

# DOS PUEBLOS

New York–Tipitapa  
Sister City Project

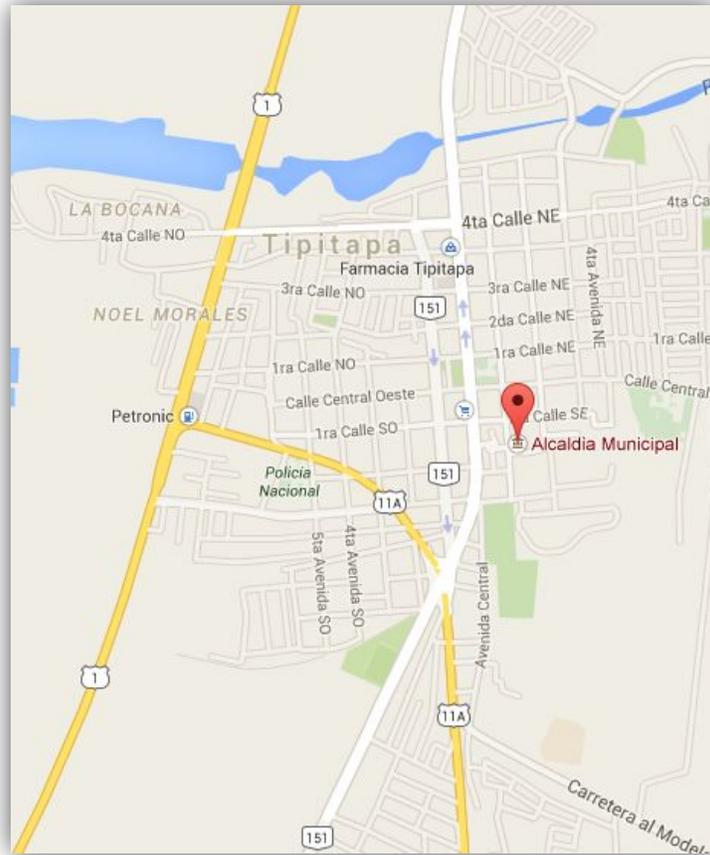
## 2017 YOUTH DELEGATION HANDBOOK



# YOUTH DELEGATION

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## 2017 YOUTH DELEGATION HANDBOOK

### Preparing for Your Trip

#### A NOTE ON THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook is designed to prepare you for the 2017 Youth Delegation trip in Tipitapa, Nicaragua. The purpose of this trip is to provide a unique experience in a developing country with a long history of relations with the U.S. and to support community-led initiatives to improve social conditions in Tipitapa, Nicaragua. We are a partnership: our Nicaraguan community organizers run projects on the ground while our New York team provides financial support and technical assistance. This trip will allow us to further develop ways we can work collaboratively with a common commitment to economic justice and sustainable development.

#### INTRODUCTION

As a young delegate you will be immersed in the beauty of the Nicaraguan people and culture while engaging with the everyday realities and challenges of a developing country. Because our work takes place in communities without much infrastructure, please be prepared to travel on some unpaved dirt roads, use latrines, and eat locally grown foods prepared by community members. This experience gives us the opportunity to understand our global connection with the people of Nicaragua.

#### PACKING GUIDE

In general, pack no more than you can carry on. We ask all our travelers, if possible, to donate their checked luggage space so that we may take school supplies for our libraries. Please let us know if you can give up your space so that we may give you 50lbs of supplies to check in.

#### TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

- Passport (bring a photocopy in case of loss)
- \$10 Visa fee in U.S. cash per person payable upon arrival in Nicaragua (as of Nov 2015). This fee can change at any moment so come prepared with extra cash.
- Prescription medicine—please let Susan, Ann, or Lupe know if you need assistance
- Mosquito net

#### CLOTHING (AS ESTIMATED FOR A 10 DAY TRIP)

- 2 pairs of jeans or light weight pants
- 2-3 shirts (long sleeve)
- 4-5 T-shirts/blouses
- Cotton socks/underwear

- Flip-flops or sandals for casual walking
- 2-3 pairs of shorts (not too short)
- Swimsuit
- Sturdy sneakers or shoes for community work & working gloves

### PERSONAL EFFECTS

- Water bottle (please write your name on it)
- Hat(s) and /or Bandana(s) for sun
- Liquid soap for showering (there will be regular soap at hotel)
- Sunscreen, at least 30SPF
- Toiletries /sanitary products
- Hand sanitizer/hand wipes
- Insect repellent (w/ 30%+ DEET)—bring lots!
- Eyeglasses or contact lenses/ case/ solution
- DON'T FORGET MOSQUITO NET

### OPTIONAL

- Journal and pens
- Flashlight/headlamp with extra batteries
- Camera with batteries
- Laptop or iPad - wifi available at hotels
- Sunglasses
- Ear Plugs/ Eye mask for sleeping

### CAMERAS, ELECTRONICS, CELL PHONES, JEWELRY, ETC.

We take precautions to assure that your belongings are well protected. However, we ask you to be aware of the wealth that you represent and to pack simply. Please do not bring anything of significant value. Dos Pueblos cannot take responsibility for any lost or stolen personal items.

### SPENDING MONEY

You may want to bring around \$50-\$75 to spend on snacks, water, etc. (Not including souvenirs). Please have ready the \$10 visa entry fee in CASH to pass through the Managua Sandino airport. Cash is best for your spending money. Many establishments will accept U.S. currency, although smaller shops will generally not be able to change anything larger than a \$10 bill. **All U.S. dollar bills should be in good condition—not ripped, torn or marked.** Local currency (Córdobas) is accepted in just about any condition. If you want to change dollars into local currency, our delegate from Texas, Dr. Paul Martin will have Córdobas for exchange when we arrive at the hotel after our flight. We can also direct you to a cash machine or bank if you need additional córdobas during the trip.

### PERSONAL SNACKS

Pack some snack foods such as granola bars, trail mix, cookies, etc. (in fact we recommend it to help you through the flights and also if you feel like you need to eat something familiar during the trip). All food needs to be stored in sealed plastic containers.

## **WATER**

The water where we are staying is purified and safe to drink. It is "city" water and seems to be chlorinated—but proceed at your own risk. When we're out in the field, we only drink bottled water. You will be offered bottled sodas as refreshments, which is safe.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS**

The Best Western/Las Mercedes across from the hotel is a good place to stay if you arrive/leave early. The hotel where we will be based in is in Nindirí about 20 minutes from Tipitapa: Estancia Victoriana, Km. 26 Carretera Masaya de la gasolinera puma Nindirí, 200 mts al sur, *Contact: front desk Telephone: (505) 2522-6156, Cel. 88836379 email:gerencia@estanciavictoriana.com*

## **CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES**

Dos Pueblos' delegates have a responsibility to be sensitive to local habits and customs, and to behave in an appropriate and respectful manner in the local communities. We will work, play, and eat together and we are constantly reminded that we have much to learn from each other, across cultural and economic divides. Some things to keep in mind:

## **DAILY SCHEDULES**

People tend to get up very early and may go to bed early as well. We should be conscious of these routines.

## **PUNCTUALITY**

In rural areas, the infrastructure is generally non-existent, making it difficult for local people to rely on communication and transportation systems or to live by strict schedules. For North Americans, this can be frustrating. Of course, we will try to stick to our trip agenda as much as possible, but we ask you to be flexible and patient in case of necessary changes.

## **PHOTOS**

Please be conscious of people's comfort level before taking their picture. It is always better to ask permission first.

## **RELIGION**

You will not be expected to participate in any religious ceremonies that might compromise your personal beliefs. However, our intention is to demonstrate an open and respectful spirit. On occasion, a community religious leader will welcome us with prayer and song—you have the option to participate or remain quiet during the service.

## **FOOD**

You will be provided with all your meals throughout the day. Please be careful what you eat on your own. Make sure snacks are store packaged and water purchases are properly sealed to ensure safety. If you buy fresh fruit, it is safest to choose fruit with a peel—bananas, oranges, melons, etc. Never eat from street stalls or from people selling food as we cannot confirm their hygienic preparation.

## **INCLUSION**

While it's easy to gravitate towards people in your group, the goal of this Dos Pueblos trip is to stretch ourselves and our capacity to meet new friends, especially those from Nicaragua. Take time to get to know your entire group, the staff at the hotel, our community volunteers, the children and their parents.

## **LANGUAGE**

You are not required to know Spanish to participate in a Dos Pueblos trip. However, it certainly adds to the richness of your experience. We will have interpreters available should you want to strike up a conversation.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **FOR ADULT CHAPERONES**

Thank you for coming along on this wonderful journey. Adult partnership is essential to a successful trip! Following are some guidelines that will help you as a chaperone to our delegates.

- Ensure the health and safety of all delegates.
- Communicate any delegate's needs to trip leaders if you can't help them.
- Serve as the "adult voice" and provide guidance to all youth delegates at all times.
- Participate in workshops and activities (including evening social activities).
- Assist in getting delegates to activities on time.
- Report any emergencies to leaders
- Model good behavior at all times.
- Provide additional assistance when needed
- Have fun!

## **GUIDELINES**

- Never go out for a run or walk alone while in Nicaragua. You are part of a group.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Hydrate! Drink plenty of water (from approved sources).
- Only consume food and beverages that have been commercially packaged or have been approved by trip leaders. Avoid ice.
- Be conscious of the sun and heat. Apply sunblock often and wear a hat or bandana.
- Use insect repellent everyday to protect you from local outbreaks carried by mosquitoes.
- Proceed with caution when handling any animals, including dogs.

- Report any illness or injury immediately to your trip leader(s)!

**MEDICAL SITUATIONS AND EMERGENCIES:**

**IMMUNIZATIONS**

Volunteers are strongly encouraged to seek the advice of a physician or an expert in the field of travel medicine in preparation for the trip (especially regarding recommended immunizations). The Center for Disease Control website ([www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)) has information regarding recommended immunizations and medications for short-term travel to regions such as Central America and the Caribbean.

**SERIOUS MEDICAL PROBLEMS**

Travel medical insurance is mandatory on this trip. Should you develop a major medical problem or a serious injury, we will immediately take you to the nearest hospital and/or evacuate you to a properly equipped medical facility.

**EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION**

During the day, delegates will typically not have access to phones or email while they are engaged in our programs. The best way to contact a youth delegate in the event of an emergency is through traveling board members Susan Light +1 917-903-3977, or Ann Garvin 011-505-84328598. You may also call Lupe Ramsey Executive Director at the Dos Pueblos office, 917-776-4246.

**DOS PUEBLOS POLICIES**

Dos Pueblos and the communities in Tipitapa are grateful for your interest and participation in our programs. We request that you follow the rules outlined in order to ensure the best possible trip experience, to keep our staff and all volunteers safe, and to preserve our work and relations within the communities where we work.

**INAPPROPRIATE RELATIONSHIPS**

Sexual or similarly inappropriate contact between delegates and members of the local community is strictly prohibited.

**DRUGS**

The use of illegal drugs will not be tolerated. Individuals found to be using or in possession of illegal drugs will be asked to leave the group immediately. Fees associated with returning home early will be charged to the individual.

**ALCOHOL**

The Dos Pueblos experience is about building relationships and trust within a community. Therefore, the use of alcohol is prohibited during our community visits in Tipitapa. Excessive alcohol use creates a negative image of our delegates, undermines the intentions of our work, and may contribute to

undesirable behavior in the communities. After our time in the communities, we strongly encourage moderation and discretion if you do choose to consume alcohol during dinner. For anyone under 21, there is a NO alcohol policy at all times.

### **GIFT GIVING**

It is normal to want to pass gifts along to new friends in the local community. Nonetheless, we strongly discourage individual gift-giving because it can create divisions in the community at large. Our primary purpose is to provide sustainable health and education programs that will benefit the entire community. Gift-giving between individuals can create tension between the “haves” and the “have-nots.” A simple guide is not to give anything away that cannot be given back to you. A story, a song, a game... are things that can be shared. If you give a gift that cannot be re-paid, you are reminding the community of the difference between our material wealth rather than celebrating our commonalities.

### **PROBLEMS ON THE DAY OF TRAVEL**

- *What you should do if you miss your flight*

Contact the airline! You must try to contact the airline before the scheduled departure time. If you call them after the departure time, they may not make arrangements to help you and/or may not be required to reimburse you. Once you have spoken with the airline, please contact Susan Light, +1 917-903-3977. We will do our best to assist you.

- *What you should do if your flight is delayed or you miss your connecting flight*

Talk with the agents at the airline to see what arrangements they can make to accommodate you and/or rebook your flight. When you have made your new arrangements, please contact Susan Light so that we may arrange airport pick up in Managua.



## Vaccines and Medicines

Prepare travelers to Nicaragua with recommendations for vaccines and medications.

	Recommendations	Transmission	Guidance
Routine vaccines	Recommended for all travelers	varied	<a href="#">Immunization schedules</a>
<a href="#">Hepatitis A</a>	Recommended for most travelers, including those with "standard" itineraries and accommodations	Fecal-oral route (contaminated food and water) Person-to-person contact	<a href="#">Hepatitis A</a> (Yellow Book) <a href="#">Dosing info</a>
<a href="#">Hepatitis B</a>	Consider for most travelers; recommended for those who might be exposed to blood or other body fluids, have sexual contact with the local population, or be exposed through medical treatment (e.g., for an accident).	Contact with blood and other body fluids: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unprotected sex</li> <li>• Injection drug use</li> <li>• Contaminated transfusions</li> <li>• Exposure to human blood</li> <li>• Contaminated tattoo and piercing equipment</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Hepatitis B</a> (Yellow Book) <a href="#">Dosing info</a>
<a href="#">Malaria</a>	Antimalarials recommended for travelers to <a href="#">malaria risk areas in Nicaragua</a>	Bite of infected mosquito (female <i>Anopheles</i> )	<a href="#">Malaria</a> (Yellow Book) <a href="#">Considerations when choosing a drug for malaria prophylaxis</a> (Yellow Book)
<a href="#">Rabies</a>	Recommended for the following groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travelers involved in outdoor and other activities that might bring them into direct contact with dogs, bats, and other mammals (such as campers, hikers, bikers, adventure travelers, and cavers).</li> <li>• Those with occupational risks (such as veterinarians, wildlife professionals, researchers).</li> <li>• Long-term travelers and expatriates.</li> <li>• Children, because they are considered at higher risk; consider lower threshold for vaccination.</li> </ul>	Mammal bites (including dogs, bats, other carnivores)	<a href="#">Rabies</a> (Yellow Book)
<a href="#">Typhoid</a>	Recommended for most travelers, especially those who are staying with friends or relatives; visiting smaller cities, villages, or rural areas where exposure might occur through food or water; or prone to "adventurous eating"	Fecal-oral route (contaminated food and water)	<a href="#">Typhoid</a> (Yellow Book) <a href="#">Dosing info</a> (Yellow Book)

## Timeline of the History of the United States and Nicaragua

**1522** - Spanish explorer Gil Gonzalez de Avila names Nicaragua after a local Indian chief, Nicarao.

**17th-18th centuries** - British plunder and extend their influence over the inhabitants of Nicaragua's Caribbean coast.

**1821** - Nicaragua becomes independent from Spain, but is incorporated into the Mexican empire.

**1823** - Nicaragua becomes part of the United Provinces of Central America: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

### **Independence**

**1838** - Nicaragua becomes fully independent.

**1860** - British cede control over the country's Caribbean coast to Nicaragua.

**1893** - General Jose Santos Zelaya, a Liberal, seizes power and establishes dictatorship.

**1909** - US troops help depose Zelaya.

**1912-25** - US establishes military bases.

**1927-33** - Guerrillas campaign against US military presence. Announced plan for independence of all of Latin America.

**1934** - Sandino assassinated on the orders of the National Guard commander, General Anastasio Somoza Garcia.

### **Somoza family dictatorship**

**1937** - General Somoza elected president, heralding the start of a 44-year-long dictatorship by his family.

**1956** - General Somoza assassinated, but is succeeded as president by his son, Luis Somoza Debayle.

**1961** - Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) founded.

**1967** - Luis Somoza dies and is succeeded as president by his brother, Anastasio Somoza.

**1972** - Managua is devastated by an earthquake that kills between 5,000 and 10,000 people.

**1978** - Assassination of the leader of the opposition Democratic Liberation Union, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, triggers general strike and brings together moderates and the FSLN in a united front to oust Somoza.

### **Sandinista revolution and US subversion**

**1979** - FSLN military offensive ends with the ouster of Somoza.

**1980** - Somoza assassinated in Paraguay; FSLN government led by Daniel Ortega nationalizes and turns into cooperatives lands held by the Somoza family.

**1982** - US-sponsored attacks by Contra rebels based in Honduras begin; state of emergency declared.

**1984** - Daniel Ortega elected president; US mines Nicaraguan harbors and is condemned by the World Court for doing so.

**1987-88** - Nicaraguan leadership signs peace agreement and holds talks with Contra; hurricane leaves 180,000 homeless.

### **Post-Sandinista era**

**1990** - US-backed centre-right National Opposition Union defeats FSLN in elections; Violeta Chamorro becomes president.

## Nicaragua Human Development Report 2015 *(abridged)*



The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development:

- A) a long and healthy life (life expectancy)
- B) access to knowledge (years of education/ expected years of schooling for children of school-entry age)
- C) a decent standard of living (Gross National Income).

For cross-country comparability, the HDI is based primarily on international data from the United Nations Population Division, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics and the World Bank.

### Nicaragua's HDI value and rank

Nicaragua's HDI value in 2014 was 0.631—**Medium Human Development**  
Country rank: **125 out of 188 countries** and territories.

Between 1980 and 2014, Nicaragua's HDI value increased from 0.478 to 0.631, an increase of 32.1% or an average annual increase of about 0.82%.

### Table A:

Between 1980- 2014, life expectancy at birth **increased by 16.4 years**

Mean years of schooling **increased by 2.8 years**

Expected years of schooling **increased by 3.6 years**

Nicaragua's GNI per capita **increased by about 4.6%**

**Table A: Nicaragua's HDI trends based on consistent time series data and new goalposts**

	Life expectancy at birth	Expected years of schooling	Mean years of schooling	GNI per capita (2011 PPP\$)	HDI value
1980	58.5	7.9	3.2	4,259	0.478
1985	60.7	7.4	3.6	3,935	0.484
1990	64.2	7.6	4.1	2,971	0.495
1995	67.4	8.8	4.6	2,655	0.523
2000	69.7	10.0	5.1	3,288	0.565
2005	71.9	10.9	5.5	3,656	0.595
2010	73.7	11.5	6.0	3,856	0.619
2011	74.0	11.5	6.0	4,046	0.623
2012	74.3	11.5	6.0	4,172	0.625
2013	74.6	11.5	6.0	4,307	0.628
2014	74.9	11.5	6.0	4,457	0.631

Figure 1 below shows the contribution of each component index to Nicaragua's HDI since 1980.

\*Complete report can be found online: <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/NIC.pdf>

## CIA Country Factbook: Nicaragua

### Introduction: NICARAGUA

#### Background:

The Pacific coast of Nicaragua was settled as a Spanish colony from Panama in the early 16th century. Independence from Spain was declared in 1821 and the country became an independent republic in 1838. Britain occupied the Caribbean Coast in the first half of the 19th century, but gradually ceded control of the region in subsequent decades. Violent opposition to governmental manipulation and corruption spread to all classes by 1978 and resulted in a short-lived civil war that brought the Marxist Sandinista guerrillas to power in 1979. Nicaraguan aid to leftist rebels in El Salvador prompted the US to sponsor anti-Sandinista contra guerrillas through much of the 1980s. After losing free and fair elections in 1990, 1996, and 2001, former Sandinista President Daniel ORTEGA Saavedra was elected president in 2006 and reelected in 2011. The 2008 municipal elections, 2010 regional elections, 2011 presidential election, 2012 municipal elections, and 2013 regional elections were marred by widespread irregularities. Nicaragua's infrastructure and economy - hard hit by the earlier civil war and by Hurricane Mitch in 1998 - are slowly being rebuilt, but democratic institutions have been weakened under the ORTEGA administration.

### Geography: NICARAGUA

#### Location:

Central America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Costa Rica and Honduras

#### Geographic coordinates:

13 00 N, 85 00 W

#### Area:

**total:** 130,370 sq km

**land:** 119,990 sq km

**water:** 10,380 sq km

#### Climate:

tropical in lowlands, cooler in highlands

#### Environment - current issues:

deforestation; soil erosion; water pollution

### People and Society: NICARAGUA

#### Nationality:

**noun:** Nicaraguan(s)                      **adjective:** Nicaraguan

#### Ethnic groups:

mestizo (mixed Amerindian and white) 69%, white 17%, black 9%, Amerindian 5%

#### Languages:

Spanish (official) 95.3%, Miskito 2.2%, Mestizo of the Caribbean coast 2%, other 0.5%

**note:** English and indigenous languages found on the Caribbean coast (2005 est.)

#### Religions:

Roman Catholic 58.5%, Protestant 23.2% (Evangelical 21.6%, Moravian 1.6%), Jehovah's Witnesses 0.9%, other 1.6%, none 15.7% (2005 est.)

**Demographic profile:**

Despite being one of the poorest countries in Latin America, Nicaragua has improved its access to potable water and sanitation and has ameliorated its life expectancy, infant and child mortality, and immunization rates. However, income distribution is very uneven, and the poor, agriculturalists, and indigenous people continue to have less access to healthcare services. Nicaragua's total fertility rate has fallen from around 6 children per woman in 1980 to just above replacement level today, but the high birth rate among adolescents perpetuates a cycle of poverty and low educational attainment.

**Population:**

5,907,881 (July 2015 est.)

**Population growth rate:**

1% (2015 est.)

**Birth rate:**

18.03 births/1,000 population (2015 est.)

**Death rate:**

5.08 deaths/1,000 population (2015)

**Urbanization:**

**urban population:** 58.8% of total population (2015)

**rate of urbanization:** 1.96% annual change (2010-15 est.)

**Major urban areas - population:** MANAGUA (capital) 956,000 (2015)

**Maternal mortality rate:**

150 deaths/100,000 live births (2015 est.)

**Infant mortality rate:**

**total:** 19.65 deaths/1,000 live births

**Life expectancy at birth:**

**total population:** 72.98 years

**Total fertility rate:**

1.94 children born/woman (2015 est.)

**Contraceptive prevalence rate:**

80.4% (2011/12)

**Health expenditures:**

8.4% of GDP (2013)

**Physicians density:**

0.9 physicians/1,000 population (2014)

**Drinking water source:**

**improved:**

urban: 99.3% of population

rural: 69.4% of population

total: 87% of population

**Sanitation facility access:**

**improved:**

urban: 76.5% of population

rural: 55.7% of population

total: 67.9% of population

**HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:**

0.27% (2014 est.)

**people living with HIV/AIDS:** 10,000 (2014 est.)

**HIV/AIDS - deaths:** 400 (2014 est.)

**Major infectious diseases:**

**degree of risk:** high

**food or waterborne diseases:** bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever

**vectorborne disease:** dengue fever and malaria (2013)

**Obesity - adult prevalence rate:**

15.5% (2014)

**Children > 5 years old underweight:**

5.7% (2007)

**Education expenditures:**

4.4% of GDP (2010)

**Literacy:** (age 15 and over can read and write)

**total population:** 82.8%

**male:** 82.4%                    **female:** 83.2% (2015 est.)

**Child labor - children ages 5-14:**

**total number:** 223,992                    **percentage:** 14%

**note:** data represents children ages 5-17 (2005 est.)

**Government :: NICARAGUA**

**Government type:**

republic

**Capital:**

**name:** Managua

**time difference:** UTC-6 (1 hour behind Washington, DC, during Standard Time)

**Independence:**

15 September 1821 (from Spain)

**National holiday:**

Independence Day, 15 September (1821)

**Constitution:**

several previous; latest adopted 19 November 1986, effective 9 January 1987; amended several times, last in 2014 (2015)

**Legal system:**

civil law system; Supreme Court may review administrative acts

**Citizenship:**

**citizenship by birth:** yes

**citizenship by descent:** yes

**dual citizenship recognized:** no, except in cases where bilateral agreements exist

**Suffrage:**

16 years of age; universal

**Economy : NICARAGUA**

**overview:**

Nicaragua, the poorest country in Central America and the second poorest in the Western Hemisphere, has widespread underemployment and poverty. The Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) has been in effect since April 2006 and has expanded export opportunities for many agricultural and manufactured goods. Textiles and agriculture combined account for nearly 50% of Nicaragua's exports. In 2013, the government granted a 50-year concession to a newly formed Chinese-run company to finance and build an inter-oceanic canal and related projects, at an estimated cost of \$50 billion. The economy grew 4.7% in 2014, despite a steep decline in coffee export revenues due to a coffee rust fungus.

**GDP (purchasing power parity):**

\$29.69 billion (2014 est.)

**GDP - per capita (PPP):**

\$4,800 usd (2014 est.)

**GDP - composition, by sector of origin:**

**agriculture:** 18.5%

**industry:** 23.2%

**services:** 58.3% (2014 est.)

**Labor force:**

2.946 million (2014 est.)

**Unemployment rate:**

6% (2014 est.)

**note:** underemployment was 46.5% in 2008

**Population below poverty line:**

42.5% (2009 est.)

**Budget:**

**revenues:** \$3.009 billion

**expenditures:** \$3.262 billion (2014 est.)

**Taxes and other revenues:**

25.5% of GDP (2014 est.)

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):**

6% (2014 est.)

**Exports - partners:**

US 52.3%, Mexico 11.8%, Venezuela 6.8%, Canada 5.9% (2014)

**Exports - commodities:**

coffee, beef, gold, sugar, peanuts, shrimp and lobster, tobacco, cigars, automobile wiring harnesses, textiles, apparel, cotton

**Imports - partners:**

US 16.2%, Venezuela 15.9%, Mexico 13.6%, China 9.1%, Guatemala 8.2%, Costa Rica 8%, El Salvador 5.4% (2014)

**Exchange rates:**

cordobas (NIO) per US dollar - 26.01 (2014 est.)

**Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/nu.html>**

## Nicaragua in the News

### **Nicaragua Canal: A Giant Project with Huge Environmental Costs** (abridged)

*Chris Kraul 05 MAY 2015*



In a scenic lagoon on Nicaragua’s Brito River, less than a mile from the Pacific Ocean, school teacher Jorge Lopez and a friend were fishing on a recent morning. He gestured toward a bend in the narrow river, canopied with arching trees draped in moss, and said, “There are howler monkeys, crocodiles, and parrots all along this waterway. It would be a shame to lose all this.”

What threatens this tranquil spot and many others in Nicaragua is a controversial and wildly ambitious project to build a [173-mile canal](#) — more than three times the length of the Panama Canal — that would connect the Pacific and Atlantic oceans via the Caribbean Sea. The \$50 billion canal project is the brainchild of Chinese businessman Wang Jing and has the full support of the Nicaraguan government, which claims that the canal will give a huge boost to the country’s economy, the [second poorest](#) in the Western Hemisphere after Haiti.

Many Nicaraguans back the canal project, and preliminary work has already begun — even before the completion of an environmental impact assessment. But other Nicaraguans, as well as local and international scientists, say the canal would be an environmental catastrophe, threatening a host of ecosystems across the country. They say it would also displace tens of thousands of Nicaraguans, including indigenous people whose territories the canal would cross.

The impacts would begin near Lopez’s fishing spot, where a breakwater and giant port — capable of docking supertankers and immense cargo ships carrying 25,000 containers — are planned as the western terminus of the canal. The port infrastructure along Nicaragua’s Pacific

coast would threaten mangrove swamps and sea turtle nesting beaches. Then, passing through the remote, hilly coastal region where Lopez fished, the canal, carved to a depth of nearly 100 feet, would continue 16 miles through agricultural land to [Lake Nicaragua](#), Central America's largest body of freshwater.

Scientists say the damage to Lake Nicaragua could be enormous. One third of the canal's total length would traverse the lake, whose average bottom of 40 feet would have to be dredged to nearly twice that depth. The digging in the lake and over the rest of the canal's proposed route would generate an almost unfathomable quantity of mud and dredging spoils — enough to cover the entire state of Connecticut with one foot of dirt. Silt would cloud the lake's water column, threatening indigenous fish and other species, scientists warn, and invasive species could make their way into the lake along the canal from the Pacific and the Caribbean.

From Lake Nicaragua, the canal would head east, slicing through remote wetlands, nature reserves, and forests, many of them now inaccessible by road. The canal and related infrastructure could easily be several miles wide, and roads and construction camps would open up large areas of wilderness inhabited by indigenous people, thousands of whom would have to relocate.

On the Caribbean side, the traffic generated by supertankers and cargo ships could threaten sensitive marine ecosystems, including a 250-square-mile [Colombian biosphere reserve](#) that includes the second-largest coral reef system in the Caribbean. And the canal would cut in two the so-called [Mesoamerican Biological Corridor](#), a loose network of reserves and other lands that stretches from southern Mexico to Panama and is used by animal species such as jaguars to traverse Central America.

“In our view, this canal would create an environmental disaster in Nicaragua and beyond,” Jorge Huete-Pérez, a biology professor and foreign secretary of the Nicaraguan Academy of Sciences, wrote earlier this year in a joint commentary with a German colleague in *Nature*. “The excavation of hundreds of kilometers from coast-to-coast will destroy around 400,000 hectares of rainforests and wetlands. The accompanying development could imperil surrounding ecosystems.” (full article found on link )

[http://e360.yale.edu/feature/nicaragua\\_canal\\_a\\_giant\\_project\\_with\\_huge\\_environmental\\_costs/2871/](http://e360.yale.edu/feature/nicaragua_canal_a_giant_project_with_huge_environmental_costs/2871/)

**Nicaragua News Bulletin (January 12, 2016)** – Abridged from <http://www.nicanet.org/>

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### **1. Analysts discuss nine years of Daniel Ortega’s second presidency**

On Jan. 10, President Daniel Ortega marked the ninth anniversary of his inauguration as president in 2007. He also served as coordinator of the Reconstruction Junta from 1979 to 1984 and as president from 1984 to 1990. Analysts pointed to important advances that the country has made since 2007. Economist Nestor Avendano told *Informe Pastran*, “With nine years in power, the most outstanding aspect of the presidency of Comandante Daniel Ortega is the guarantee of macroeconomic stability which has attracted an important flow of foreign investment and sustained economic growth. But it is still insufficient to reduce underemployment and poverty. The advances have been, to a large degree, thanks to the dialogue between the government and the business community and the workers.” Avendano went on to say, “In the area of social policies, what stands out is the shift from assistance to the poor to more human development with an increase in basic social services. Nevertheless, problems of income inequality, underemployment and informal labor persist.”  
*(Informe Pastran, Jan. 11; Radio La Primerisima, Jan. 10)*

### **2. Electoral Tribunal to announce election schedule in March**

Edwin Castro, head of the Sandinista bench in the National Assembly, said on Jan. 11 that the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) would announce the schedule for the general elections of November of this year in March. Voters will elect the president, vice-president, and members of the National Assembly and the Central American Parliament. In past elections the CSE has issued the call for elections in November of the year before the vote so expectations have been rising about the 2016 schedule for registration of candidates, etc. On Jan. 5, Wilber Lopez, head of the Independent Liberal Party (PLI) bench, had said, “It is very important that the Supreme Electoral Council immediately release the electoral calendar. We need [the CSE] to convene the political parties and lay out the rules.”

Members of the opposition continued to express their desire for unity. Eduardo Montealegre, leader of the PLI who has run for president in the past, said that he would not be a candidate this time. He said, “I’m not going to run. I’m just going to put in my grain of sand to help; I’m not going to get in the way. What we are doing is seeking out all those who will join us, those who are truly in opposition to the Sandinista Front.” Noel Vidaurre has said that he will spend January seeing unity but if that is not achieved he will announce his candidacy for the presidency running for the Constitutional Liberal Party (PLC), although in the past he has run as a Conservative. Vidaurre said that he has met numerous times with Montealegre attempting to achieve unity between the PLC and PLI but the efforts have so far come to naught. And National Assembly Deputy Wilfredo Navarro revealed that a group of dissidents from the PLC and PLI are forming still another Liberal Party that will be known as the Independent Constitutional Liberal Party. Radio broadcaster Fabio Gadea, who ran as the opposition candidate for president in 2011, said that in spite of his advanced age (he is over 80 years old), he is having medical check ups and would run if asked: “Of course, even if I would die in the effort. If we had guarantees I would accept.” He added that the CSE must invite sufficient national and international observers who would visit the polling stations and make sure voters had their registration cards.

Members of the Nicaraguan Resistance Party (PRN), one wing of the former contras, said that they were ready to continue in alliance with the Sandinista Party (FSLN) in the coming elections. Julio Cesar Blandon, known as Comandante Kaliman in the 1980s, told *El Nuevo Diario* that the leadership of his party based its decision on the good management of the Sandinista government. He said that the PRN would negotiate with the FSLN a certain

number of slots on the list of candidates for the National Assembly and other offices and even said that the party would like to see one of its leaders as the Sandinista candidate for vice-president.

On Jan. 11, the Civic Electoral Tribunal (TEC), organized by the non-governmental organization Hagamos Democracia [which has received so-called “democracy promotion” funding from the US government], announced the names of four people who will run for president and 136 for the National Assembly in primary elections funded by the group. The four are Erick Cabezas for the Conservative Party, Moises Hassan for the Historic PLI and Citizen Action Party, Claudia Cuadra for the Christian Socialist Party, and independent Luis Adolfo Medal. (*Informe Pastran, Jan. 5, 6, 7, 8, 11; La Prensa, Jan. 10, 11; El Nuevo Diario, Jan. 12*)

### **3. Energy news: Renewables on the rise; more investment in renewables; electricity losses**

The Ministry of Energy & Mines announced on Jan. 11 that, at certain times of day, up to 65% of Nicaragua’s energy needs are being met by renewable energy. For example, on Jan. 11, between 8 and 11:00am, only 35% of the energy being used in the country was produced from petroleum while 30% came from wind power, 14.5% geothermal, 10%, biomass, and 10% hydroelectric. But, by 2:00pm, the percentage provided by renewables had dropped to 55%, still an impressive number. The government has proclaimed a goal of generating 91% of the country’s energy by renewables by the year 2027. According to Mauricio Medal, an expert in clean energy, investment in renewable energy in Nicaragua is attractive for international investors (*El Nuevo Diario, Jan. 12*)

Energy Chamber President Cesar Zamora, announced that the energy industry is planning on investing in the near future US\$300 million in projects of wind, solar, biomass and geothermal energy. He said that the energy industry would present to the government a proposal this week for a reduction in electricity rates, noting that in 2015, Nicaragua saved 32% over the previous year in the cost of energy production based on the drop in the price of petroleum and the increase in the number of renewable energy projects. (*Informe Pastran, Jan. 8*)

### **4. Ramas disagree about negotiations with Canal Commission**

On Jan. 10, Allen Clair Duncan, a member of the Rama-Kriol Territorial Government, said that members of the indigenous territorial government were being pressured by the central government to sign a “lease in perpetuity” to 263 square kilometers of indigenous territory (both land and maritime) for the eastern terminus of the proposed inter-oceanic shipping canal and its subprojects. [The route of the canal goes through Rama territory to which the indigenous have communal title. By law the land cannot be sold but it can be leased.] He said that an assembly of the community only authorized the 18 members of the territorial assembly to negotiate with the Canal Commission a rental contract for the area it was going to occupy. Carlos Billis Wilson, president of the community of Bangkukuk Taik [which would have to be moved to a different location], said that he did not understand what he had signed because it was not well explained. However, the next day, Hector Thomas McCrea, president of the Rama-Kriol Territorial Government, released a communique saying that Allen Clair Duncan was not authorized to speak for the territorial government and that his declarations about the consultation with the Canal Commission were false. He said that the process has been carried out in accord with a methodology elaborated by the Rama-Kriol Government and the Canal Commission and is based on good faith principles. (*La Prensa, Jan. 11, 12*)

### **5. Nicaragua continues to succeed against drug traffickers**

Operation “Retaining Wall” of the IV Region Military Command, is designed to confront drug trafficking and organized crime. Commander Alberto Lorios reported the operation seized US\$800,000 and 2,500 kilograms (5,500 lbs.) of cocaine in region IV in 2015 through the end of November and destroyed marijuana fields. Nationally, between Sept. 2014 and August 2015, the Police seized 5 ½ tons of cocaine and neutralized nine drug trafficking cells that attempted to settle in the nation, seized US\$3 million, 183 guns, 296 light and heavy vehicles, 39 boats, 2,072 radios, and 111 properties. Combatting drug trafficking remains a high priority among government institutions and Nicaragua’s success, especially compared to the scourge of drug trafficking in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, has been recognized internationally. (*Informe Pastran, Jan. 11*)

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