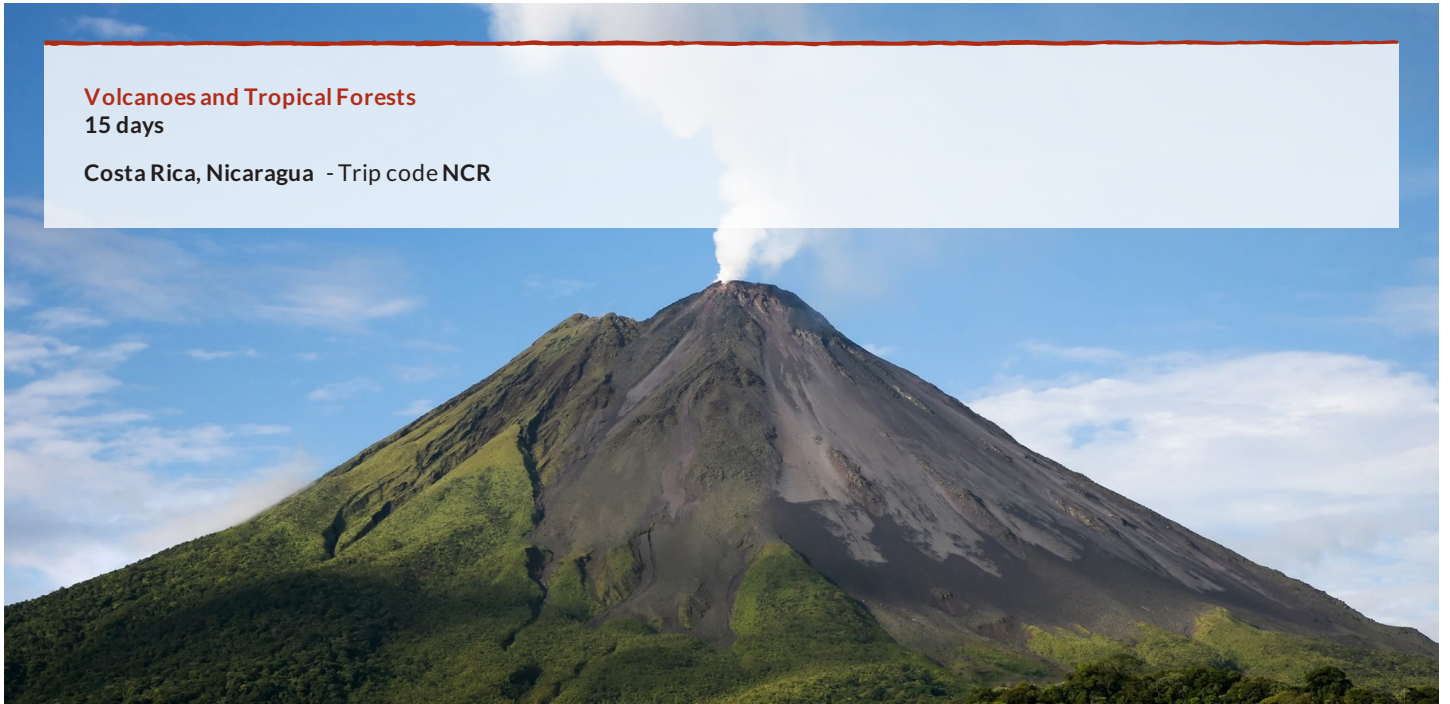


EXPLORE!

Volcanoes and Tropical Forests

15 days

Costa Rica, Nicaragua - Trip code NCR



Volcanoes and Tropical Forests

Journey through the contrasting Central American countries of Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Hike up volcanoes, discover remote waterfalls, and learn about tropical forests. Look out for the diverse wildlife living in the cloud and rain forests of the area and wake up to the sounds of Howler monkeys. Stay on Ometepe, a volcanic island on Lake Nicaragua, and enjoy the relaxed pace of life there - a contrast to the more energetic pace of the fascinating colonial cities of Leon and Granada.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Primary forest walk** - At La Selva Biological Station
- ★ **Arenal Volcano** - Hike in the tropical forest around this famous volcano
- ★ **Exotic tropical wildlife** - Look out for howler monkeys, toucans and humming birds
- ★ **Isla Ometepe** - Experience the laid back atmosphere of this island in the middle of Lake Nicaragua
- ★ **Leon and Granada** - Explore these beautiful colonial cities

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

WALKING GRADE:

Moderate

For those who are fit and active, these moderate walks are normally on good paths and tracks at low altitude. Days may include some fairly demanding ascents and descents, so previous experience is preferable but not essential.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Trip starts in San Jose

Trip start in Costa Rica's capital, San Jose, in the country's Central Valley.



Accommodation: Villa Tournon (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Walk in Braulio Carrillo National Park. Drive to Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí

This morning after breakfast we travel to Braulio Carrillo National Park, where we take a short walk through the tropical forests. This protected area, though only a short distance from the capital, is a significant natural reserve and home to over 500 species of birds and 150 species of mammals, including howler and white faced capuchin monkeys. On our return to our bus we continue our journey to Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí. Today is an easy introductory walk. We walk for one and a half hours covering three kilometres through tropical forest. Ascent / descent +300m/ - 300m.



Accommodation: Hotel Ara Ambigua (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Follow trail through primary rainforest at La Selva. Free afternoon

Today we visit La Selva, the Organisation for Tropical Studies' biological station, and follow the trail through their primary forest with a local guide. En route we learn about the flora and fauna here and about the station's research. The afternoon is free and optional excursions include white water rafting, a hike around Tirimbina Reserve and a chocolate tour. Today's walk is also an easy walk through primary forest following a marked trail. We cover six and a half kilometres in approximately three hours.



Accommodation: Hotel Ara Ambigua (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Travel to Arenal. Local walk. Optional thermal baths

This morning after some free time in Sarapiquí we travel for around two hours to La Fortuna, close to Arenal volcano. Arenal Volcano has until recently been one of the world's most active volcanoes, but since 2010 activity has reduced. It however continues to have a dramatic and picturesque presence in the area. It is surrounded by rainforest which provides great hiking and has a large attractive lake to the west, formed as part of a hydro-electric power scheme. In the afternoon we take a gentle walk in the national park to learn about the area. Later we have the opportunity to try one the local hot spring baths. Our walk today covers five kilometres and takes approximately two hours. Ascent / decent +100m / - 100m.



Accommodation: Arenal Montechiari Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Hiking in Arenal Volcano National Park

Today we take to the tree tops for Arenal's famous 'Hanging Bridges' canopy hike. This involves walking on suspended bridges and walkways high up in the jungle canopy. A completely different view of the Arenal National Park than the trails on the ground and a great opportunity to view the wildlife that lives in the trees. We should also get some stunning views of the Arenal Volcano itself from up high. Today's hike takes approximately four hours and covers six kilometres. Ascent / descent +200m / - 300m.



Accommodation: Arenal Montechiari Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Drive around Lake Arenal and on to Rincon de la Vieja National Park

This morning there is the opportunity to take a local waterfall hike, or you may chose to rest at the hotel before we depart, in the late morning, for Rincon de la Vieja. We drive part way round Arenal Lake before heading north- west to another national park with an active volcano, Rincon de la Vieja. Here we stay in a lodge not far from the park entrance.



Accommodation: Canon de la Vieja Lodge (or similar)



Standard Lodge



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Hike through national park to Blue Lagoon Waterfall

After driving into the park we begin our hike to a local Waterfall. Within the park we will see evidence of steam vents and boiling volcanic mud in 'Pailas' as well as interesting birds and other flora and fauna in the surrounding tropical forest. It is possible to take a swim in the waterfall outside the rainy season. On our return it is possible to include the 'Pailas Loop' to see more of the park. The Waterfall hike is ten kilometres and takes approximately four and a half hours. Ascent / descent +200m / - 200m. The additional Pailas Loop is another four kilometres and two and a half hours.



Accommodation: Canon de la Vieja Lodge (or similar)



Standard Lodge



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Cross the border to Nicaragua. Take ferry to Isla Ometepe

Today we leave Costa Rica, crossing over into neighbouring Nicaragua. We travel to Lake Nicaragua, one of the world's largest freshwater lakes, and take a ferry across to the volcanic island of Ometepe. Ometepe has been home to indigenous tribes and cultures for many centuries, demonstrated by the pre-Colombian petroglyphs and artefacts found here. The island was made from the formation of two volcanoes - Concepcion (1610m) and Maderas (1394m) that give the island its distinctive profile as you approach the island by boat. On Ometepe we stay in a small natural reserve on the shoreline. On arrival we take an easy walk around the nearby lake to a viewpoint. Our stroll around the lake takes approximately forty-five minutes and covers two kilometres.



Accommodation: Hotel Charco Verde (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

DAY 9 - Hike through cloudforest to San Ramon Waterfall

After breakfast we drive to the start of today's hike to San Ramon Waterfall. The waterfall is on the southern slopes of Maderas Volcano, about four kilometres from San Ramon village. We walk through dense jungle, home to howler monkeys and a wide variety of birds and butterflies, some of which are endemic to the area. The waterfall is most impressive during the rainy season when there is the most water but remains a beautiful spot throughout the year. Along the way to the waterfall we will see the pipes from the local hydroelectric station. The crystal clear water from here is also bottled for drinking. Today's hike is eight kilometres and takes approximately four hours. + 400m / - 400m.



Accommodation: Hotel Charco Verde (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

DAY 10 - Ferry back to mainland and drive to the colonial city of Leon

Today we take the ferry back across the lake to drive north-west to the colonial university city of Leon, home to the country's main universities. In the afternoon we take a walk around the fascinating old town with its historical buildings, churches and cathedral - listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.



Accommodation: Hotel Los Balcones (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

DAY 11 - Four-wheel drive through Los Maribios and volcano hike on El Hoyo

Our walk today is on a distinctive volcano - El Hoyo can easily be recognised from a distance by the large hole in the on one of its slopes, and is actually a complex of several volcanic structures, the most significant of which are two round craters and several fumaroles. We arrive to the start of our hike by four wheel drive through Los Maribios, Nicaragua's impressive volcanic chain. As we ascend we will have views down over other volcanoes and Lake Managua, the large lake to the north of Lake Nicaragua. Our hike today takes approximately four hours and covers five kilometres.



Accommodation: Hotel Los Balcones (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

DAY 12 - Drive to Granada, one of Central America's most beautiful cities; explore on foot

Granada, on the shores of Lake Nicaragua, was founded in 1524 and is thought to be the second oldest Spanish city in Latin America. Today much of the city centre has been renovated and it has a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere. On our arrival we take a tour of the city including the Merced church and a local market. The rest of the day is free to explore this attractive city further or relax in one of the many cafes.



Accommodation: Hotel El Almirante (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Four-wheel drive and hike along the Puma Trail on a walking tour of Mombacho Volcano

Covered by cloudforest, Mombacho Volcano can be seen from Granada. This morning we drive to the top by four wheel drive and visit the scientific station there. We then take a guided hike along the Puma Trail, learning about the volcano and the flora and fauna found in this special environment. From the top there are stunning views down to Lake Nicaragua. This volcano hike is four and a half kilometres and takes four hours. Ascent / descent +100m / - 100m.



Accommodation: Hotel El Almirante (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Free day in Granada

Today we have a free day in Granada. Possible optional excursions include a boat trip through Las Isletas on Lake Nicaragua, and kayaking.



Accommodation: Hotel El Almirante (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



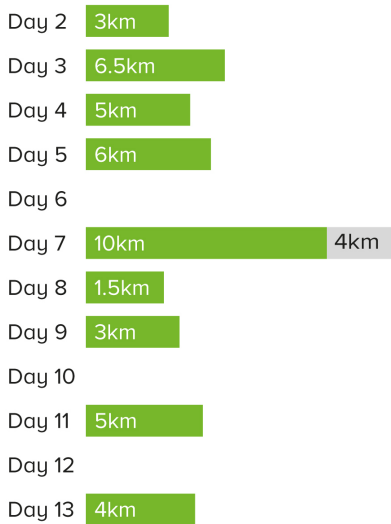
DAY 15 - Trip ends at Managua airport

We drive to Managua airport where our trip ends.



Walking and Trekking information

DAILY DISTANCE



Walking grade

Moderate

Trek details

Walks on 9 days for between 1.5 to 6 hours. Some walks are graded easy, some moderate. The trip has been graded as moderate overall because of the effect that heat and humidity may have.

Optional Walks



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 14



Transport

Bus
4WD
Ferry



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Boat Crew
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

9 nights standard hotel
3 nights premium hotel
2 nights standard lodge

Trip information

Country information

Holidays to Costa Rica

Climate

Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page. Costa Rica has a tropical climate with high temperature humidity and rainfall. The average temperature is 21°C in the highlands and variable in the lowlands. The rainy season is from May to November and the summer from December to April, but it does still tend to rain, usually in short bursts. Bear in mind that Costa Rica has 12 microclimates and weather can vary significantly in one day.

Time difference to GMT

-6

Plugs

2 Pin Flat

Religion

Christian, Roman Catholic

Language

Holidays to Nicaragua

Climate

Tropical, with little seasonal variation in temperature. The heavy rainy season is May to October but it can rain at any time along the Caribbean coast of Rio San Juan. There are 3 main climactic zones, the hot tropical lowlands and the cooler hill region, which has a larger range of daily temperature.

Time difference to GMT

-6

Plugs

2 Pin Flat

Religion

Roman Catholic

Language

Spanish

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Puerto Viejo Sarapiquí - White water Rafting (class I-III) US\$59; (class V) US\$110; Canopy US\$59; Chocolate tour US\$34; Tirimbina hike US\$34 La Fortuna - Hot Springs: US\$41 (Entrance) / + dinner US\$65; La Fortuna Waterfall hike US\$25 (for two passengers and upwards US\$55 for one passenger only) Rincon de la Vieja - Las Pailas hike US\$46 inc lunch Leon - San Jacinto Mud fields and Tortilla Workshop \$30 (min 4 pers); León Viejo Ruins: \$35 (min 4 pers) Granada - Las Isletas boat trip US\$25; Las Isletas kayak US\$35

Clothing

Lightweight clothing is essential for most of the year, though a warmer jumper is advisable for cooler evenings at higher altitudes. A good lightwaterproof is essential, and you could consider waterproof trousers. The jungle lowlands are hot and muggy, and it can rain at any time of year. Long trousers and long-sleeved shirts are recommended on jungle walks.

Footwear

We recommend you bring lightweight walking boots with ankle support, make sure that your boots are worn-in and comfortable before the start of the trip. Also trainers or sandals for relaxing and general wear. We suggest that on international flights you either carry your walking boots in your hand luggage or wear them - should your luggage be lost or delayed, your own boots are the one thing that will be irreplaceable.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daysack.

Equipment

A waterbottle, sunhat, sunglasses, insect repellent and sun protection cream are essential. Bring poles if you are used to walking with them.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip. For this trip we recommend US\$60 contribution.

International Departure Taxes

Please allow US\$20 for border taxes.

Country Information

Holidays to Costa Rica

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£13

Dinner price

£13

Beer price

£1.8

Water price

£1.3

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Costa Rican Colon.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Carry all your funds in US cash NOT Sterling or Travellers Cheques which are more difficult to exchange. We recommend to take a minimum of US\$400-\$500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange. USD can be used in some places in Costa Rica

Where To Exchange

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

Holidays to Nicaragua

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price

£10.00 - 12.00

Beer price

£2

Water price

£0.8

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Cordoba

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Carry all your funds in US cash NOT Sterling or Travellers Cheques which are more difficult to exchange. We recommend to take a minimum of US\$400-\$500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange. USD can be used in some places in Nicaragua.

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Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, 4WD, Ferry

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Costa Rica: Citizens from the UK, US, Canada and most E.U countries do not require a visa for a stay up to 90 days. Citizen of Australia, New Zealand and the Republic of Ireland do not require a visa for stays up to 30 days. Nicaragua: Visas are not required for UK, New Zealand, Australian, US and Canadian citizens. There is an entry charge of 10USD. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate. USA: (including those in transit) Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and passport holders from several EU countries can enter the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) - where you apply for an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation), which applies if you enter the country by sea or by air. This must be done on line - <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> no later than 72 hours prior to travel. Travellers who have not registered before their trip are likely to be refused boarding. You must have an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information about the passport owner. UK passports which are biometric feature a small gold symbol (camera) at the bottom of the front cover. If you have visited Iraq, Syria, Iran or Sudan since 2011 or are dual nationals of these countries, you cannot travel with an ESTA and instead you will need to apply for a visa from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. If you are unable to provide a valid visa before boarding flights to the US, or entering via another method, you may not be permitted to travel. Please note for your ESTA application you will be required to supply Point of Contact information. Explore's USA contact information will be listed on your final documentation

which you will receive approximately 3-4 weeks before departure. If you are leaving for the USA before this, please call the Explore team to get this information. (Not necessary if in transit) For further information please check out the US embassy website. Visa applications - <http://london.usembassy.gov/niv/apply.html> Canada: An electronic travel authorisation (ETA) is required by British citizens transiting via Canada. For more information see the official Canadian government website: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/eta.asp> Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Holidays to Costa Rica

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the

NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended.. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Holidays to Nicaragua

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended.. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.
