

# **Ecotourism in Nicaragua**

**Autor: Eddy Kühl Arauz - 16-05-2019**

<https://vinculando.org/en/ecotourism-in-nicaragua.html>

## **Brief history**

Nicaragua is a Central American country with just over 5,000,000 inhabitants and an area of 130,000 km<sup>2</sup>.

Nicaragua was discovered by Christopher Columbus on his Fourth Journey in 1502, who toured its entire Caribbean coast.

The Pacific region of Nicaragua was colonized by Andalusians and Spanish Extremadurians who founded the city of Granada in 1524, the city of Leon in the same year, and in 1534 in the mountainous region of northern Nicaragua founded by orders of Governor Castañeda another city called Nueva Segovia, this city was assaulted several times by pirates and Carib Indians, until its inhabitants ended up relocating in 1611 in safer places always north of the country.

The lost city of Nueva Segovia is an interesting challenge for archaeologists because its ruins have not yet been found.

Almost all other cities retain their original Indian name: Masaya, Chinandega, Matagalpa, Jinotega, Esteli, Boaco, Juigalpa, Diriamba and Jinotepe.

## **Geographical location**

Being Nicaragua in the union of masses between North and South America, there is an interesting phenomenon for naturalists and ecologists in the fact that there are species of fauna and flora of both continents. Example: deer, pumas, sloths, ocelots, quetzals, pine trees from the north and south.

Nicaragua has the largest expanse of virgin rainforests north of the Amazon. \*1

## **Volcanoes**

Another important factor is the geological one. When the continental masses collide, formidable volcanoes have been formed, three of them in activity. There are few places in the world where you can see active craters from a vantage point.

## **Lakes**

Lake Nicaragua is another phenomenon to visit. This lake, the second largest in Latin America, with a little more than 8,000 km<sup>2</sup>, is believed to have originated when the land closed and enveloped part of the Pacific Ocean leaving trapped marine species that eventually adapted to fresh water, such as sharks and sawfish.

In this lake are very picturesque islands that can be visited traveling by boat. The Island of Ometepe, with two very beautiful and symmetrical volcanoes, the Concepción and the Maderas, have roads around the island where ecotourism can be done. It has very nice lodging and restaurants.

There is also the Archipelago of Solentiname, famous for the retirement of Trappist monks in the sixties and the crafts of the natives. There is lodging in the area.

The Archipelago of Las Isletas, immediately in front of the colonial city of Granada, has facilities for lodging, rowing and fishing.

## **Rivers**

The San Juan River was besieged during the 17th and 18th centuries by English, French and Dutch pirates. Still there is the Castle of the Immaculate Conception built by the Spanish crown, where the young daughter of regent Rafaela Herrera in the late eighteenth century defeated the invaders, including then Lieutenant Horacio Nelson, who is said to have lost an eye in that battle.

This river is navigable and tourists can stay in hostels.

The Rama and Escondido River is navigable and can be reached from Managua on paved road and embark in El Rama in the interior of the country to Bluefields port in the Caribbean Sea enjoying a naturalist journey.

The Rio Grande of Matagalpa, which has been believed to have been discovered by Christopher Columbus on his fourth and last voyage in 1502, who called it the Rio del Desastre, as he sank boats with sailors he had sent to collect drinking water.

The Rio Coco, Wanks or Segovia, to the north partially bordered with Honduras, where also the pirates went up, attacking the towns of the interior of the country arriving until the towns of Segovia, Jinotega and Matagalpa. In Matagalpa there is a small valley called Pacsila, where the inhabitants are blond with blue eyes, which according to the naturalist Thomas Belt and the researcher Harvy Wells\*2 are descendants of English or Dutch pirates who settled in that region.

## **Mountains and lodging**

To the north and center, crossing Nicaragua from north to south, are the mountain ranges of

Dipilto, Isabelia, Dariense and Amerrisque, which are the continuation of the chain that in North America are called Rocky Mountains and in South America are called Andes. 5\*

In the departments of Matagalpa, Jinotega, Estelí, Somoto and Ocotal, virgin mountains with abundant flora and fauna can be seen.

Between the cities of Matagalpa and Jinotega on a road with panoramic views, there are mountain hotels, 1,300 meters above sea level (4,300 feet), where tourists can stay at any time of year.

In these hostels you can learn about pedestrian trails or on horses, you can walk for hours in primary jungles and cloud forests. There are more than 200 varieties of birds including the Quetzal and more than 150 varieties of orchids, in addition to deer, dantos, wild boar, pumas and ocelots. They are like sanctuaries of flora and fauna, because it is not allowed to hunt or deforest, scientists have found new species that have registered with the name of the region 1\*. There is also a Youth Hostel for young tourists.

In this area you can see the harvest and the coffee processing and appreciate the eco-agriculture. Shaded coffee from this area is coveted by the international market. There are also coffee tours.\*5

## **Beach**

The beaches of Nicaragua are very beautiful and extensive, in the Pacific there are hotels with international comforts, in spas like La Boquita, Casares and San Juan del Sur.

Mangroves, turtles and reefs are protected by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. Chacocente on the south coast of the Pacific is one of the few places in Central America where giant turtles can be seen laying their eggs. 4

There are paved roads both on the beaches and in the mountains.

## **Cities**

Managua. The capital, with one million inhabitants, on the shores of Lake Xolotlán, has several first class hotels, International Airport with direct flights to Miami, Panama, the Caribbean, North and South America.

Granada, founded by Francisco Hernández de Córdoba in 1524 on the shores of Lake Cocibolca, has been preserved with its colonial style, one of the oldest cities on the continent that is preserved in the same place. Granada has very good hotels.

Leon. also founded by Hernandez de Cordoba in 1524 a little further west, was the first capital of the country, is the university city, very stately and colonial.

León has one of the most beautiful and largest cathedrals in Latin America. In the Cathedral you can see some colonial relics and the tomb of the celebrated poet Rubén Darío who revolutionized the Castilian language.

Matagalpa in the north of Nicaragua, an ancient Indian city in the foothills of the mountains where the Cordillera Isabelia (by Queen Isabel of Spain) and the Cordillera Dariense (by Ruben Dario) coincide, with virgin forests and other coffee plantations, located two hours from the international airport on an asphalted road. It has a beautiful Cathedral and a Cemetery for foreigners worth visiting. It has city hotels and a mountain hotel with facilities for international tourism.

In the coast of the Caribbean Sea, are the cities of Bluefields named like this by a Dutch corsair captain of surname "Blewfeld", later during the English occupation of the mosquitia anglizaron its name to Bluefields, but to the north that finds Puerto Cabezas interesting by its population and misquita history.

South of the Caribbean coast is San Juan del Norte, known to the English as Greytown, famous for passenger traffic during the "gold rush". in the mid-nineteenth century coming from the east coast of the United States, crossed the Nicaraguan isthmus through the San Juan River, Lake Nicaragua, then crossing the isthmus of Rivas in diligences of mules to San Juan del Sur, where they embarked to San Francisco and California, the same as at the time of the invasion of the American southern William Walker, who occupied Nicaragua for some time until he was defeated 3 \*.

## **Conclusion**

Nicaragua is a country with great eco-tourism resources, with beaches on the Atlantic, Pacific and large lakes.

With volcanoes that can be ascended and observed. (Santiago, Momotombo, San Cristobal, Mombacho)

With still virgin mountains (Isabelia, Dariense, etc), where the autochthonous flora and fauna are conserved, which have been declared protected areas.

(Bosawas, Arenal, Corn Indian Reserve)\*4

The Institute of Tourism, the Ministry of the Environment and various organizations such as NGOs, are openly campaigning for the protection of the environment.

Nicaragua is preparing for a better future for its inhabitants and to welcome the international eco-tourist to share the appreciation of our natural beauties.

## References:

- Dr. Günter Kohler. Head of Biology Department. Seckenberg Museum. Frankfurt, Germany
- Book: *The Naturalist in Nicaragua* by Thomas Belt
- Book: "*William Walker, the Predestined*", by Alejandro Bolaños Geyer
- MARENA. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. Managua
- "Geography of Nicaragua", by Dr. Jaime Incer Barquero. Managua

author Eddy Kuhl, is director of the Academy of Geography and History of Nicaragua; Email: [eddy@selvanegra.com.ni](mailto:eddy@selvanegra.com.ni)