

Nicaragua Lakes and Volcanoes

Trip Code: NLV

Version: NLV Nicaragua Lakes and Volcanoes



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



LEISURELY



HIGHLIGHTS

- Discover the charming historic cities of Granada and Leon
- Explore Lake Nicaragua and its 365 islets by boat
- Volcano hikes on Mombacho, Cerro Negro and Ometepe Island
- Canoe through the San Juan River Biosphere Reserve
- Enjoy fascinating tropical wildlife on nature walks with expert naturalist guides

AT A GLANCE

- 4 days Walking
- 5 days Sightseeing
- 1 Canoe journey
- 1 Boat trip
- Max Altitude: 1394m
- Join at Managua

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

- 12 Breakfasts
- 5 Lunches
- 3 Dinners
- 11 nights Hotel
- 1 nights Camping

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

Introduction

Join us on a captivating adventure that will immerse you in the breathtaking landscapes and teeming biodiversity of Nicaragua. Leaving behind the country's bustling capital, Managua, we head south and set our sights on exploring the enchanting Rio San Juan. This picturesque area serves as a sanctuary for a plethora of wildlife, including the enigmatic jaguar and majestic Harpy Eagle. From the quaint village of El Castillo we travel down the river by boat and canoe to reach the Indio Maiz Biological Reserve, a verdant oasis brimming with lush vegetation and distinctive flora and fauna. Returning to civilisation we enjoy the splendor of Granada, a city steeped in history, where vibrant churches adorned with vivid hues invite us to explore. We then embark on to the tranquil waters of Lake Nicaragua and its Islets, revealing a hidden world of basalt rock cloaked in rich foliage and a profusion of avian life, from elegant egrets to soaring kingfishers.

We delve deeper into Nicaragua's nature with a guided hike through the cloud-kissed Mombacho Volcano Reserve, with panoramic views of Lake Nicaragua before a special sunset visit to the neighbouring Masaya Volcano and its smoldering fiery crater. The mystical Ometepe Island is our next stop, guarded by twin volcanoes, where we climb the slopers of the towering Maderas Volcano, rewarded with awe-inspiring vistas and a serene crater lake.

Before our time in Nicaragua is up we have a unique camping experience in the tranquil sanctuary of La Makina Reserve, where we camp amidst tropical forests, meandering trails, and pristine waterfalls. Lastly, we venture to Leon, a city brimming with creative fervor, intellectual curiosity, and revolutionary spirit. From here we embark on an exhilarating hike up Cerro Negro Volcano, an ancient giant adorned in black sands.

Is this holiday for you?

This adventure is designed to explore the best of Nicaragua with a mix of adventure, cultural and interesting day walks. This is an active holiday where we will be on our feet most days whether exploring historic cities on walking tours, looking out for wildlife in unique nature reserves or being treated to

spectacular vistas on a volcano hike.

We have a couple of longer walking days on these volcano hikes, particularly the 1394m Maderas Volcano, but otherwise the itinerary is not intended as a long or challenging walking holiday, with more time given to wildlife spotting and the history of the places visited.

We take to the water on a couple of boat trips and a short canoe journey on the Rio San Juan - no paddling experience is necessary for these flat and calm waters but for those less confident a support boat is available. The majority of the holiday is leisurely, with a number of short and longer walks and other activities.

Itinerary

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DAY 1

Arrive Managua and overnight.

Arrive to Managua, the capital and largest city in Nicaragua. A single group transfer is provided from the airport. Your holiday begins with the overnight at the group hotel.



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 2

Drive to San Carlos and the Rio San Juan.

After breakfast we drive to San Carlos, a small village situated on the south eastern shore of Lake Nicaragua and the beginning of the San Juan River, which flows east to the border with Costa Rica. From San Carlos we take a boat down the river for 2 hours to the village of El Castillo. The river and surrounding rainforest make up the Rio San Juan UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and is packed with unique and interesting wildlife; including mammals such as the Tapir and elusive Jaguar, birds such as the Harpy Eagle and Green Macaw, and freshwater life such as Manatees, freshwater sharks and the American Crocodile.

Reaching El Castillo (the Castle), an impressive fortress dominates the town, strategically located on a sharp curve in the river, it was built by the Spanish to protect the affluent city of Granada from attacks by pirates. This vehicle-free town is made up of colourful wooden buildings which sit on stilts above the fast flowing river. We find our hotel on the narrow "main street" where we overnight.

Meals: **B L D**



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 3

Boat trip on the Rio San Juan; Canoe river journey; Hike in the Indio Maiz Biological Reserve.

Today starts early to explore the Indio Maiz Biological Reserve, the best time to see wildlife. We embark on a scenic boat trip down the Rio San Juan, arriving at one of the military ranger stations which have been set up to protect the reserve from poachers. From here, we board canoes and begin our adventure. As we paddle along the river we are surrounded by lush vegetation, dense forest and the relaxing sounds of nature. The calm waters of the river provide a smooth and enjoyable canoeing experience. After 1-2 hours of light canoeing we reach the start point for our walk into the heart of the Biological Reserve.

Walking through the jungle we can expect to see Howler Monkeys, brightly coloured Poison Dart Frogs, a wide range of birdlife including Trogons, Manikins, Tanagers and if we are lucky Scarlet Macaws. There is also an endless variety of flora and the chance to see larger mammals such as ocelots. After the hike we return to El Castillo by boat.

Meals: **B L D**



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 4

Drive to Granada; free afternoon.

This morning we drive for 4 hours to one of the prettiest city in Nicaragua, Granada. Dating back to 1524 this historic city draws locals and travellers alike, with its wonderful colonial and neoclassical architecture, colourful cobbled streets and laid-back, easy-going atmosphere. The afternoon is free to relax and sample some of the culinary delights on offer ahead of our walking tour tomorrow.

Meals: **B**



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 5

Guided city tour of Granada; Boat tour of the Islets of Lake Nicaragua.

This morning our tour leader will take us on a walking tour of Granada. We will visit 'La Merced' Church, Granada's impressive and brightly painted cathedral and the San Francisco convent. We then continue on to the warm waters of Lake Nicaragua where we will explore some of its 354 islets by boat. The islets are made up of basalt rock covered in lush vegetation, rich in bird life, with plenty of egrets, comorants, ospreys, kingfishers and orpendulas. The age of these islands is unknown but it is believed they were created by a massive eruption of Mombacho Volcano that watches over the lake to the west.

Meals: **B**



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 6

Nature walk in Mombacho Volcano Reserve; Sunset drive to Masaya Volcano.

Just South of Granada, Mombacho Volcano Reserve has some of the most beautiful cloud forest flora seen anywhere in Latin America with numerous flowers, bromeliads and orchids amongst its 800+ species. We arrive in the morning, where we will be transported by 4x4 to the ranger station from where we will start our nature walk. The Puma Trail hike takes you inside the cloud forest, as we ascend along the trail we are surrounded by a dense canopy of vegetation, alive with calls of tropical birds and the rustling of leaves. The air is cool and refreshing and with the aid of our naturalist guide we learn about the amazing biodiversity and, if weather permits, we will be treated to amazing views of Lake Nicaragua and its Islets.

After our nature walk we return to Granada, where we will be picked up for a sunset drive up nearby Masaya Volcano. Reaching the rim of the crater we walk to a viewpoint where we can look down inside the crater of the volcano, observing the glowing lava below.

Meals: **B L**



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 7

Drive to San Jorge Port; Ferry to Ometepe Island.

This morning we travel (approx. 2 hour drive) to San Jorge Port on the Western side of Lake Nicaragua. On arriving to San Jorge, we take the ferry to Ometepe Island. Made up of two imposing volcanic cones that rise up from the waters of Central America's largest lake, it is a land of legends and another UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Ometepe has been sacred to the local Nahuatl people for millennia and its fertile landscape is scattered with archaeological remains and ancient petroglyphs. We overnight at our hotel ahead of exploring the island tomorrow.

Meals: **B**






Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 8**Ometepe Island Hike - Maderas Volcano (1394m).**

Today we aim for the high point of our trip by climbing Maderas Volcano (1394m). A dormant volcano it is known for its cloud forest and stunning crater lake. This hike is through dense vegetation, ascending steep slopes and crossing scenic streams. As we ascend, we are surrounded by diverse flora and fauna including orchids, monkeys and a variety of bird species. Reaching the summit we are rewarded with an inspiring panorama of the island. The highlight of this hike is in finding the mystical lagoon nestled within the volcano's crater, a serene and picturesque sight. After our walk we return to our hotel on the island for a well-earned rest.


Meals: **B L**

	Accommodation Hotel		Ascent 1300M		Descent 1300M		Time 7 - 8 hours walking		Distance 15KM
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DAY 9**Free day on Ometepe Island.**

There are lots of different options to explore the island's rich cultural and archaeological heritage, cycling and kayaking are very easy to arrange locally. The best beach on the island is Playa Santo Domingo - on a clear day you can see both volcanoes from the water here and the long stretch of beach is well worth a visit. Other options include bird watching, visits to waterfalls and natural springs, the interesting coin and pre-Columbian museum and the petroglyphs that the island is famous for.

Meals: **B**

	Accommodation Hotel
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DAY 10**Drive to La Makina Reserve; Camping experience in the nature reserve.**

In the morning we take the ferry back to the mainland and drive 2 hours to La Makina Reserve. This nature reserve has embraced tourism as a route to conserving its unique wildlife habitats and ecosystems, located in the dry tropics of Carazo. It offers guided trail walks, canopy walks and a small campsite located in the park, with funds going back into the conservation and protection of the land. There are plenty of trails to explore winding their way through tropical forest and waterfalls with pristine swimming pools, along with high viewpoints where you can overlook the Pacific Ocean. A campfire is set up in the evening for a special night in this natural setting.

On the way we stop at a project in the small community of Nambume. Ramon and his wife welcome us

to learn about the variety of medicinal, citrus and ornamental plants grown on their estate. We can also sample their produce with food prepared by ancestral recipes based on native seeds and organic production methods.

Meals: **B L D**



Accommodation
Camping

DAY 11

Drive to Leon; Afternoon walking tour.

Leaving the reserve, today we drive (approx. 3 hours) to the university city of Leon. Leon is the artistic and intellectual heart of Nicaragua, the colonial capital for three centuries and former home of its three great poets, including Ruben Dario. Leon's historic cathedral (the largest in Central America) is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list and there is plenty more to explore; whether the revolutionary street art, restaurant lined plazas, or colonial architecture.

Meals: **B**



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 12

Cerro Negro Volcano day hike.

Today we embark on a half-day excursion to Cerro Negro Volcano. An hour's drive outside Leon, Cerro Negro is Nicaragua's youngest active volcano and is completely covered in black sand and rocks, of which its name is derived. We walk the 500m of ascent to the top of the volcano (726m above sea level), which takes 1-2 hours, at the top a vista of unforgettable views stretch along Nicaragua's volcanic chain. A unique quirk of Cerro Negro is the steep soft black sand slopes that allow for a quick and easy descent. We can either walk, run, slide or 'volcano board' back down to the bottom before we return to Leon.

Meals: **B**



Accommodation
Hotel



Ascent
500M



Descent
500M



Time
2 - 3 hours



Distance
5KM

DAY 13

Drive to Managua Airport; Depart.

This morning we wake to our last day in Nicaragua. After breakfast we drive (approx. 3 hours) directly to Managua Airport, where the holiday ends, in time for afternoon flight departures. Additional nights in Leon or Managua can be arranged.

Meals: **B**

Holiday Information

What's Included

- A professional and qualified tour leader
- A single timed airport transfers on arrival and departure
- Meals as described in the Meal Plan
- All land / boat transport required by the itinerary
- All activities/excursions/entrance fees mentioned unless specified as 'optional'

What's not Included

- Travel Insurance
- Departure Taxes (if applicable)
- Airport transfers other than group transfers
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Tips
- Any additional activities/excursions indicated as optional
- Miscellaneous expenses - drinks and souvenirs etc
- Tourist Card - US\$10 per person in cash to be paid directly at immigration on entry
- Airport Tax (Exit) US\$45 per person (Note that the exit tax is now included by most airlines in ticket cost; please check with your carrier)

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the hotel in Managua

A single group transfer from / to Managua Airport is provided.

Hotel and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Meal Plan

12 Breakfasts, 5 lunches and 3 dinners are included, with lunches and dinners when in the main towns with plenty of dining options not included. You should budget US\$10 - \$20 per meal for these non-included meals.

Food & Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. If you are on a trekking or cycling holiday, water is supplied to fill up your individual bottles. This will be boiled, filtered or provided in large jerry cans or 5 litre bottles. Additionally you should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) to treat your water when in towns or where water is not supplied. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

The cuisine of Nicaragua is a mix of Spanish and Creole. As in many other Central American countries, corn is a main staple, particularly in the form of the tortilla. Many of Nicaragua's dishes include fruits and vegetables such as jocote, grosella, mimbro, mango, papaya, tamarind, pipian, banana, avocado, yuca, quequisque, and herbs such as coriander (cilantro), oregano and achiote. In Granada and Leon there are many restaurants serving local cuisine but international dishes can also be found.

Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your diet with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

Accommodation

Accommodation on this holiday is in comfortable hotels when in the towns and cities (1 night in Managua, 3 nights in Granada, 3 nights in Ometepe and 2 nights in Leon), some of these hotels have small swimming pools. In the smaller town of El Castillo we spend 2 nights in a more basic hotel.

We spend 1 night camping at La Makina Nature Reserve. All camping equipment is provided.

All accommodation is twin share. If you are travelling by yourself, you will be paired up with another single client of the same sex. Single rooms are available for a supplementary cost. If you are planning to extend your holiday, additional nights at the group hotel are available on request.

Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be accompanied by a professional and qualified tour leader.

Spending Money

We estimate that US\$300-400 should be sufficient to cover your spending requirements including the evening meals and lunches which are not included (allowing \$10-20 per meal), tips for drivers and guides, tourist card (\$10 per person cash on entry), airport tax (\$45 if not included in your airline ticket) and other incidental expenses such as snacks and alcoholic drinks.

Guidance on Tipping

Tipping is the accepted way of saying 'thank you' to you leader and local team. Tipping is entirely voluntary and should be dependent on good service. We advise you to tip as a group. For full groups we advise around \$50-60 per person total.

Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status and so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

General Information

Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday. Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](https://www.gov.uk).

Visa Nicaragua

UK and USA passport holders do not require a visa for short stays.

Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

VACCINATIONS

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you specific require any vaccinations or other preventive measures. You should be up to date with routine courses and boosters as recommended in the UK e.g. diphtheria-tetanus-polio and measles-mumps-rubella), along with hepatitis A and typhoid. A certificate of yellow fever vaccination is required if travelling from countries with risk of yellow fever transmission and for travellers having transitted for more than 12 hrs through an airport of a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dentist check up. A good online resource is [Travel Health Pro](https://travelhealthpro.org.uk).

Zika virus has been confirmed as active in this country. It is a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you take the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites. The mosquitoes that transmit ZIKV are unlikely to be found above 2,000m altitude. For more information, visit the website of the National Travel Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) at <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk>

Currency

The unit of currency in Nicaragua is the Cordoba.

Preparing for your Holiday

It makes a lot of sense to spend some time before coming on an adventure holiday by getting some additional exercise. The fitter you are, the more enjoyable you will find the experience. Regular hiking in hill country is the best preparation but running, cycling and swimming are also good.

Climate

Nicaragua has a tropical climate with just two major seasons - dry and wet. The dry season occurs between December and June. The eastern part of Nicaragua receives more rain than the west while the coastal area experiences tropical storms and hurricanes between July and October. Temperatures vary more with elevation than the season. In the lowlands temperatures typically range between 22° C to 30° C, whereas the temperature in the mountains will be up to 10° C cooler. The hottest months are March, April and May. Generally the climate is warm and humid except in the central highlands. Mid-day while climbing on the exposed black ash of the volcanoes, the sun can be very fierce. However, rain and cloud and exceptionally, cooler weather can occur in the mountains and you need to be prepared for this as well as for the hot sun.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that prior to travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: www.travel.state.gov for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates direct from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

- "The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey" by Salman Rushdie

This book is a captivating travelogue by the renowned author Salman Rushdie. In "The Jaguar Smile," Rushdie recounts his journey to Nicaragua in the 1980s, during the Sandinista Revolution. The book provides insights into the political and social landscape of Nicaragua at the time, as well as its history and culture.

- "Blood of Brothers: Life and War in Nicaragua" by Stephen Kinzer

Stephen Kinzer, a seasoned journalist, delves into the tumultuous history of Nicaragua and the Sandinista Revolution in "Blood of Brothers." This book provides a gripping account of the conflict and revolution, capturing the bravery and sacrifices of the Nicaraguan people in their pursuit of social justice and freedom.

- "Travels with Mr Brown" by Mark Twain

Written by the celebrated American author Mark Twain, "Travels with Mr Brown" is a travel narrative that documents Twain's journey through Nicaragua in the mid-19th century. This adventurous tale explores Twain's humorous encounters, misadventures, and observations of the country's landscapes and people during his travels.

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

The following checklist should help you with your packing. As a general rule, you should always try to keep the weight of your equipment to a minimum.

YOU SHOULD BRING THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- Hiking Boots or trail shoes
- Sandals (like tevas suitable to get wet)
- Socks & underwear
- Trekking trousers
- Shorts
- Shirts / T-shirts / Tops

- Fleece jacket or warm jumper
- Lightweight waterproof jacket & trousers
- Sunhat
- Warm hat
- Sunglasses
- Daypack 35-45 litres (with rain cover)
- Dry bags
- Headtorch
- Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.)
- Water bottles 1 Litre (2 pint) x2 (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Water purification tablets
- Washbag and toiletries
- Antibacterial handwash
- Insect repellent
- Small travel towel
- Small padlock (to lock your bag)
- Basic First Aid Kit, including: Antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium), painkillers, plasters and blister treatment, and re-hydration salts (Dioralite). Glucose tablets and multi-vitamin tablets are also a good idea.

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE OPTIONAL:

- Trekking poles
- Travel clothes
- Flipflops for casual wear and evenings
- Swimwear (some of the hotels have pools as well as other swimming opportunities)
- Binoculars
- Pen-knife (note: always pack sharp objects in hold baggage)
- Repair kit - (eg. needle, thread, duct tape)
- Camera
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

Cotswold Outdoor



Many of the Equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive 12.5% discount voucher from Cotswold Outdoor and other retailers.
[-> Find out more](#)

Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary joining in Managua, Nicaragua. A single transfer is included from / to Managua Airport.

Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Managua, Nicaragua. The flights will depart from the UK in the morning, arriving the later the same day (day 1 of the itinerary). Return flights will depart in the afternoon of the last day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK the following morning.

Why Choose KE

Why KE?

This 13-day itinerary offers a unique and immersive journey through the hidden gems of Nicaragua. This adventure takes you off the beaten path, delving into the heart of the country's diverse landscapes and rich biodiversity. Exploring picturesque villages, historic cities, and UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, this itinerary promises a deeper connection to Nicaragua's culture, heritage, and pristine environments. With each moment carefully crafted to inspire and delight, this extraordinary adventure delivers unforgettable memories that will last a lifetime. Say goodbye to the ordinary and embrace the extraordinary with this one-of-a-kind journey through the real essence of Nicaragua.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 17/05/2024 and the trip is subject to change