



GRANADA

Granada is one of Nicaragua most important cities and the country's main destination for international travelers. For centuries it has been called 'The Great Sultana' in recognition of its beautiful colonial architecture.

Granada is 40 Km South East of Managua and less than 30 Km from the capital city's international airport. It is an excellent starting point for exploring some of the main attractions in Nicaragua and the neighboring Costa Rica, from active volcanoes to unique cloud forest ecosystems, from the beautiful islands on Lake Cocibolca, or Nicaragua to the endless beaches of the Pacific Ocean where every year, between August and December, thousands of turtles lay their eggs.

As all colonial cities in Central America, Granada is built around its main square (Parque Central) that represents the city's social, cultural, and economic hub. Around the Parque Central visitors find Granada's Cathedral, the city hall, important banks, cultural centers, as well as a myriad of small shops and stalls selling traditional food and handcrafts.

A few blocks to the West of the main square is the central market. There, reasonably priced tropical fruit, fresh vegetables, meat, cheese, and freshly caught fish from the lake are sold on wooden stalls since the early hours of the morning.



PROUD LEÓN

León was originally founded on the shores of Lake Xolotlán in 1524. In 1610, Volcán Momotombo erupted, causing an earthquake that devastated the city. In order to prevent a recurrence of that disaster, the city was relocated 15 miles to the west. In the centuries that followed, León grew powerful and played an important role in shaping the region's economy and politics.



Today León is known for its museums, parks and ornate colonial churches. The cities centerpiece is the Cathedral de la Asunción. Completed in 1815, this is Central America's largest cathedral.

Although León may be more safely located than it was before 1610, the city is still within reach of a chain of six spectacular volcanoes. Many of these can be hiked as day trips.

Another worthy day trip is a visit to the ruins of Old León, the abandoned city. In 2000, UNESCO named Las Ruínas de León Viejo a World Heritage Sites the first such honor granted to a Nicaraguan location. This designation is helping to protect and preserve these ruins.

LAKE COCIBOLCA: THE SWEET SEA

Located one hour southeast of Managua, Cocibolca (also known as Lake Nicaragua) is the largest lake in Central America. Geologic evidence suggests that it was once connected to the Pacific. Today it empties into the Caribbean via the lush, winding Rio San Juan the favorite route of 18th-century English Pirates intent on looting Granada.

Granada rests on the lake's northwestern shore. Just south of town is a peninsula ringed by Las Islitas, a group of more than 360 small islands created when the nearby Mombacho Volcano exploded. The islands are home to many colorful bird species, which can be observed via guided kayak excursions. The fort of San Pablo, located on the farthest island, was constructed in 1783 to defend Granada from pirate attack.

Prior to the conquest, Cocibolca's shores and volcanic islands were home to the Chorotegan and Nicarao civilizations, known for their petroglyphs and monolithic stone carvings (best viewed at Granada's San Francisco convent).

The lake's centerpiece is the hourglass island of Ometepe, located four hours southeast of Granada by boat (one hour east of San Jorge, on the western shore). Ometepe's twin volcanic peaks, Concepción (5282 feet) and Madera (4573 feet) rise dramatically from the lake's blue depths. Visitors can explore Concepción's forested slopes on foot or horseback, hike to Madera's crater-lake and waterfall, observe wildlife and enjoy a cup of island grown coffee.

THE CORN ISLANDS

Just 75 minutes due east of Managua by air you'll find Nicaragua's two sparkling Caribbean anomalies, Corn Island and Little Corn Island. These tiny coral-ringed havens are a world away from the steamy Atlantic coastline, in terms of both climate and culture.



honeycombed coral reef. Visitors can dive, kayak, fish, snorkel and hike. The entire island (all of 1.1 square miles) is free of cars and most other motorized transportation.

Once known as the Skeleton Islands, the Corns were first occupied by a ferocious tribe known for their cannibalism. Later, they were safe harbors for English pirates. Today, they are inhabited by friendly Creole fishermen, coconut farmers, seafood chefs and dive instructors. The prevailing culture is relaxed, reggae-infused, and English-speaking.

Corn Island is six-square miles of hilly interior which tapers down to white and gold beaches, mangrove estuaries, and azure waters. The best diving is found off the island's wide northern end, where the coral reef supports dozens of coral species, sharks, snapper, parrot fish, angelfish and rays. The oblong southern end of the island shelters the best beaches.

Little Corn Island, located twenty miles north, is accessed by boat from Corn Islands main dock. Here you'll find wide beaches and six miles of

MORGAN'S ROCK

This extraordinary and unique natural getaway is nestled in the pacific tropical region of Nicaragua. Morgan's rock magnificent eco-lodge opened its welcoming doors for nature lovers as well for those looking for a peaceful location in 2004. This exclusive natural resort offers to its visitors exceptional comfortable bungalows designed with precious woods. The spacious bungalows allow the guests to enjoy view over the splendid private bay of Morgan's rock as well as its natural surroundings.



Morgan's rock comprises an area of 1,700 hectares of tropical forest with outstanding opportunities to explore this interesting wildlife. The property enjoys a great system of trails where nature enthusiasts can most of the time be in contact with native nature as howler monkeys, white tailed deer, central American agouti, sloths, black spiny iguanas, scarlet macaws, turquoise browed motmot, white throated magpie jays, crabs, and many more species of animals.

SAN JUAN DEL SUR

San Juan del Sur is a classic beach town: slow paced and slightly ramshackle, with a sheltered crescent beach, fresh seafood and stunning sunsets. But this area also has everything a traveler could need, including one of the best seaside eco-lodges in Central America, Morgan's Rock. In this region, visitors can dive, surf, deep-sea fish, swim with sea turtles and ride high-flying zip-lines through the treetops.



Dozens of worthwhile beaches lie within a half-hour drive or boat trip from town. Rent a bike and visit the tide pools at Playa Remanso to the south. Farther south are Playa Coco (perfect sand and swimming) and Playa La Flor (a nesting site for Olive Ridley sea turtles). During the August to October peak of the nesting season, visitors can participate in nighttime visits to the La Flor Wildlife Refuge, silently watching the sea turtles deposit their clutches.

Eight miles north of San Juan del Sur is Playa Maderas, well known for its excellent breaks and home to occasional surfing contests. Its northern neighbor, Bahia Majagual, is one of the Countries most beautiful. Both are easily reached by water taxi from San Juan del Sur.