119,990 Square Kilometers |
| Water Area | 4,008 Square Miles 10,380 Square Kilometers |
| Land Boundaries | 765 Miles 1,231 Kilometers |
| Irrigated Land | 364 Square Miles 942 Square Kilometers |
| Border Countries | Costa Rica 309 km, Honduras 922 km |
| Coastline | 565 Miles 910 Kilometers |
| Geographic Coordinates | 13 00 N, 85 00 W |
| Terrain | extensive Atlantic coastal plains rising to central interior mountains; narrow Pacific coastal plain interrupted by volcanoes |
| Highest Point | 2,438 Meters |
| Highest Point Location | Mogoton 2,438 m |
| Lowest Point Location | Pacific Ocean 0 m |
| Natural Resources | gold, silver, copper, tungsten, lead, zinc, timber, fish |

**Nicaragua Weather and Climate**

**Climate and Weather**

Nicaragua’s climate varies with altitude and season. The summer, or dry season, from mid-November to mid-May, is hot and dry, with cooler nights. Winter, better described as the rainy season, from mid-May to mid-November, is hot and humid, with short, heavy tropical showers that may occur daily, often accompanied by violent electrical storms. Streams flood in the rainy season and dry up the rest of the year. The average daily high temperature in Managua ranges from 79°F to 93°F. Nights are usually temperate. Temperatures in the mountains can dip as low as 61°F, while the east coast high may be a humid 84°F.

**Nicaragua Environmental Issues**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Climate | Nicaragua’s climate varies with altitude and season. The summer, or dry season, from mid-November to mid-May, is hot and dry, with cooler nights. Winter, better described as the rainy season, from mid-May to mid-November, is hot and humid, with short, heavy tropical showers that may occur daily, often accompanied by violent electrical storms. Streams flood in the rainy season and dry up the rest of the year. The average daily high temperature in Managua ranges from 79°F to 93°F. Nights are usually temperate. Temperatures in the mountains can dip as low as 61°F, while the east coast high may be a humid 84°F. |
| Terrain | extensive Atlantic coastal plains rising to central interior mountains; narrow Pacific coastal plain interrupted by volcanoes |
| Natural Resources | gold, silver, copper, tungsten, lead, zinc, timber, fish |
| Natural Hazards | destructive earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides; extremely susceptible to hurricanes |
| Irrigated Land | 364 Square Miles 942 Square Kilometers |
| Environmental Issues | deforestation; soil erosion; water pollution |
| Environment - International Agreements | party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands, Whaling   signed, but not ratified: none of the selected agreements |

**Nicaragua Population Details**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Population | 5,788,531 |
| Population Growth Rate | 1.05% |
| Urban Population | 57.5% |
| Population in Major Urban Areas | MANAGUA (capital) 970,000 |
| Nationality Noun | Nicaraguan(s) |
| Nationality Adjective | Nicaraguan |
| Ethnic Groups | mestizo (mixed Amerindian and white) 69%, white 17%, black 9%, Amerindian 5% |
| Languages | Spanish (official) |
| Rate of Urbanization- annual rate of change | 1.94% |

**Nicaragua Medical Information**

Medical care is very limited, particularly outside of Managua. Basic and emergency medical services are available in Managua and in many of the smaller towns and villages. However, treatment for many serious medical problems is either unavailable or available only in Managua. Ambulance services, where available, provide transportation and basic first aid only. More advanced medical equipment, and some medications and treatments, are not available in Nicaragua. Physicians and hospital personnel frequently do not speak English, and medical reports are written in Spanish.   
  
In an emergency, individuals are taken to the nearest hospital that will accept a patient. This is usually a public hospital unless the individual or someone acting on their behalf indicates that they can pay for a private hospital. Payment for medical services is typically done on a cash basis, although some private hospitals will accept major credit cards for payment. U.S. health insurance plans are generally not accepted in Nicaragua, however, the Embassy has been informed that Hospital Metropolitano in Managua accepts Blue Cross Blue Shield and Tricare.  
  
Tap water is not considered potable in Nicaragua. All persons should drink only bottled water.  
  
Individuals traveling to Nicaragua should ensure that all their routine vaccinations are up to date. Vaccinations against Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, rabies, and typhoid are strongly recommended. A yellow fever vaccination is not required to enter Nicaragua unless the traveler has recently visited a country where yellow fever is endemic. Travelers taking prescription medications should bring an adequate supply with them when coming to Nicaragua. Many newer combination medications are not available in local pharmacies.  
  
In July 2013, the Nicaraguan government declared an alert based on an increase in cases of Dengue Fever, H1N1 flu, and leptospirosis. We advise U.S. citizens to take appropriate precautions and consult with your medical professional for advice before you visit Nicaragua.

**Nicaragua Health Information**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Health Expenditures (% of GDP) | 10.1% |
| Death Rate/1,000 population | 5.06 |
| Obesity- adult prevalence rate | 22.2% |
| Hospital Bed Density/1,000 population | 1.1 |
| Physicians Density/1,000 population | .37 |
| Infant Mortality Rate/1,000 population | 21.09 |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Female/1,000 population | 17.84 |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Male/1,000 population | 24.19 |
| Underweight - percent of children under five years | 5.7% |
| Total Fertility Rate | 2.03 |
| Age of Mother's First Birth | 19.7 |
| Contraceptive prevalance rate (female 15-49) | 72.4% |
| Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births | 95 |
| HIV Adult Prevalence Rate | 0.2% |
| HIV Aids Deaths | 100 |
| HIV Aids People Living With | 6,900 |
| Drinking Water Source: unimproved | 15% |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of rural population improved | 67.8% |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of urban population improved | 97.6% |
| Sanitation Facility Access: unimproved | 47.9% |
| Sanitation Facility Access - percent of urban population improved | 63.2% |
| Sanitation Facitlity Access - percent of rural population improved | 37% |
| Major Infectious Diseases - degree of risk | high |
| Food or Waterborne Disease (s) | bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever |
| Vectorborne Disease (s) | dengue fever and malaria |

**Nicaragua Crime**

**Crime Information**

While less than in neighboring countries, violent crime in Managua exists, and petty street crimes are common. Gang activity exists, but also remains less prevalent than in neighboring Central American countries. Pick-pocketing and occasional armed robberies occur on crowded buses, at bus stops, in taxis, and in open markets like the Oriental and Huembes Markets. Violence, robbery, assault, and stabbings are mostly confined to poorer neighborhoods, including the area around the Ticabus terminal, a major arrival and departure point for tourist buses. However, over the past year, acts of petty crime have taken place in more upscale neighborhoods and near major hotels, including in the Zona Hippos, Galerias Mall, Santo Domingo, Las Colinas, and South Highway neighborhoods. We also advise U.S. citizens not to leave any valuables or passports in a car, especially while shopping at gas station convenience stores, as there have been a large number of reports by U.S. citizens of cars being burglarized in these locations.  
  
In the past, some U.S. citizens were targeted shortly after arriving in the country by criminals posing as Nicaraguan police officers who pull over their vehicles – including those operated by reputable hotels – for inspection. In each case, the incidents happened after dark and involved gun-wielding assailants who robbed passengers of all valuables and abandoned them in remote locations. Some assailants employed threats of physical violence. While the traditional scene of these attacks has been the Tipitapa-Masaya Highway, also known as Carretera Norte, this activity has also spread to the Managua-Leon Highway. There has also been an increase in armed robbery attempts by masked individuals along roadsides leading to popular tourist destinations. Assailants will step out of roadside vegetation with weapons in an attempt to stop the vehicle and rob passengers. Another criminal strategy is to set up make-shift blockades of tree branches and rocks to force travelers to stop. Once vehicle occupants exit their vehicles to move the items, they are typically robbed at gun or knife point.  
  
U.S. citizens should exercise particular caution when approached by strangers offering assistance with finding a taxi cab. Dozens of U.S. citizens have reported being victimized by fellow travelers who offered to assist them in locating and/or sharing a taxi in and around San Juan del Sur, San Jorge, Granada, Managua, Masaya, and other popular tourist destinations. Upon entering the taxi, the U.S. citizens were held at knife- or gunpoint, threatened with bodily injury and/or rape, robbed of their valuables, and driven around to ATMs to withdraw funds from their accounts. Taxi drivers have also picked up additional passengers along the route who then threaten and rob the U.S. citizen, generally in conjunction with the taxi driver. After the assault, the U.S. citizen victims were left abandoned and destitute in remote areas. In 2011, two U.S. citizen victims were beaten and raped after providing incorrect bank card PIN numbers to assailants.  
  
Before taking a taxi, make sure that it has a red license plate and that the number is legible. Pick taxis carefully and note the driver's name and license number. Instruct the driver not to pick up other passengers, agree on the fare before entering the taxi, and have small bills available for payment, as taxi drivers often do not make change. Also, check that the taxi is properly labeled with the cooperativa (company) name and logo. Purse and jewelry snatchings sometimes occur at stoplights. While riding in a vehicle, windows should be closed, car doors locked and valuables placed out of sight. Radio dispatched cabs are recommended and can be summoned at Managua’s international airport and to most major hotels and restaurants.  
  
Many consider the police presence in the tourist destination of San Juan del Sur to be inadequate. There have been incidents of sexual assaults of foreign tourists on beaches in Nicaragua. U.S. citizens were the victims of such assaults in 2011 at a popular beach hotel in San Juan del Sur and in 2013 at a beach hostel at Playa Majagualnot far from San Juan del Sur. The Embassy recommends travelling in groups when going to the beach or to isolated areas. Single travelers should exercise special caution while traveling to beach areas, to the Atlantic Coast, and in other remote areas of the country.  
  
Police coverage is extremely sparse outside of major urban areas, including in the remote beach communities on the Pacific Coast and Nicaragua’s Atlantic coast autonomous regions. Lack of adequate police coverage has resulted in these areas being used by drug traffickers and other criminal elements. Street crime and petty theft are common problems in Puerto Cabezas, Bluefields, and other urban areas along the Atlantic coast. Given the area’s geographical isolation, the Embassy’s ability to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens who choose to travel in the Atlantic coastal area is limited. Police presence is minimal on the Corn Islands as well.  
  
Throughout Nicaragua, U.S. citizens should utilize hotels and guest houses which have security measures in place, including but not limited to rooms equipped with safes for securing valuables and travel documents and adequate access control precautions. U.S. citizens report that even in hotels with safes, items have gone missing.   
  
Do not resist a robbery attempt. Many criminals have weapons, and most injuries and deaths have resulted when victims resisted. Do not hitchhike or go home with strangers, particularly from nightclubs. Do not accept rides from strangers at major bus terminals or border crossings. Travel in groups of two or more persons whenever possible. Use the same common sense while traveling in Nicaragua that you would in any high-crime area of a large U.S. city. Do not wear excessive jewelry or utilize your smart/cell phone in a fashion that attracts attention to its inherent value. Do not carry large sums of money, other valuables, or ATM or credit cards that are not needed.  
  
Do not leave valuables inside parked vehicles. U.S. citizens residing in Nicaragua are urged to review residential security procedures, including with their domestic employees, and strengthen security measures to help safeguard their houses.  
  
Don’t buy counterfeit and pirated goods, even if they are widely available. Not only are the bootlegs illegal in the United States, if you purchase them you may also be breaking local law. Be wary when making purchases from street vendors or in markets. Buying pirated goods undermines legitimate businesses.

**Nicaragua Penalties for Crime**

**Criminal Penalties**

While you are traveling in Nicaragua, you are subject to its laws even if you are a U.S. citizen. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different from our own. There are also some things that might be legal in the country you visit, but still illegal in the United States, for example, you can be prosecuted under U.S. law if you buy pirated goods. In some places you may be taken in for questioning if you don’t have your passport with you. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime prosecutable in the United States. If you break local laws in Nicaragua, your U.S. passport won’t help you avoid arrest or prosecution. It’s very important to know what’s legal and what’s not where you are going.   
  
Persons violating Nicaraguan laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possessing, using, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Nicaragua are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and fines. Nicaragua’s judicial system is subject to political interference and suffers from widespread corruption. Laws are not enforced uniformly. Detainees, both Nicaraguan and foreign, have been subject to imprisonment for lengthy periods without charges being filed against them. U.S. citizens should be aware that Embassy officials are limited in what they can do to assist detainees.  
  
Based on the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, bilateral agreements with certain countries, and customary international law, if you are arrested in Nicaragua, you have the option to request that the police, prison officials, or other authorities alert the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate of your arrest, and to have communications from you forwarded to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

**Nicaragua Life Expectancy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Life Expectancy At Birth | 72 Years |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Female | 74 Years |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Male | 70 Years |
| Median Age (female) | 24 Years |
| Median Age (male) | 22 Years |
| Median Age | 23 Years |

**Nicaragua Literacy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Predominant Language | Spanish (official) |
| Literacy Definition | age 15 and over can read and write |
| Literacy Female | 67.8% |
| Literacy Male | 67.2% |
| Literacy Total | 67.5% |

**Nicaragua Education**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Education Expenditures - percent of GDP | 4.6% |
| Literacy - female | 67.8% |
| Literacy - male | 67.2% |
| Literacy - total population | 67.5% |
| Literacy Definition | age 15 and over can read and write |
| School Life Expectancy - female | 11 Years |
| School Life Expectancy - male | 10 Years |
| Total School Life Expectancy - (primary to tertiary) | 11 Years |

**Nicaragua Government**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital Name | Managua |
| Country Name | Nicaragua |
| Local - Long | Republica de Nicaragua |
| Full Country Name | Republic of Nicaragua |
| Local - Short | Nicaragua |
| Government Type | republic |
| Capital - geographic coordinate | 12 08 N, 86 15 W |
| National Holiday | Independence Day, 15 September (1821) |
| Constitution | 9 January 1987; revised in 1995, 2000, and 2005 |
| Legal System | civil law system; Supreme Court may review administrative acts |
| Suffrage | 16 years of age; universal |

**Nicaragua Government and Politics**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Government Executive Branch | chief of state: President Jose Daniel ORTEGA Saavedra (since 10 January 2007); Vice President Moises Omar HALLESLEVENS Acevedo (since 10 January 2012); note - the president is both chief of state and head of government   head of government: President Jose Daniel ORTEGA Saavedra (since 10 January 2007); Vice President Moises Omar HALLESLEVENS Acevedo (since 10 January 2012)   cabinet: Council of Ministers appointed by the president   elections: president and vice president elected on the same ticket by popular vote for a five-year term; election last held on 6 November 2011 (next to be held by November 2016)   election results: Jose Daniel ORTEGA Saavedra reelected president; percent of vote - Jose Daniel ORTEGA Saavedra 62.5%, Fabio GADEA 31%, Arnoldo ALEMAN 5.9%, other 0.6% |
| Legislative Branch | unicameral National Assembly or Asamblea Nacional (92 seats; 90 members elected by proportional representation and party lists to serve five-year terms; 1 seat for the previous president, 1 seat for the runner-up in previous presidential election)  elections: last held on 6 November 2011 (next to be held by November 2017)  election results: percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - FSLN 63, PLI/MRS 27, PLC 2 |
| Judicial Branch | Supreme Court or Corte Suprema de Justicia (16 judges elected for five-year terms by the National Assembly); note - in 2010, President ORTEGA directly replaced seven justices on the Supreme Court |
| Regions or States | 15 departments (departamentos, singular - departamento) and 2 autonomous regions\* (regiones autonomistas, singular - region autonoma); Atlantico Norte\*, Atlantico Sur\*, Boaco, Carazo, Chinandega, Chontales, Esteli, Granada, Jinotega, Leon, Madriz, Managua, Masaya, Matagalpa, Nueva Segovia, Rio San Juan, Rivas |
| Political Parties and Leaders | Conservative Party or PC [Alejandro BOLANOS Davis]; Independent Liberal Party or PLI [Indalecio RODRIGUEZ]; Liberal Constitutionalist Party or PLC [Jorge CASTILLO Quant]; Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance or ALN [Alejandro MEJIA Ferreti]; Sandinista National Liberation Front or FSLN [Jose Daniel ORTEGA Saavedra]; Sandinista Renovation Movement or MRS [Enrique SAENZ-NAVARRETE] |
| International Law Organization Participation | accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction with reservations; non-party state to the ICCt |
| International Organization Participation | BCIE, CACM, CELAC, FAO, G-77, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ITSO, ITU, ITUC, LAES, LAIA (observer), MIGA, NAM, OAS, OPANAL, OPCW, PCA, Petrocaribe, SICA, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, Union Latina, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO |
| Politicial Pressure Groups and Leaders | National Workers Front or FNT (a Sandinista umbrella group of eight labor unions including: Farm Workers Association or ATC, Health Workers Federation or FETASALUD, Heroes and Martyrs Confederation of Professional Associations or CONAPRO, National Association of Educators of Nicaragua or ANDEN, National Union of Employees or UNE, National Union of Farmers and Ranchers or UNAG, Sandinista Workers Central or CST, and Union of Journalists of Nicaragua or UPN); Permanent Congress of Workers or CPT (an umbrella group of four non-Sandinista labor unions including: Autonomous Nicaraguan Workers Central or CTN-A, Confederation of Labor Unification or CUS, Independent General Confederation of Labor or CGT-I, and Labor Action and Unity Central or CAUS); Nicaraguan Workers' Central or CTN (an independent labor union); Superior Council of Private Enterprise or COSEP (a confederation of business groups) |

**Nicaragua Economy Data**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| GDP - Gross Domestic Product | $27,970,000,000 (USD) |
| GDP - official exchange rate | $11,260,000,000 (USD) |
| GDP - real growth rate | 4.6% |
| GDP Per Capita | $4,500.00 (USD) |
| GDP by Sector- agriculture | 17.1% |
| GDP by Sector- Industry | 25.5% |
| GDP by Sector- services | 57.5% |
| Population Below Poverty Line | 48% |
| Inflation Rate | 4.7% |
| Labor Force | 2,320,000 |
| Labor Force By Occupation- agriculture | 31% |
| Labor Force By Occupation- industry | 18% |
| Labor Force By Occupation- services | 50% |
| Unemployment Rate | 8% |
| Unemployment - note | underemployment was 46.5% in 2008 |
| Fiscal Year | calendar year |
| Annual Budget | $1,421,000,000 (USD) |
| Budget Surplus or Deficit - percent of GDP | -0.3% |
| Public Debt (% of GDP) | 130% |
| Taxes and other revenues - percent of GDP | 25.6% |
| Major Industries | food processing, chemicals, machinery and metal products, textiles, clothing, petroleum refining and distribution, beverages, footwear, wood |
| Industrial Growth Rate | 1.5% |
| Agriculture Products | coffee, bananas, sugarcane, cotton, rice, corn, tobacco, sesame, soya, beans; beef, veal, pork, poultry, dairy products |
| Currency Code | gold cordoba (NIO) |
| Child Labor - % of children ages 5-14 | 14% |
| Child Labor - # of children ages 5-14 | 223,992 |
| Child Labor - note | note: data represents children ages 5-17 |
| Commercial Bank Prime Lending Rate | 12% |

**Nicaragua Economy**

**Economic Overview**

Nicaragua, one of the hemisphere's poorest countries, faces low per capita income, massive unemployment, and huge external debt. Distribution of income is one of the most unequal on the globe. While the country has made progress toward macroeconomic stability over the past few years, GDP annual growth of 1.5% - 2.5% has been far too low to meet the country's need. Nicaragua will continue to be dependent on international aid and debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. Nicaragua has undertaken significant economic reforms that are expected to help the country qualify for more than $4 billion in debt relief under HIPC in early 2004. Donors have made aid conditional on the openness of government financial operation, poverty alleviation, and human rights. A three-year poverty reduction and growth plan, agreed to with the IMF in December 2002, guides economic policy.

**Nicaragua Exports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Exports | $3,182,000,000 (USD) |
| Major Exports | coffee, shrimp and lobster, cotton, tobacco, bananas, beef, sugar, gold |
| Top Export Partners | US 59.4%, El Salvador 7.5%, Honduras 4.8% |

**Nicaragua Imports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Imports | $4,700,000,000 (USD) |
| Major Imports | machinery and equipment, raw materials, petroleum products, consumer goods |
| Top Import Partners | US 23.6%, Costa Rica 10.2%, Guatemala 7.8%, Venezuela 7.1%, El Salvador 6%, Mexico 4.9%, South Korea 4.6% |

**Nicaragua Flag Description**

three equal horizontal bands of blue (top), white, and blue with the national coat of arms centered in the white band; the coat of arms features a triangle encircled by the words REPUBLICA DE NICARAGUA on the top and AMERICA CENTRAL on the bottom; similar to the flag of El Salvador, which features a round emblem encircled by the words REPUBLICA DE EL SALVADOR EN LA AMERICA CENTRAL centered in the white band; also similar to the flag of Honduras, which has five blue stars arranged in an X pattern centered in the white band. The volcanoes stand for the 5 nations of Central America.

Nicaragua flag



|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Anthem History | Salve a ti, Nicaragua (Hail to thee, Nicaragua) is the Nicaraguan national anthem. It was approved October 20, 1939, and officially adopted August 25, 1971. Lyrics by Salomon Ibarra Mayorga, musical arrangement by Luis A. Delgadillo |
| Anthem Lyrics English | **Hail to thee**  Hail to thee, Nicaragua!  the voice of the cannon no longer roars on your soil,  nor does the blood of brothers stain  your glorious bicolor flag.  Peace shines beautiful in your sky,  nothing dims your immortal glory,  ¡for work is what earns your laurels  and honor is your triumphal ensign! |

**Nicaragua National Anthem History**

The History of the Nicaragua National Anthem

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Salve a ti, Nicaragua (Hail to thee, Nicaragua) is the Nicaraguan national anthem. It was approved October 20, 1939, and officially adopted August 25, 1971. Lyrics by Salomon Ibarra Mayorga, musical arrangement by Luis A. Delgadillo |

**Nicaragua Interesting Facts**

* A ceremony known as La Novena is observed in the nine days before La Purísima. Many people make religious pilgrimages to the basilica at the city of El Viejo. A unique ceremony called 'the washing of the plates' takes place on December 6, when a high church official washes sacred silver church objects with lemon juice.
* According to a well-known Nicaraguan proverb, ';a shrimp that sleeps will be taken away by the tide,' which means that if you don't take action in your life, you will be left behind. Another popular expression is that someone is as 'fresh as a lettuce,' meaning that the person is living life as it comes and not concerned about the future.
* Although Nicaragua is a predominantly Roman Catholic country, many couples do not go through a church or civil wedding ceremony. Couples in these common-law unions have the same status as those who have civil marriages.
* Cacao seeds, from which chocolate is made, were used as money by pre-Columbian cultures in Central America.
* During the California gold rush, millionaire Cornelius Vanderbilt transported people by steamship from New York to Lake Nicaragua, then by stagecoach to the Pacific, and by steamship again to California.
* Ernesto Cardenal and Carlos Mejía Godoy composed the well-known Nicaraguan Missa Campesina or Peasant Mass. This popular mass draws on the ideas of liberation theology, which views religion in Latin America from the perspective of the poor and the oppressed.
* In 1993, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception was built in Managua to replace the old cathedral, which had been damaged by the 1972 earthquake. Funding for the new cathedral was largely provided by an American pizza franchise owner.
* In the early 1980s, about 81,000 volunteer teachers were trained and sent all over the country. Many people who had never before had access to education learned to read and write.
* Nearly half of all Nicaraguans are under 15, and more than a quarter are between the ages of 15 and 29. Only a quarter of the population is over 30. Poverty-related diseases and long-term warfare kill many people before they get old.
* Nicaragua has one of the lowest voting ages in the world: sixteen-year old children can vote in Nicaraguan elections, and have been able to since the 1979 revolution.
* Nicaragua is named for one of its original inhabitants, Chief Nicarao, who ruled part of the area at the time the Spanish arrived in Central America.
* The coat of arms of Nicaragua is a triangle in which there are five mountains, representing the five countries of Central America, a rainbow representing peace, and a red cap of the style worn by revolutionaries in the French Revolution, which symbolizes freedom.
* The only freshwater sharks in the world live in Lake Nicaragua. They are thought to be the descendants of saltwater sharks that were trapped there when the lake separated from the ocean, and that evolved to survive in a freshwater environment.
* Volcán Masaya is an important national park. It is home to Crater Santiago, the only Central American crater where you can see molten lava. Even though the crater emits strong sulfuric fumes, green parakeets nest and roost on its walls.

**History of Nicaragua**

*Augusto Cesar Sandino, guerrilla leader in the struggle against the United States occupation of Nicaragua in the 1920s-30s*

*Figure 2. Nicaragua in Its Central American Setting, 1993*

THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY, Nicaragua has suffered from political instability, civil war, poverty, foreign intervention, and natural disasters. Governments since colonial times have been unable to bring stability and sustainable economic growth. Personal and foreign special interests have generally prevailed over the national interests, and foreign intervention in Nicaraguan political and economic affairs, especially by the United States, has resulted in various forms of populist and nationalist reactions. The legacy of the past can be seen today in the attitudes toward foreign influence. Although the upper and middle classes tend to emulate North American life-styles and be supportive of United States policies, the Nicaraguan poor are highly suspicious of the culture and political intentions of the United States.

Since precolonial times, Nicaragua’s fertile Pacific coast has attracted settlers, thus concentrating most of the population in the western part of the country. The Caribbean coast, because of its proximity to the West Indies, historically has been the site of foreign intervention and non-Hispanic immigration from black and indigenous groups from the Caribbean and from British settlers and pirates. The resulting diverse ethnic groups that today inhabit the Caribbean coast have for centuries resisted Hispanic Nicaraguan governments and demanded political autonomy.

During most of the twentieth century, Nicaragua has suffered under dictatorial regimes. From the mid-1930s until 1979, the Somoza family controlled the government, the military, and an ever expanding sector of the Nicaraguan economy. On July 19, 1979, Somoza rule came to an end after the triumph of an insurrection movement led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional--FSLN). However, the predominance of the FSLN led to the development of a different kind of authoritarian regime that lasted for more than a decade.

During the 1980s, Nicaragua was the center of Cold War confrontation in the Western Hemisphere, with the former Soviet Union and Cuba providing assistance to the nicaragua/ni\_glos.asp#Sandinista">Sandinista (see Glossary) government, and the United States supporting anti-government forces. A regional peace initiative brought an end to civil war in the late 1980s. The Sandinistas lost in the 1990 elections, and a new government headed by President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro was installed in April 1990.

**Nicaragua History Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Nicaragua Year in History | Nicaragua Timeline |
| 1821 | **Nicaragua gain their independence from the Spanish Crown.** Nicaragua and other Central American colonies gain their independence from the Spanish Crown. |
| 1847 | **British sailors invade San Juan del Norte, Nicaragua.** British sailors invade San Juan del Norte, Nicaragua. |
| 1850 | **The United States and Great Britain sign the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty** The United States and Great Britain sign the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty without Nicaraguan consent. They are granted access to an inter-oceanic trade route through Nicaraguan territory. |
| 1855 | **Nicaraguan Liberal forces to crush the Conservative opposition hire William Walker** Nicaraguan Liberal forces to crush the Conservative opposition hire William Walker, a North American adventurer with a small band of followers. Walker captures Granada. |
| 1856 | **Walker assumes the Nicaraguan presidency** Walker assumes the Nicaraguan presidency and seeks U.S. annexation. As president, his first decree is to sanction slavery in Nicaragua. |
| 1870 | **Nicaragua protests U.S. intervention** Nicaragua protests U.S. intervention and demands reparations for damages incurred in the 1855-armed conflict. |
| 1907 | **U.S. war ships take possession of the Fonseca Gulf.** U.S. war ships take possession of the Fonseca Gulf. |
| 1910 | **U.S. troops impose a puppet government in Nicaragua.** U.S. troops impose a puppet government in Nicaragua. Liberal President, José Santos Zelaya is forced out of office and Adolfo Díaz is made provisional president. |
| 1912 | **Díaz requests U.S. military assistance to control civil unrest.** Díaz requests U.S. military assistance to control civil unrest. Nicaraguans resist U.S. occupation and the national hero, Benjamin Zeledón dies. |
| 1914 | **Emiliano Chamorro signs the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty with the U.S. administration.** Nicaraguan president, Emiliano Chamorro signs the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty with the U.S. administration. |
| 1925 | **U.S. forces withdraw from Nicaragua** When U.S. forces withdraw from Nicaragua, rebellions ensue; and the marines return to quell the disturbances. |
| 1927 | **Sandino successfully expels U.S. armed forces from Nicaragua.** After five hundred battles fought against U.S. marines and sympathizers, Sandino successfully expels U.S. armed forces from Nicaragua. |
| 1934 | **The U.S. withdraws** The U.S. withdraws, leaving Nicaraguan military officer, Anastasio Somoza as Commander of the National Guard. |
| 1936 | **Anastasio Somoza founds a brutal dictatorship** Anastasio Somoza founds a brutal dictatorship, fueled by U.S. funds, which is passed from father to son to brother for over 43 years. |
| 1941 | **Nicaragua enters World War II** Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Nicaragua enters World War II. |
| 1945 | **Nicaragua is recognized as a charter member of the United Nations.** Nicaragua is recognized as a charter member of the United Nations. |
| 1956 | **Anastasio Somoza is assassinated** Anastasio Somoza is assassinated and succeeded by his son, Luis Somoza Debayle. For four years after his son’s regime, close associates of the Somoza family maintain political control of Nicaragua. |
| 1961 | **US mercenaries depart from Nicaragua’s Puerto Cabezas and invade Playa Girón.** US mercenaries depart from Nicaragua’s Puerto Cabezas and invade Playa Girón, Cuba. They suffer a historical defeat known as the “Bay of Pigs.” |
| 1971 | **Somoza Debayle steps down from government, but retains the post, Chief of the Armed Forces.** Somoza Debayle steps down from government, but retains the post, Chief of the Armed Forces. A governing coalition is formed, which is comprised of a Conservative and two Liberal executives. |
| 1972 | **A devastating earthquake strikes Managua** A devastating earthquake strikes Managua, leaving 6,000 dead and 20,000 injured. Somoza Debayle embezzles money from international relief funds. Martial law is declared; and Somoza Debayle is made Chief Executive of the Nicaraguan government. U.S. marines are sent to Nicaragua to insure Somoza’s regime is instituted. |
| 1988 | **Nicaragua is a disaster zone** Nicaragua is a disaster zone, ravaged by civil war and the onslaught of Hurricane Hugo. President Ortega agrees to the first round of peace talks with Contra leaders. A temporary truce is reached in March. |
| 1990 | **Violeta Chamorro is elected president of Nicaragua.** The moderate UNO Coalition candidate, Violeta Chamorro is elected president of Nicaragua. Chamorro improves diplomatic relations with the U.S. At this time, the FSLN party still holds the majority of popular support in Nicaragua. |

**Nicaragua Holidays and Events**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Display Date | Title |
| September 15th | **Independence Day** |
| December 25th | **Christmas** The Christmas Season starts with the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the night which is termed *La Noche de Griteria* (The night of the Shouting)  Christmas decorations include *flores de pastor* (Shepherd’s Flowers, poinsettias) *muérdagos* (aromatic decorations suspended overhead) colored streamers, artificial Christmas trees.  The Christmas Eve dinner included *gallina de patio* (stuffed chicken), Spanish rice, *nacatamal* (tamales), tortillas, and *ponche* (a rum beverage).  Gifts are hidden around the house and children believing that *el Niño Jesus* (Baby Jesus) brings them, search for them following Midnight Mass.  New Year’s Eve is filled with parties and fireworks. |

**Nicaragua Meals and Food**

Recipes from Nicaragua

* [Gallo Pinto - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Nicaragua/recipe/-gallo-pinto.htm)
* [Fresco de Piña y Arroz (Pineapple and Rice Drink) - Beverage](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Nicaragua/recipe/fresco-de-pi%C3%B1a-y-arroz-%28pineapple-and-rice-drink%29.htm)
* [Gallo Pinto (Red Beans and Rice) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Nicaragua/recipe/gallo-pinto-%28red-beans-and-rice%29.htm)
* [Moros y Cristianos - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Nicaragua/recipe/moros-y-cristianos.htm)
* [Oxtail Stew - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Nicaragua/recipe/oxtail-stew.htm)
* [Standard Black Beans - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Nicaragua/recipe/standard-black-beans.htm)

**Nicaragua Recipes and Diet**

Nicaragua food and meal customs

**Diet**

Beans and rice are eaten with most meals. Corn is an important ingredient in many foods. Typical dishes include tortillas, enchiladas, nacatamales (meat and vegetables, with spices), mondongo (tripe and beef knuckles), and baho (meat, vegetables, and plantain).

**Meals**

Eating is complemented with pleasant conversation. Both hands (not elbows) should remain on or above the table at all times. The main meal is eaten at midday.

Food in Nicaragua

[](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/nu/food.jpg)

[[http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/exH_50/images/photos/nu/food.jpg](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/nu/food.jpg)](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/nu/food.jpg) [[http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/exH_50/images/photos/nu/streetfood.jpg](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/nu/streetfood.jpg)](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/nu/streetfood.jpg)

**Nicaragua Languages**

**Languages**

Spanish (official)

**Language Translations:**

**Greetings in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Do you speak English? | Habla usted ingles? |
| Do you speak Spanish? | Habla usted espanol? |
| Excuse me | Dispenseme |
| Fine / Good | Bien |
| Good afternoon | Buenas tardes |
| Good evening | Buenas tardes |
| Good morning | Buenos diás |
| Good night | Buenas noches |
| Goodbye | Adios |
| Happy New Year! | ¡Felíz año nuevo! |
| Hello | ¡Hóla! |
| How are you? | Como esta usted? |
| I'm pleased to meet you | Encantado de conocerle |
| Merry Christmas | Feliz Navidad |
| Please | Por favor |
| See you later | Hasta luego |
| Thank you | Gracias |
| Welcome | Bienvenido |
| What is your name? | Como se llama? / Deme su nombre |
| Yes / No | Si / No |

**Days in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sunday | Domingo |
| Monday | Lunes |
| Tuesday | Martes |
| Wednesday | Miercoles |
| Thursday | Jueves |
| Friday | Viernes |
| Saturday | Sabado |

**Months in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| January | Enero |
| February | Febrero |
| March | marzo |
| April | Abril |
| May | Mayo |
| June | Junio |
| July | Julio |
| August | Agosto |
| September | Septiembre |
| October | Octubre |
| November | Noviembre |
| December | Diciembre |

**Colors in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Black | Negro |
| Blue | Azul |
| Green | Verde |
| Orange | Anaranjado |
| Pink | Rosado |
| Red | Rojo |
| White | Blanco |
| Yellow | Amarillo |

**Numbers in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| One | Uno |
| Two | Dos |
| Three | Tres |
| Four | Cuatro |
| Five | Cinco |
| Six | Seis |
| Seven | Siete |
| Eight | Ocho |
| Nine | Nueve |
| Ten | Diez |
| Fifty | Cincuenta |
| one Hundred | Cien |
| One Thousand | mil |

**Nicaragua Clothing and Fashion**

Men wear clothes made from washable cotton cord or other lightweight material. Women wear cool, cotton dresses. There are also various traditional costumes worn for special occasions and festivals.

**Dating, Family and Children Nicaragua**

**Dating and Marriage**

A girl formally enters social life at age fifteen. Group dating is common among the youth. Although marriage is a valued institution, some infidelity among men is tolerated.

**Family and Children**

Family is the basis of society and influences an individual's life and decision making. A person has two family names.

**Nicaragua Gestures and Greetings**

**Greetings**

When meeting people one usually shake hands and smiles if they are in friendly terms. One should give another their complete attention when greeting someone. Between female friends, greetings often include a kiss on the cheek and hug.

**Gestures**

Most gestures common in Western countries are also acceptable in Nicaragua. However, a fist with the thumb positioned between the index and middle fingers is vulgar.

**Visiting**

Visitors are always welcome, as the Nicaraguans are very hospitable people. Dinner guests may take small gifts, such as flowers or candy, to the hosts.

Time off from work is often spent visiting family members. If relatives live too far away to visit regularly, the family might get together every year during Semana Santa. Nicaraguans also enjoy arguing about politics.

**Cultural Attributes**

Nicaraguans enjoy the company of other people and are generally sociable. Honor is important and defended vigorously, sometimes even physically. Personal criticism of others should be avoided. Schedules and punctuality at meetings is not strictly observed. Power is highly valued and often sought.

**Nicaragua Church and Religion**

Non-Christian communities were few and small. The Jewish community counted fewer than fifty persons (including expatriates). They gathered for religious holidays and Sabbath dinners but did not have an ordained rabbi or a synagogue. In March 2006 the Jewish community established the Israelite Community of Nicaragua with a board of directors. The new organization aimed to eventually reestablish a synagogue in Nicaragua and was seeking a rabbi. According to community members, the last synagogue was firebombed by the Sandinistas in 1978.   
  
A small number of Muslims, mostly Sunnis and primarily resident aliens or naturalized citizens from Iran, Libya, and Palestine who immigrated in the 1980s. There was a mosque and an Islamic cultural center in Managua, the capital, with approximately 200 members.   
  
Minority religious groups also included the Baha'i Faith and the Church of Scientology. Other immigrant groups included Turcos, Palestinian Christians whose ancestors came to Central America in the early 1900s, and Chinese, who either arrived as Christians or frequently intermarried with citizens and converted to Christianity.   
  
There were no longer any pre-Columbian religions in the country, although there was a "freedom movement" within some Moravian churches to allow indigenous Amerindian spiritual expression, often through music. The Catholic Church frequently incorporates syncretic elements and does not criticize or interfere with pre-Colombian aspects of Christian religious festivals.   
  
Moravian and Episcopal communities were concentrated on the Atlantic coast, while Catholic and evangelical churches dominated the Pacific and central regions. There was a strong correlation between ethnicity and religion; blacks and Amerindians, who generally lived along the Atlantic coast, were more likely to belong to the Moravian or Episcopal Church. Some evangelical churches focused on the remote towns of the central South Atlantic Region and had a strong presence there.   
  
Evangelical churches were growing rapidly, particularly in poor or remote areas. In 1980 the Assemblies of God had 80 churches and fewer than 5,000 members, but according to Church leader Saturnino Cerrato, as of April 2006 there were more than 860 churches and 200,000 baptized members. The evangelical churches operated two private universities without interference from the Government.   
  
Anecdotal evidence pointed to proportionally higher church attendance among members of the new evangelical churches than in Catholic and traditional Protestant churches. In poorer neighborhoods, the small evangelical churches were filled to capacity nearly every evening. According to a Catholic official, the Catholic Church was growing numerically but losing ground proportionally.   
  
Foreign missionaries were active. The Mormons had the most, and the Mennonites had a handful of missionary families. Nearly all of the non-Catholic denominations had at least one missionary family present.   
  
The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. The Government at all levels sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The constitution also states that no one "shall be obligated by coercive measures to declare their ideology or beliefs." The constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion.   
  
There is no official state religion; however, the Catholic Church enjoys a close relationship with the Government. It is the most politically active religious group and has significant political influence. Catholic Church leaders routinely meet with senior government officials. There were allegations that state funds have been used to support purely religious Catholic Church activities; however, under the current administration the Government and Catholic Church maintained more distant relations. The historical position of the Church is such that most religiously affiliated monuments, memorials, and holidays are Catholic-related. However, the dominance of the Catholic Church did not have a negative effect on the religious freedom of others.   
  
The following holy days are recognized as national holidays: Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, Immaculate Conception, and Christmas. The Festival of Santo Domingo (August 1 and 10) is also celebrated, but only in Managua.   
  
The Government's requirements for legal recognition of a religious group are similar to requirements for other nongovernmental organizations. A church must apply for personeria juridica (legal standing), which the National Assembly must approve. Following approval, a church must register with the Ministry of Government as an association or a foundation. Groups that do not register cannot obtain tax-exempt status and technically do not have standing to incur legal obligations and make contracts. However, a number of groups did not register and continued to operate without penalty.   
  
A recognized church may be granted tax-exempt status, known as exoneration. Because of perceived unequal treatment for different religious groups, exoneration was a contentious issue. This was particularly true with regard to exemption from customs duties on imported goods donated for humanitarian purposes. Goods donated to established churches and other nonprofit religious organizations recognized by the Government that are intended for the exclusive use of the church or organization are eligible for exoneration. Groups must receive clearance from the Office of External Cooperation, the Ministry of Finance, the Customs Office, and the municipality in which the donated goods would be used before a tax exemption is approved and the goods are released.   
  
Religion is not taught in public schools, but private religious schools operate in the country. The Government provides financial support to a number of Catholic primary and secondary schools by paying teacher salaries

**Nicaragua Sport and Recreation**

Children enjoy a type of hopscotch called rayuela, games of hide and seek, and playing with a trompo (a toy like a top with a string) or a skipping rope.

Nicaraguans are passionate about baseball. Most communities have a baseball field, and even the poorest children learn to play by improvising with a stick for a bat and a rolled-up sock for a ball. There are several professional baseball teams in Nicaragua, and people follow their progress, as well as that of Latin American and North American leagues. The biggest baseball stadium in Nicaragua is in Managua. It holds 40,000 people.

Many women and girls enjoy playing volleyball and basketball, and some play soccer and baseball as well. Men and boys participate in baseball, soccer, basketball, volleyball and boxing.

Nicaragua has two long coastlines, the Pacific on the west and the Caribbean on the east, and many people go to the beach for their holidays. Most people take their holidays during the dry season, which lasts from about December to May, depending on the region. Beaches are especially busy during Semana Santa (Holy Week) just before Easter, which is a popular vacation time. People also enjoy camping in the mountains, as well as swimming in volcanic crater lakes.

Other pastimes include games like checkers and, for children, marbles.