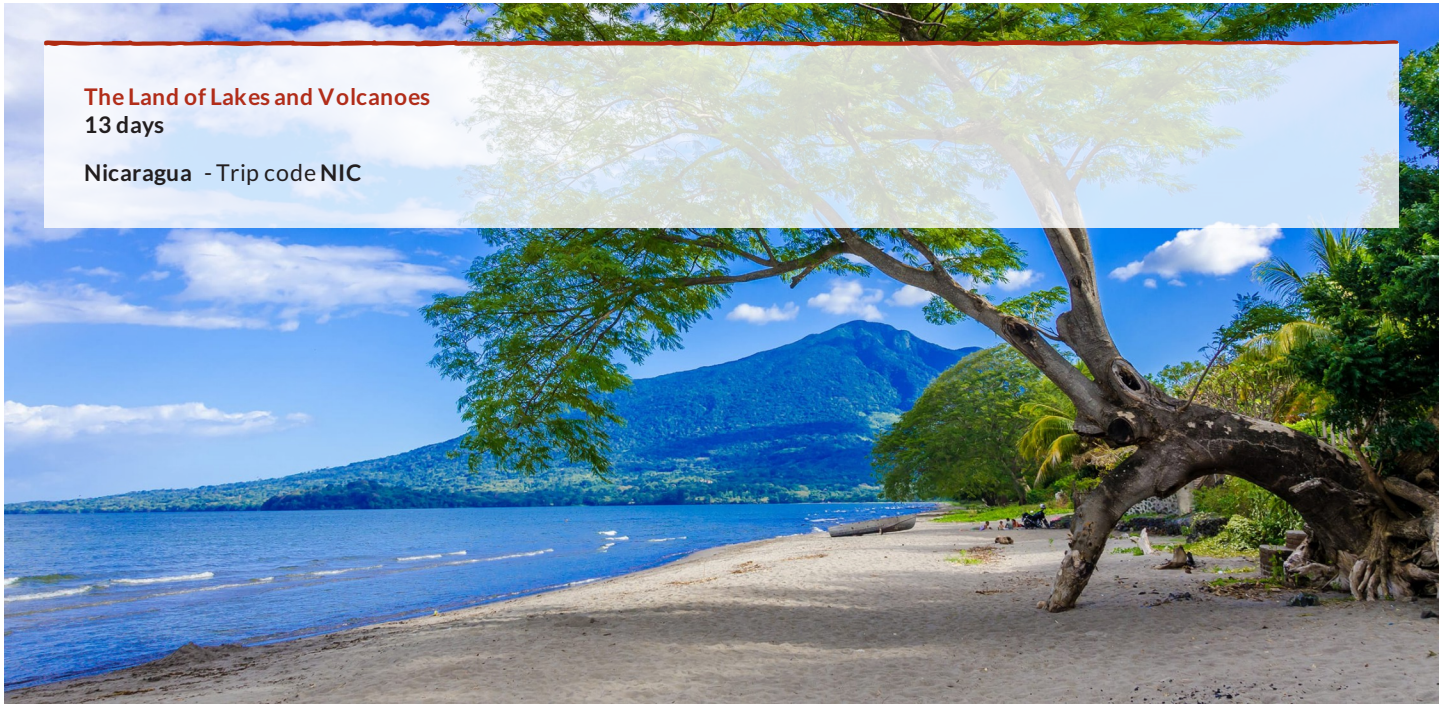


EXPLORE!

The Land of Lakes and Volcanoes

13 days

Nicaragua - Trip code NIC



The Land of Lakes and Volcanoes

Explore Nicaragua, the 'Land of Lakes and Volcanoes' on this two-week trip. We visit the colonial towns of Leon and Granada, the volcanic island of Ometepe and the Selva Negra Cloudforest. A particular highlight is staying with a local family and learning about coffee production. The trip ends with a relaxing stay at San Juan del Sur on the Pacific Coast.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Leon and Granada** - Discover these lively colonial cities, historic rivals for the title of capital city of Nicaragua
- ★ **San Ramon Homestay** - Spend the night with a local family and learn all about coffee production
- ★ **Ometepe Island** - Cross the impressive Lake Nicaragua to the laid-back volcanic island of Ometepe
- ★ **San Juan del Sur** - Relax on the Pacific Coast and perhaps try your hand at surfing

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.

TRIP PACE:

Moderate

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:

12 - 18

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 - Join tour Managua

Our tour starts in Managua. Often overlooked by tourists, the capital of Nicaragua has surprisingly much to offer to tourists, and Managua is the shopping town of the country, where you can find both local made arts and crafts as well as internationally renowned shops. Nicaragua has a very interesting political and cultural history and Managua is the centre of it all. Managua is a busy modern city with its own unorthodox charm has been largely rebuilt since the earthquake of 1972.



Accommodation: Mansión Teodolinda (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Tour of Managua and Leon's highlights

This morning we enjoy a short city tour of Managua by bus. On this orientation tour, you have the opportunity to explore both the historical and modern facets of the city and learn about the interesting events that took place not too long ago. Your first stop is Tiscapa Crater Lake where you have superb views over the entire city. On a clear day, you will be able to see several volcanoes which lay north of the city. You can't miss the large silhouette of the famous revolutionary General Sandino statue that stands overlooking the Tiscapa Crater Lake. Next, we head over to the old city, where you can see the National Palace, the Old Cathedral, the National Theatre and the President's house. We will end this tour at the Malecon, Managua's favourite hangout at the lake for a drink. Next we head to Leon Viejo. The first capital of Nicaragua, Leon Viejo (Old Leon) was founded in 1524 by the Spanish conquistadores, south of the Momotombo Volcano, and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The area suffered frequent volcanic activity, culminating in the earthquakes of 1594 and 1610. The city was not destroyed by the 1610 earthquake, but due to the damage caused to the infrastructure by the seismic activity, the settlers held a referendum and decided to relocate the city to its present location, about 20 miles to the west. The old city was gradually buried by the continuous expulsions of ash and volcanic stone coming from Momotombo, and by lake sediments. The ruins of Leon Viejo were discovered in 1967 and excavations began the following year revealing that the city had a similar layout to other cities in America at that time, laid out on a grid system with a main square located at its centre. Leon Viejo is the only 16th century colonial city in America that has never suffered city-planning alterations during its history. Finally, we head to Leon where we will have an orientation tour on arrival. We explore the rich cultural and political history of one of Nicaragua's oldest and most influential cities. Defined by its graceful Spanish colonial architecture and fascinating political history, you will soon discover why Leon is considered to be Nicaragua's historical, cultural, educational and religious capital. The best way to explore this captivating city is by foot, as much of its charm lies in the narrow colonial streets

and architecture, art galleries, museums, restaurants and cafes. Leon's history is fascinating, like no other town in Central America. The town was dismantled, moved, and rebuilt due to volcanic activities, ransacked (and reconstructed!) by pirates, it won and lost its struggle as the most important city in Nicaragua against Managua, and several presidents were assassinated here. It is the place where famous poets are buried, where the largest cathedral in Central America stands, and is a hotbed for revolutionaries due to the big university located in Leon. In this guided walking tour we will visit revolutionary murals, baroque and neoclassical churches and a surprisingly interesting museum of legends, arts and poetry. During the tour we will also explore numerous colonial buildings, among them Nicaragua's first university. After the tour, you can climb to the rooftop of Central America's largest cathedral, recently added to UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites, and enjoy astonishing views over the city and the surrounding Maribios Volcanic Chain.



Accommodation: Hotel Los Balcones (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Free time to explore Leon or optional Cerro Negro hike

Today is free to explore Leon at your own pace or to take an optional tour of Cerro Negro Volcano. There is also the option to take a tour to Isla Juan Venado.



Accommodation: Hotel Los Balcones (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Visit San Jacinto en route to San Ramon homestay

Today we leave Leon and visit the mud fields of San Jacinto, en route to San Ramon. San Jacinto is a little town about 20 kilometres northeast of Leon; behind the village is boiling mud holes connected to the Telica Volcano. These volcanic fields serve as breathing holes for the nearby volcanoes, forming the area like a Martian landscape (and, in turn, help to prevent future eruptions). It is extremely hot to walk around and see the holes, which differ in size and colour, where the mud is fiercely boiling. The mud sometimes throws little rocks in the air and steam is continuously emitted from the holes. Local people (especially children) are keen to sell you indigenous ceramics and handmade figurines, made fresh from the hot volcanic mud. Then we continue our journey to San Ramon. San Ramon is located in the mountainous north of the department of Matagalpa. The area was originally settled by the Sumo and Miskito people of the Atlantic Coast, as well as the Chontales Indians. We will spend the night in a homestay. This experience offers a unique chance to get to know more about the culture and daily life of the coffee producers and their communities. You can participate in the process of coffee making and share their everyday lives by learning how to cook local dishes or produce natural medicine, as well as enjoy various cultural events such as music, drama and crafts. You can also explore the local surroundings by taking a walk to the waterfall of Salto Yasica.



Accommodation: UCA San Ramon (or similar)



Simple Homestay



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 5 - Search for wildlife in the Selva Negra Cloudforest

Today we enjoy a cloudforest hike (approximately two hours) in Selva Negra or Black Forest. During the walk we will learn about the importance of the rainforest and discover the flora and fauna. Then we head south to Granada. Granada was founded in 1524 and is believed to be the second oldest city established in mainland Latin America by the Spanish conquest. During colonial times, Granada saw much unrest as the city was attacked several times by pirates. Nowadays Granada is characterised by bright-coloured Spanish-colonial architecture, visible throughout the city centre. The ambiance is very pleasant and there is a wide array of restaurants and bars, especially along the boulevard from the central park to the shores of Lake Nicaragua.



Accommodation: Paraiso Granada (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 6 - Discover Granada, optional boat trip on Lake Nicaragua

In the morning, we will enjoy a city tour of Granada. No visit to Granada is complete without a tour of the city's beautiful historic centre and there is no better way to visit it than on a traditional horse-drawn carriage. Founded by the Spanish in 1524, Granada is considered to be one of the oldest colonial cities in the Western hemisphere. On this guided walking/carriage tour we will explore the San Francisco Church and neighbouring San Francisco Convent built in 1529 (entry optional). We then continue onto the beautiful Merced Church where we will have the opportunity to climb to the top of the bell tower and take in the spectacular views over the city, Lake Nicaragua and the Mombacho Volcano. Finally, you will see a glimpse of Nicaraguan daily life at the local market. This afternoon is free. A recommended optional activity is a boat trip through Las Isletas on Lake Nicaragua. A boat trip through the Isletas of Granada is a great way to explore Lake Cocibolca, also known as Lake Nicaragua. Situated at the foot of the impressive Mombacho Volcano, the area we visit consists of around 360 small volcanic islands which were formed when the Mombacho Volcano erupted about 20,000 years ago. These small islands are inhabited by families who make their living from fishing, while other islands are host to extravagant villas owned by Nicaragua's rich and famous. Along the way, the tour guide will explain a lot about the many birds that can be seen here as well as recalling the history of the area.



Accommodation: Paraiso Granada (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Visit the Masaya Volcano and artisan market

Today we will explore the Masaya region including the Masaya Volcano and artisan market. The Masaya Volcano is still active and is the only volcano in the western hemisphere where it is possible to drive to the rim and see the smoking crater. If we are lucky, we might encounter the extremely rare green parakeets which, strangely, call the volcano home. After visiting the volcano we will visit Masaya's famous artisan market. In this very diverse market it is possible to find many unique Nicaraguan products. Then we will have lunch in the village of Catarina from where we can enjoy spectacular views over the enormous crater lake of Apoyo which is said to have the clearest water in Central America. After lunch, there will be some time to explore the village. Our last stop today is

San Juan de Oriente, one of the so called 'Pueblos Blancos' where we will see its white colonial architecture. We will also learn about the delicate process of the traditional art form of ceramics and visit the house of a local family.



Accommodation: Paraiso Granada (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 8 - Travel to Ometepe Island

Today, we transfer to the port of San Jorge, at the shores of Lake Nicaragua or Cocibolca as the locals call it, and take the ferry to Isla de Ometepe. The island of Ometepe is situated in one of the world's largest fresh water lakes, Lake Nicaragua. The two volcanoes on the island, Concepcion and Maderas, offer stunning views when approaching Ometepe by boat from the mainland. Both of the volcanoes have their own climate and unique vegetation and hiking either of them is a great way to enjoy spectacular views of the surroundings. We will take a short walk in the Charco Verde Natural Reserve, a protected area located between Ometepe's two volcanoes. The area consists of a lagoon, a beach, and a forest. The reserve is named Charco Verde (Green Puddle) due to the green colour of the lagoon. Many birds find shelter in this part of the island so birding enthusiasts should keep an eye out. The walk is not strenuous and leads up a hill, from where we will have nice views on the surroundings.



Accommodation: Playa Venecia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Free day for optional walks

Today is a free day. There are several optionals available including a classic tour of the island, a Sam Ramon Waterfall walk or hiking up the Maderas or Concepcion Volcanoes.



Accommodation: Playa Venecia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Travel to San Juan del Sur on the Pacific Coast

Today, we take the ferry back to the mainland and continue to San Juan del Sur, in the southwest. San Juan del Sur is one of the most popular destinations in Nicaragua. It used to be a quiet fishing village and has now emerged into one of the country's leading coast

destinations, but has still maintained its charm and unique culture. The beaches are great for surfing almost all year long; also snorkelling or sailing trips are offered along the coast.



Accommodation: Hotel Colonial (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Optional surfing lesson or turtle nesting tour (in season)

Today is a free day. You can choose to simply relax or perhaps try your hand at surfing. La Flor Beach is a must to witness mass arrivals of turtles (during the season, August-January). The beach is a protected wildlife reserve because of the massive arrivals of Olive Ridley turtles that take place every year between August and January. Thousands of turtles arrive during certain nights to lay eggs at this one specific beach. About 50 days later, thousands of eggs hatch and the baby turtles try to make their way to the ocean.



Accommodation: Hotel Colonial (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Return to the capital, Managua

Today we return back to the capital, Managua.



Accommodation: Mansión Teodolinda (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Tour ends Managua

Our tour ends this morning in Managua.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 12
Lunch: 3
Dinner: 1



Transport

Bus
Boat
Ferry



Trip staff

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



Accommodation

1 nights simple homestay
9 nights standard hotel
2 nights simple hotel

Trip information

Country information

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

Leon - Walk on Cerro Negro costs US\$ 35 pp; Juan Venado Excursion US\$ 70 pp for 2-3; US\$ 50 pp for 4 or more Granada - Las Isletas boat trip US\$25; Las Isletas kayak US\$35 Ometepe - Ometepe Classic tour inc. lunch : US\$ 95 pp 2-3; US\$ 85 pp for 4 and US\$75pp for 8 +; San Ramón hike: US\$ 85 pp (2-3 pers), US\$75 pp (4-7 pers) US\$65 pp (8 pers +) ; Maderas hike inc. lunch: US\$ 80 pp (2-5 pers); US\$ 70 pp (6-9 pers) ; Concepcion hike inc. lunch: US\$ 75 pp (2-5 pers); US\$ 60 pp (6-9 pers) ; Ometepe Nature tour US\$55pp (2-5 pers), US\$50pp (6-9 pers) lunch not included. San Juan del Sur - Surf Lessons 45 US\$pp, minimum 3 people (two hours of instructions, and use of the board for the day); Canopy tour US\$ 40 pp; Turtle watching (Aug - January only) US\$ 60 pp

Clothing

Around Managua you will need loose-fitting comfortable, hot-weather clothes (100% cotton is recommended). Don't forget your swimming costume.

Footwear

Lightweight walking boots plus comfortable trainers and sandals for travelling and relaxing. Water sandals may be useful.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage (suitcase or holdall) and a daypack.

Equipment

A water bottle, sunhat, sunscreen and insect repellent. Binoculars are useful for bird watching. Also bring a torch and a beach towel. If keen, we suggest you bring your own snorkelling gear. An umbrella and waterproofs can be useful in short downpours.

Tipping

Explore leader

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

Local crew

Local Crew: Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised 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 Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly, you should allow US\$ 50 for tipping. 10% is expected and often added in restaurants.

International Departure Taxes

There is an entry tax to Nicaragua of US\$10

Country Information

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.

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

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat, 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

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.

Non refundable permits

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.
