

Nicaragua - OVERVIEW

Updated: June 10, 2014



Country Name Long Form: Republic of Nicaragua

Government Type: Republic

Languages Spoken: Spanish, Miskito, English and Indigenous languages

National Flag



Nicaragua is a Tier II Country. Significant security measures are necessary.

	Overall Assessment	Political Violence	Crime	Terrorism	Travel Safety
Nicaragua					
Key: (L) Low – (M) Medium – (H) High – (C)Critical					

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Political Violence is rated at MEDIUM in Nicaragua

Nicaragua is a developing country with one of the poorest economies in the hemisphere. Political demonstrations and strikes occur sporadically have occurred in both urban areas and smaller remote communities. They have occasionally become violent. Typically, protests in Managua take place at major intersections. Outside of the capital, they often take place in the form of road and highway blockages. Activities observed during past protest include, but are not limited to the use of tear gas, rubber bullets, fireworks, rock-throwing, tire burning, road blocks, bus/vehicle, burning and physical violence between members of rival political parties. Police have often been slow to respond, and reluctant to interfere in violent confrontations between rival political factions. Many different segments of the population organize demonstrations including: political parties, university students, public transportation owner/operators, labor unions and civil society groups. It is very common for groups to use university grounds and the most heavily traveled streets in Managua to stage demonstrations.

TERRORISM

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Terrorism is assessed as LOW

Nicaragua has little or no local regional or international terrorism concerns.

RULE OF LAW / CORRUPTION

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2013 gave Nicaragua a score of 28, indicating that the country has high levels of corruption. The CPI rates countries by the perceived levels of corruption in the public sector, with the least corrupt countries receiving a maximum score of 100.

CRIME

Crime is assessed as MEDIUM

While crime rates are lower in Nicaragua in comparison to neighboring countries like Honduras, general crime is a persistent risk for residents and visitors alike. Crimes against U.S. citizens in the past year have ranged from petty theft to violent offenses. Criminal activity occurs throughout the country, but higher rates of crime reporting against U.S. citizens occur in Managua, Granada, Leon, San Juan del Sur, and the Northern and Southern Atlantic Autonomous Regions.

Caution is advised in the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN) and areas on the Caribbean coast (including Puerto Cabezas, Bluefields and the Corn Islands), as Nicaraguas's Caribbean coast has become an increasingly important route for drug trafficking to the U.S. Ineffective policing has resulted in criminal elements and drug trafficking becoming more active in the RAAN region. There have been a number of violent attacks, armed robberies and kidnappings reported against foreign nationals in these areas. Armed banditry, including incidents of carjackings and highway robbery, have also been reported on the road between Managua and Puerto Cabezas; driving in the RAAN region should only be undertaken in daylight hours and preferably in a convoy of at least two vehicles.

KIDNAPPING

Although Nicaragua has one of the lowest rates of kidnapping in Latin America, kidnappings are being reported more frequently in the country. Historically, kidnap victims are wealthy locals and businesspeople; foreign travelers are seldom affected.

Express kidnappings, wherein victims are abducted and forced to withdraw money from ATMs before being released, are also on the increase, especially in Managua and other large urban areas. While kidnapping for ransom activities require prior planning and are more likely to involve residents or long-term travelers, express kidnappings are largely opportunistic in nature and have a greater potential to affect short-term travelers.

NATURAL DISASTERS

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Nicaragua has many active and potentially active volcanoes. The San Cristobal Volcano near Chinadega has experience two brief periods of minor eruptions beginning in September 2012, resulting in evacuations of residents living near its flanks. In addition, the Central America region has been seismically active in the same period, with major earthquakes in nearby Costa Rica and Guatemala.

Other potential environmental threats include earthquakes, flooding, fires, hurricanes, and tsunamis. In the event of a natural disaster, transportation, water, communications, and power systems may fail due to damaged infrastructure or heavy ash fall. Earthquakes sometimes trigger deadly tsunamis, which could strike coastal areas of Nicaragua.

STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE

- Do not buy counterfeit and pirated goods, even if they are widely available.
- Stay in groups, travel in a caravan consisting of two or more vehicles, and stay on the main roads.
- Ensure that someone not traveling with you is aware of your itinerary.
- Avoid hotels that do not have adequate security.
- It is preferable to stay in the main tourist destinations.
- Pay close attention to your surroundings, especially when walking or driving in Nicaragua
- Official taxis are a suitable means of travel in daylight hours in urban areas. It is highly recommended that taxis be arranged through your hotel, or program office. Negotiate the price in advance.
- Women should be especially careful when traveling alone and avoid staying out late without a trusted male escort.
- Make sensible security precautions to mitigate the risk of petty crime, particularly pick pocketing and bag snatching.
- Carry a photocopy of your passport when traveling to avoid losing it in a robbery.
- Do not resist if you are being robbed and avoid eye contact and do not make any sudden movements.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times and keep a low profile.
- Never leave your belongings unattended.
- Carry bags close to your body and make sure the fasteners are secure.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash or wearing expensive jewelry or valuables.
- Leave all important documents in a safe or safe deposit box at your hotel and only carry certified copies.
- Trust your instincts. If someone or something makes you uneasy, avoid the situation.

Important Contact Details:

International Dialing Code: +505

International Dialing Prefix: 00

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Victims of crime in Nicaragua should contact the following phone numbers for assistance:

POLICE: The local equivalent to the “911” emergency line in Nicaragua is 118

FIRE DEPARTMENT: 115 (911 from cell phones)

AMBULANCE: 128

Note: Police, ambulance or fire department response may be unreliable in some parts of the country.

TRAVEL & ROAD SAFETY

- The infrastructure of Nicaragua is generally adequate however; infrastructure becomes severely limited in rural area.
- Roads linking the capital to other major cities are often badly maintained and prone to damage by floods, landslides and the annual hurricane season.
- Travelers intending to travel by road are advised to exercise extreme caution even when driving in major urban areas.
- Due to their road network, Nicaragua has a high accident rate.
- The supply of basic amenities, such as power and water are reliable across all regions.

RECOMMENDED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

- No use of ATMs after dark.
- No bathing or swimming in rivers.

HEALTH

The provision of medical care in Nicaragua is limited across most of the country, including in Managua. Private medical facilities are only available in the capital and are restricted to basic health care; more serious conditions may require evacuation to another country. Medical facilities are extremely limited in the outlying, rural areas of the country. The supply of routine medication is limited in Nicaragua; furthermore, numerous other medications may appear under different labels than are generally used in most parts of the world.

- Tap water outside the capital Nicaragua is generally not safe to drink. Travelers are advised to consume only sterilized or bottled water. This applies to water used for brushing teeth, making ice or washing foods.
- Unpasteurized milk should be boiled before consumption, or powdered or tinned milk should be used as an alternative.
- Fruit and vegetables should only be consumed if they have been peeled or cooked.
- Undercooked meat and fish should not be consumed.
- Food from street vendors should be avoided as it carries a higher risk of causing illness.

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The following vaccinations are recommended or required if travelling to Nicaragua:

- Hepatitis A (recommended)
- Hepatitis B (recommended)
- Rabies (recommended)
- Typhoid (recommended)

Yellow Fever (required for travelers arriving from a country where yellow fever is present)

It is also important to ensure that routine vaccinations are up to date for diseases including influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

Significant Diseases –

Malaria – A life threatening parasitic disease transmitted by mosquitoes. The malaria risk in Nicaragua is prevalent across most of the country, including the outskirts of Managua.

Dengue Fever – An infectious disease carried by mosquitoes. It is endemic to Nicaragua; outbreaks occur annually across most parts of the country, particularly during the rainy season (May to October).

Diarrhea – Common among travelers and can be caused by bacteria, viruses or parasites. One of the most common causes is a bacterium known as E. Coli, which is transmitted by ingesting contaminated food and liquids.

HOSPITALS –

Clinica de Asma y Alergia
Reparto Serrano #12
Managua, Nicaragua
Phone: +505 278 1169

Hospital Bautista de Nicaragua
P.O. Box 709
Managua, Nicaragua
Phone: +505 249 7070
Fax: +505 249 7327

Hospital Central
Antiguo edificio del Banco del Café
Managua, Nicaragua
Phone: +505 255 6900

US EMBASSY – CONSULATE LOCATIONS

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The US Embassy Managua

Km 5 ½ Carretera Sur

Managua

Tel: +505 2252 7100

Fax: +505 2252 7250

Email: acs.managua@state.gov

USF INTERNATIONAL HOTLINE

USF 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 813-317-5815

AXA Assistance 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 1-877-577-9504 / +1-203-399-5130 (Call collect from abroad)

ASSIST ID #: GLMN 04983932. <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/resources/>

* Information derived from CIA World Fact Book, US Department of State, OSAC, and Travel Guard. This travel overview summarizes some of the most important concerns; however, it does not negate the need for detailed trip planning.