

VISIONS Nicaragua

June 29 - July 26 (28 days / 4 weeks) • \$4,600

JINOTEGA, CENTRAL HIGHLANDS
IMMERSION IN CENTRAL AMERICA SPANISH CULTURE
MOUNTAINS, VALLEYS, CRATER LAKES, NATIONAL PARKS
GRANADA, MASAYA ARTISAN MARKET, COFFEE PLANTATIONS
MIN. 95 HOURS SERVICE CREDIT

Well past the political turbulence of three decades ago, Nicaragua has become one of the safest of Central American destinations. Arguably, it has the most breathtaking landscapes in all of Central America. Nicaragua is second only to Haiti as one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. It is the least densely populated yet physically the largest in Central America. In the Americas only the Brazil Amazon rainforest is larger than Nicaragua's rainforest; one-fifth of Nicaragua remains protected in national parks or biological reserves. The population, largely *mestizo*, is youthful with 40% of Nicaraguans under the age of 18.

A nationwide sustainable movement has taken hold visibly. A common language among Nicaraguans is sustainability—solar and wind power, clean water, eco-tourism, and organic production initiatives abound.

Our home base is in the highland city of Jinotega, roughly 100 miles northeast of the capital of Managua. In the 'cloud forests' where the climate is cooler than the lowlands, Jinotega nestles at the base of a forested mountain range that surrounds this small city. Oak and pine trees, ferns and moss thrive here, and coffee beans. Jinotega Province is renowned for the coffee production in its higher slopes.

We partner with Asociación de Voluntarios para del Desarrollo Comunitario (AVODEC), a grassroots NGO that supports rural communities by providing materials, labor and expertise for a variety of sustainable initiatives including potable water systems, compost latrines, plant nurseries, agricultural and other environmental projects. You might also volunteer in an orphanage teaching handicrafts and building skills. Service in Nicaragua mixes sustainable construction, reforestation, agriculture, and assistance to micro-businesses.

Nicaraguans embrace life with openness and equal measures of tranquility and optimism. It is our good fortune to spend a lot of free time with our hosts eating dinner together, dancing and karaoke nights, talking about culture, customs, and history. With a few Jinotega families, we travel to the countryside to spend time in their home villages. Exploration includes an overnight stay on an ecological coffee farm, hiking in Reservas Datanli and to La Peña de la Cruz to the panoramic view of all of Jinotega, perhaps a fishing trip to Lago de Apanas. We tour Granada, the oldest colonial city in Central America, with its tree-lined plaza, cobblestone alleys and vibrantly restored colonial-era homes, and we take in the sprawling Masaya artisan market with wares from all over the country.

From our bus drivers the Blandon brothers and their families to Victorino and Alex from AVODEC to many other Nicaraguans, you'll gain insight into Nicaragua's history, culture, and dramatic beauty.

Participants in this language immersion program must have minimum two years of high school Spanish or equivalent proficiency.

WORK HARD PLAY HARD LIVE DYNAMICALLY CONNECT DEEPLY SERVE PURPOSEFULLY SEE DIFFERENTLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE

<http://www.visionsserviceadventures.com/programs/nicaragua.htm>