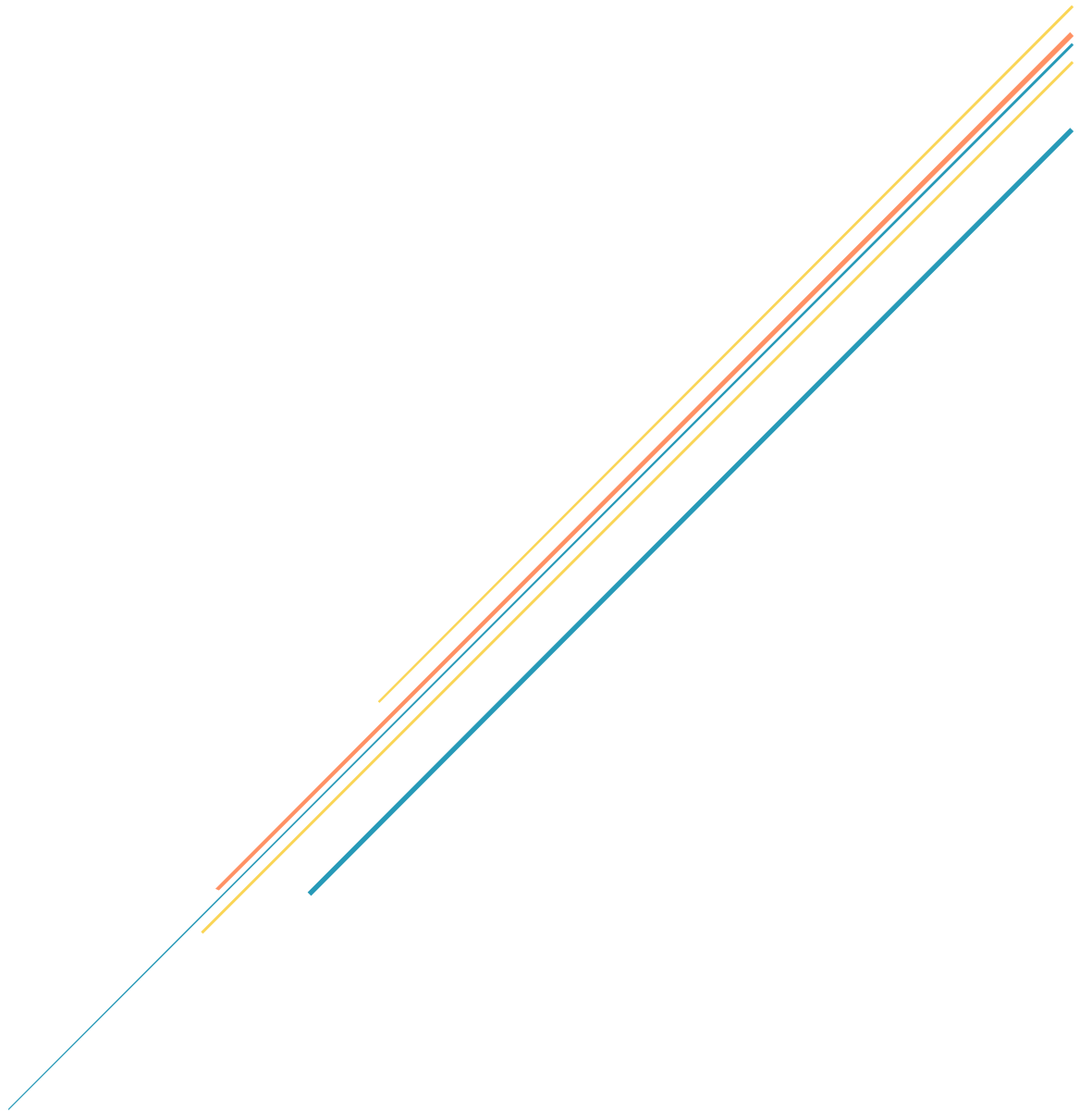


# PROJECT INFORMATION PACKET

Nicaragua: Nueva Segovia & Leon 2021



*Amigos*

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# AMIGOS DE LAS AMERICAS

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## WHAT IS AMIGOS?

AMIGOS is a leader in international youth development, creating a world in which young people realize their full potential as leaders and global citizens. We provide extraordinary opportunities for youth to design and lead projects in collaboration with U.S. and Latin American peers and partner organizations across the Americas. Our strong partner network, built over 50 years, enables authentic engagements in communities across the region.

Since its start, AMIGOS has operated continuously in various countries in Latin America, including Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. Currently, AMIGOS works in seven countries in Latin America (Costa Rica, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Uruguay) and the U.S. running youth leadership programs. AMIGOS always works through partnerships with local organizations and with members of host communities in Latin America and the U.S., with projects led by young people.

## VISION

A world where all people are lifelong leaders sharing responsibility for our global community.

## MISSION

Amigos de las Américas inspires leaders through authentic service and immersion experiences.

## VALUES

- **Safety First and Always:** We prioritize the health and safety of AMIGOS volunteers above all.
- **Youth Leadership:** We believe in the capacity of youth to become leaders for positive change.
- **Transformational Outcomes:** We strive to transform volunteers and communities in measurable ways.
- **Community-Led:** We create socially and environmentally conscious partnerships through collaboration with communities throughout the Americas.
- **Diversity Throughout:** We promote diversity of volunteers and stakeholders and work to break down barriers.
- **Respect:** We maintain respect, transparency, and high standards in everything we do.

## DIVERSITY

To realize the AMIGOS vision and mission, we believe in the power of every voice and the wisdom of diverse voices. AMIGOS embraces universal diversity, including:

- race
- nationality
- ethnicity
- socio-economic status
- religion
- age
- gender
- sexual orientation

AMIGOS seeks to include:

- different life experiences
- belief systems
- abilities
- opinions

throughout its work and aspires to eliminate barriers to inclusion and participation.

AMIGOS' Board of Directors and Convention of Chapter Presidents adopted this as the organization's official diversity statement in June 2012.

## HISTORY

AMIGOS was founded on the principle that young people can change the world. In 1965, a 29-year-old pastor from Houston, Texas named Guy Bevil led a team of teenagers into rural Honduras to support in the fight against a growing polio epidemic. Serving communities in remote areas of the country, this group of 181 youth and 36 adults helped protect people from the crippling disease and established friendships that crossed borders. This service had a bold impact on the lives of these young people and, as a result, they returned more mature, culturally aware, and inspired to continue serving communities at home and abroad.

The AMIGOS model of developing critically engaged young leaders remains highly beneficial to youth today. AMIGOS programs have evolved to be more responsive to the changing priorities of host communities and inclusive of young people across the Americas. Today, our projects cover a broader array of activities in health and education and focus on building skills in youth of both the United States and Latin America. More than 30,000 alumni have carried on the passion and commitment that started over 50 years ago. Our successful history supports the belief that young people have the power to rise to any challenge and make a difference.

# HISTORY OF AMIGOS IN NICARAGUA

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AMIGOS' work in Nicaragua began in 1970 and ran consecutively until 1978. During this time, programs implemented included human immunizations, vision screening, and dental hygiene education. AMIGOS was forced to suspend programs in Nicaragua due to the ongoing disruptions of the late 1970s and 80s.

AMIGOS returned to Nicaragua in 2000 after a long hiatus, setting up a public health program in collaboration with CARE International in the department of Leon. In the mid to late 2000s, AMIGOS opened other programs in Granada-Rivas, Chontales-Boaco, and Matagalpa, collaborating with a variety of government and NGO partners. As AMIGOS has progressed, the program focus has shifted to emphasize the development of youth leadership through the implementation of sustainable community development initiatives. In 2018, AMIGOS suspended operations due to civil unrest in the country.

This year, 2021, we are excited to relaunch our in-person programs in Nicaragua. This program combines our years of knowledge in the country and approach to community involvement with our rigorous safety measures for COVID-19. We have worked to build strong ties with the new organizations and look forward to working with them for years to come.



*Source: AMIGOS alumni pictures, Matagalpa 2011*

# COUNTRY OVERVIEW

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## COLONIAL & POST-COLONIAL HISTORY

It is widely believed Nicaragua derives its name from an Indian chief, Nicarao, who ruled part of the area at the time of the Spanish Conquest. Christopher Columbus, in 1492, was the first European to touch Nicaraguan soil. Francisco Hernandez de Córdoba followed in 1524 and founded the principal colonial cities of Granada and León. Granada evolved into a stronghold of the aristocracy, and León became the political and intellectual capital. The rivalry between these cities persists to this day. For three centuries, Nicaragua was a province of the Captaincy General of Guatemala, as the Spanish called their territories south of Mexico. Independence from Spanish rule came in 1821, and, for a short period of time, Nicaragua was a member of the Central American Federation, which included Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Costa Rica. In 1838, Nicaragua became an independent republic.

For the next 100 years, Nicaragua experienced periods of war and peace, including an attempted takeover by American William Walker in the mid- to late 1800s. Walker was defeated and killed by an alliance of Central American nations. After another period of unrest in the early 1900s, Nicaragua's president invited U.S. Marines to restore and maintain order in the country. In 1934, the government was taken over by General Anastasio Somoza García, initiating more than 40 years of family rule under a military dictatorship. In 1972, central Managua was destroyed by an earthquake that killed thousands. Managua was never completely rebuilt and has become a sprawling city without a center. In 1979, the Somoza regime was overthrown by the Marxist Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), which ruled until 1990. This period included a U.S. government-supported civil war against the Sandinista government. A 1989 accord permitted free elections in 1990, in which Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, known for her conciliatory nature, became president. Nicaragua has experienced relative peace since 1990, and the country has celebrated four successive free elections to date.

## GOVERNMENT

Nicaragua is an independent republic with a democratically elected president and a unicameral National Assembly with 93 seats. The assembly's members are elected by proportional representation and serve five-year terms. Presidential elections are conducted every five years. The current president, Daniel Ortega, leader of the leftist revolution that overthrew the Somoza dictatorship in 1979, was elected in democratically held elections in 2006. He is the fourth democratically elected president since the end of the first Sandinista regime in 1990. Nicaragua's four significant political parties are Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN), Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (PLC), Alianza Liberal Nicaragüense (ALN), and Movimiento de Renovación Sandinista (MRS).

## ECONOMY

Agriculture is the cornerstone of the Nicaraguan economy. The principal crops are corn, beans, sorghum, and rice. Cotton, coffee, sugar, bananas, and tobacco are the principal export crops. Additional export

products are beef and shrimp. In the early 1990s, Nicaragua experienced a very unstable economic situation, with hyperinflation, a large external debt, and high unemployment. During the past 15 years, the country has privatized many public institutions, but internal and external debt rates remain dangerously high. While Managua has grown and modernized, the poor rural and marginalized urban populations have experienced few economic gains. Droughts in 1996 and 1997, followed by Hurricane Mitch in 1998, caused tremendous economic hardship. The combination of unemployment and underemployment exceeds 50 percent. Nicaragua's annual per capita gross national product is currently less than \$500, making it one of the poorest countries in the hemisphere. During the 2009-2010 harvest, Nicaragua registered a 32.2 percent increase in its coffee export value in relation to the previous season, improving living conditions in rural areas.

The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) is an agreement among the United States, five Central American countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua) and the Dominican Republic. Its terms were negotiated and signed by Central American representatives in 2004. The U.S. Congress ratified CAFTA in July 2005, and in August 2005, President George W. Bush signed the bill into law. Although there are differing perspectives on its purpose and outcomes, its aim is to promote economic growth in the region and alleviate poverty by opening up trade and investment (and thus creating jobs).

# GEOGRAPHY, CULTURE, FOOD, CLIMATE, & TRADITIONS

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## INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN NICARAGUA

There are seven indigenous peoples of Nicaragua. They are distributed, historically and culturally, between the Pacific coast, Central and Northern region inhabited by the Chorotega (221,000), Cacaopera or Matagalpa (97,500), Ocanxiu or Sutiaba (49,000) and Nahoa or N.huatl (20,000) peoples. The Caribbean (or Atlantic) coast is home of the M.skitu (150,000), Sumu-Mayangna (27,000) and Rama (2,000) peoples.

Other peoples who have collective rights under the Constitution of Nicaragua (1987) are the Afro-descendants, referred to as "ethnic communities" in the national legislation. These include the Creoles or Kriols (43,000) and the Garífunas (2,500).

Nicaragua has adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ratified ILO Convention 169 in 2010. Yet, its indigenous communities are facing a great number of challenges, especially in terms of construction through communal lands, and in terms of the state failing to comply with its legal obligation to honor the title of the lands in favor of the indigenous communities.

Source: <https://www.iwgia.org/en/focus.html>

## PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Most Nicaraguans can best be classified as mestizo, a mix in which neither the European nor the Indian cultures predominate. On the geographically and politically isolated Caribbean coast, there are six different ethnic cultures, including the mestizo population. The others are Creole, Miskito, Garífuna, Rama, and Mayagna. The Caribbean region is multiethnic, multilingual, and culturally diverse, but its residents only represent about 10 percent of the total population.

The official and predominant language in Nicaragua is Spanish. Along the Caribbean coast some Miskito, Mayagna, and Rama cultures have maintained their indigenous languages; Afro-Caribbeans speak English and Creole.

More than 90 percent of the population belongs to Christian denominations (approximately 73 percent of which identify themselves as Roman Catholics; 15 percent as belonging to various evangelical churches; and the remainder to other Christian-based faiths, such as Moravians, Mormons, etc.); 8.5 percent declare no religious affiliation or claim to be atheists. The traditional social structure of Nicaragua has been essentially colonial, with a small number of wealthy landowning families at the top and a broad peasant class at the bottom. Despite the country's economic growth in the 1970s, the emergence of a middle class, and the decade of socialist rule, there are still stark inequalities in the distribution of wealth. The country's educational system, a major avenue for economic and social mobility, recently replaced the traditions of classicism and intellectualism with vocational training. Thus, the lower class now has a



somewhat better chance for economic advancement. Due to a literacy campaign between May 2007 and June 2009, the illiteracy rate has been reduced to 3.56 percent, according to government statistics in August 2009.

Nicaraguans are warm, generous, and friendly. Despite the tensions between the United States and Nicaraguan governments in the 1980s, the two countries have stable and open relationships. Foreign volunteers from the U.S. and other countries are welcomed into their communities.

*\* This section was adapted from Peace Corps Nicaragua Welcome Book\**

## FOOD

Each region in Nicaragua, according to geographical and cultural characteristics, produces various dishes, drinks, and sweets. Below you will find an overview of some of the most famous and common Nicaraguan dishes across the country. Please always remember that it is received as rude to turn down food that you are offered.

- **Gallo Pinto:** Most people in Nicaragua eat this daily at breakfast and dinner, and it is considered a national symbol. It is composed of a mixture of fried rice with onion and sweet pepper and red beans boiled with garlic. They are mixed and fried all together.
- **Nacatamal:** To make nacatamal, they start by preparing dough with ground corn and butter. This is then filled up with small pieces of pork or chicken, rice potatoes, tomatoes, onion, sweet pepper (all in slices) and pork lard. This mixture is packed leaves of plantain trees, tightened with a small thread that makes it look like a tiny pillow.
- **Vigorón:** Originally from Granada, this dish often uses a plantain leaf in place of a plate, which is then covered with a serving of yucca, chicharrón and a cabbage and tomato salad.
- **Indio Viejo:** Indio Viejo is a dish made with vegetables such as garlic, onions, sweet peppers, and tomatoes. Water-drenched tortillas are first ground into a dough; then the beef is shredded and fried with vegetables, tortilla dough, and achiote paste. When all these components are combined, it results in a creation of this hearty stew.
- **Quesillo:** This dish is originally from La Paz Centro and Nagarote, which are in the department of León. A piece of cheese (which is named quesillo) is placed inside a tortilla and then wrapped up in a plastic bag. Onions and vinegar are added, and the finishing touch is to put fresh cream and a bit of salt on top.
- **Sopa de Mondongo:** This soup is the specialty of Masatepe, which is located in the department of Masaya. Mondongo is washed with orange and lemon, then cut into small pieces and cooked with onion, sweet pepper, and garlic. When the mondongo is soft enough, rice is added, as well as vegetables in pieces, such as quequisque, chayote, sweet pepper, onion, and corn. When the soup is ready, many eat it topped with avocado and cheese.
- **Tres Leches:** This is a dessert prepared with milk condensed milk and cream.

*\* This section was adapted from Peace Corps Nicaragua Welcome Book\**

## TRADITIONS

Nicaraguans are proud of their cultural heritage and hold celebrations of all types. Music, dance, and theater are integral to Nicaraguan traditions and highlight the blend of cultures that exists in the country. On the Caribbean coast, people celebrate Palo de Mayo, which is a vibrant festival of music and dance that showcases the Afro-Caribbean heritage in Nicaragua. Closer to the Pacific Coast, one of the most famous of the fiestas patronales (celebrations of the local patron-saints) is the Fiesta de San Sebastián. Like other patron-saint celebrations, this event showcases Nicaraguan folklore through dance and music, such as El Toro Huaco and El Guegüense, a satirical drama depicting the resistance against the Spanish colonial rule that melds indigenous and Spanish culture.

With its diverse terrain and generally warm climate, Nicaraguans have many different popular sports. The national sport is baseball with soccer coming in as a close second. Additionally, surfing is popular in the coastal regions, while hiking and other adventure sports are common in the mountainous and volcano regions.

Sources:

“History and Culture of Nicaragua.” Nicaragua Tourism, 6 Apr. 2021, [www.visitnicaragua.us/about-nicaragua/culture/](http://www.visitnicaragua.us/about-nicaragua/culture/).

“Music and Dance of Nicaragua.” Nicaragua Tourism, 8 Nov. 2018, [www.visitnicaragua.us/about-nicaragua/culture/music-dance/](http://www.visitnicaragua.us/about-nicaragua/culture/music-dance/).

“Sports in Nicaragua.” *Nicaragua.com*, 17 Jan. 2020, [www.nicaragua.com/culture/sport/](http://www.nicaragua.com/culture/sport/).

## CLIMATE

While climate differs between regions, the entire country broadly has a hot, tropical climate and has two distinct seasons: wet and dry. The wet season lasts from mid-May to mid-November and transitions into the dry season for the rest of the year. Looking deeper at the project locations, León is hot and humid almost all year round with an average temperature of 84.7°. In Jinotega, the climate is still tropical, but slightly cooler because of its higher altitude. It is commonly known as “la Ciudad de las Brumas”, the city of mists, because of the light clouds that roll over the town. Because of its mountainous terrain, Nuevo Segovia is noticeably cooler and has a unique microclimate that is favorable for coffee production.

Sources:

“Climate in Nicaragua: The Weather in Nicaragua Has 2 Distinct Seasons.” *International Living*, 13 Jan. 2021, [internationalliving.com/countries/nicaragua/climate-in-nicaragua/](http://internationalliving.com/countries/nicaragua/climate-in-nicaragua/).

“What Is the Weather, Climate and Geography like in Nicaragua.” *World Travel Guide*, 26 May 2019, [www.worldtravelguide.net/guides/north-america/nicaragua/weather-climate-geography/](http://www.worldtravelguide.net/guides/north-america/nicaragua/weather-climate-geography/).

## GEOGRAPHY

Nicaragua is the largest of the five Central American republics, with a land area of almost 50,000 square miles (slightly smaller than New York). It is the least densely populated of the Central American nations,

with a population of 6,624,554 (2020 est.) and an average annual growth rate of 1.855%. Known as the land of lakes and volcanoes, Nicaragua has a diverse environment, including highlands, lowlands, tropical forests, lakes, and two oceans. Lake Nicaragua is one of the largest freshwater lakes in the world and contains such aquatic oddities as freshwater sharks. Nicaragua's location and diverse geography make it a beautiful and resource-rich country, yet it is also vulnerable to many natural disasters, including earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, droughts, and hurricanes. This vulnerability has increased as a result of deforestation and construction in unsafe areas.

*\* This section was adapted from Peace Corps Nicaragua Welcome Book\**

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The following is a list of websites for additional information about Nicaragua. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it. If you do not have access to the Internet, visit your local library. Libraries offer free Internet usage and often let you print information to take home.

### [General Information About Nicaragua](#)

<http://lanic.utexas.edu/la/ca/nicaragua/>

The Latin American Information Network Center compiles the most comprehensive set of links to websites and resources on all countries in Latin America, including Nicaragua. Go here first to find links to endless resources on the country.

<http://countrywatch.com/intelligence/countryreviews?countryid=126>

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in the capital of Nicaragua to how to convert from the dollar to the Nicaragua Cordoba Oro (NOI). Just click on Nicaragua and go from there.

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/nicaragua>

Visit this site for general travel advice about almost any country in the world.

<https://www.visitnicaragua.us/>

[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)

The State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Nicaragua and learn more about its social and political history. You can also go to the site's international travel section to check on conditions that may affect your safety.

### [Online Articles/Current News Sites About Nicaragua](#)

[www.nicaragua.com](http://www.nicaragua.com)

This offers links to English language news stories about Nicaragua and more.

<http://www.intur.gob.ni/>

This is the Ministry of Tourism webpage where one can learn more about Nicaragua.

<http://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/>

This is another large Nicaraguan daily newspaper (in Spanish).

### **International Development Sites About Nicaragua**

<http://nicaragua.usaid.gov/>

This is the U.S. Agency for International Development's official Nicaragua website and provides valuable information on development trends in country.

[www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

The World Bank Group's mission is to fight poverty and improve the living standards of people in the developing world. It is a development bank that provides loans, policy advice, technical assistance, and knowledge-sharing services to developing countries to reduce poverty. This site contains a lot of information and resources regarding Nicaragua and development.

[www.oas.org](http://www.oas.org)

The Organization of the American States' website contains information about development priorities, democracy, and other issues that are key in the Americas.

### **Recommended Books About Nicaragua**

#### **Tropical Town and Other Poems**

De La Selva, Salomon. Tropical Town and Other Poems. Houston, Texas: Arte Público Press, 1999.

#### **Everybody Had His Own Gringo: The CIA and the Contras**

Glenn, Garvin. Everybody Had His Own Gringo: The CIA and the Contras. United Kingdom: Brassey's, 1992.

#### **To Die in This Way: Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of the Mestizaje 1880-1965**

Gould, Jeffrey L. To Die in This Way: Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of the Mestizaje 1880-1965. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998.

#### **Blood of Brothers: Life and War in Nicaragua**

Kinzer, Stephen. Blood of Brothers: Life and War in Nicaragua. New York: Anchor Books, 1992.

#### **The Sandino Affair**

MacAulay, Neill. The Sandino Affair. Wacahoota Press, 1998.

**Nicaragua: A Country Study**

Merrill, Tim L. Nicaragua: A Country Study. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1999.

**The Civil War in Nicaragua: Inside the Sandinistas**

Miranda, Roger. The Civil War in Nicaragua: Inside the Sandinistas. Somerset, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1993.

**At the Fall of Somoza**

Pezzullo, Lawrence. At the Fall of Somoza. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994.

**Nicaragua: A Guide to the People, Politics and Culture**

Plunkett, Hazel. Nicaragua: A Guide to the People, Politics and Culture. Northampton, Mass.: Interlink Publishing, 1999.

## COUNTRY-SPECIFIC LANGUAGE

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Every country has its own set of idioms, mannerisms, and phrases. There are even language differences from one community to the next. No need to worry though; your Spanish will serve you very well this semester/year and will allow you to communicate with community members. Below is a list of regional vocabulary that you should learn. For those of you who want to go above and beyond, check out the link below the vocabulary list for some websites with interactive learning tools.

<b><i>Spanish word</i></b>	Definition
<b><i>Arriba, Abajo</i></b>	West and East (where the sun comes up or sets) used in directions
<b><i>Chapas</i></b>	Earrings
<b><i>Chele/a</i></b>	Light skinned person (masculine/feminine)
<b><i>Comarca</i></b>	Community
<b><i>Pulperia</i></b>	Local small store
<b><i>Varas</i></b>	Meters, used to show distance
<b><i>Zipote</i></b>	Child
<b><i>Chavalos/as</i></b>	Children
<b><i>Idiay</i></b>	Very flexible term of exclamation (like say “are you serious?”)
<b><i>Va/dale pues</i></b>	Term of agreement/understanding usually used at end of conversation
<b><i>Cosa de horno</i></b>	Bread or pastry baked in outdoor oven

More vocabulary practice:

<http://www.languageguide.org/spanish/vocabulary/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicaraguan\\_Spanish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicaraguan_Spanish)

# AMIGOS HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER PROGRAM 2021

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## PROGRAM GOALS AND PILLARS

All AMIGOS programs and project areas are different! They are uniquely designed to fit the needs of our volunteers, partner agencies, host communities and the regions we work in. However, all programs are designed to meet 3 goals and uphold 5 pillars:

### Program Goals

1. Develop young people's personal leadership capacities.
2. Strengthen young people's commitment to community engagement and service.
3. Increase young people's cross-cultural capacity and competence.

### Program Pillars

1. Training and Curriculum

Volunteers build their leadership and community development skills through hands-on training. All programs include leadership, community service, and cross-cultural humility training. Volunteers have a hands-on training throughout the experience.

2. Language and Cultural Immersion

Volunteers are immersed in the culture and language of their host country by interacting with locals in the pod, collaborating with partner agency members, and participating in cultural activities and excursions.

3. Community Service

Volunteers learn about design-thinking and begin to think through the design of a service project that they will carry out upon arriving back home.

4. Mentorship

Every volunteer is mentored by a staff team member and receives personalized feedback on their development as a leader throughout their experience.

5. Reflection and Continued Engagement

Volunteers are guided through various reflection activities during their experience. Upon successful completion of a program, all alumni are encouraged to climb our leadership ladder to continue building their leadership skills as members of our project staff teams, our training teams, or through other opportunities.

## ROLE OF THE VOLUNTEER

As you prepare for the adventure that lies ahead, think about your role as an AMIGOS, as a member of a team, and group of fellow peers. How do you hope to integrate into the group while also learning about the local culture?

Keep in mind that sometimes it may be hard to find tangible benefits to your experience throughout the trip, because it won't be easy. However, your primary role as a volunteer on our programs is to **LEARN** about the local culture, to **PRACTICE** your Spanish with fellow group members and locals, to **SUPPORT** the work of your partner agency through your volunteer service work, to **FACILITATE** group activities, to **SHARE** your passions and to serve as a **CATALYST** for change and multi-cultural understanding.

You are a:

- Community action promoter
- Representative of your home community and your country
- Representative of AMIGOS
- Representative of your partner agency
- Guest in a foreign country and community
- Organizer, motivator, facilitator, role model, student, and friend
- Spanish-speaker
- Humble human being – you're going to discover that there is much more to learn than we have to teach. Be open to learning all that you can, and let your local contacts share their experiences and wisdom with you!



# PROJECT SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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## PROJECT THEME

**Renewable Energy & Local Communities:** This STEM program will take a deep dive into different types of renewable energy in Nicaragua. Travel throughout the country to observe solar power generation and usage in rural areas and geo-thermal energy from volcanoes. What affect does renewable energy have on communities in Nicaragua? How does this relate to conservation efforts on a global scale? Find out first-hand in the land of lakes and volcanoes!

## WORK AREA DESCRIPTION

**Somoto:** The capital city of the department of Madriz is the small city of Somoto. Somoto has an active urban center set around the ancient parochial church and a small museum with Pre-Columbian pieces that were found in the area. Outside the urban center of Somoto, there are two remarkable attractions: The Somoto Canyon (Cañón de Somoto) and Cacaúlí. The Cacaúlí area became a religious sanctuary after a little boy reported to have seen an image of Virgin Mary in 1990 and nowadays receives thousands of visitors every month, expressing their faith or asking for miracles.

Source: ViaNica.com

**Jinotega:** Jinotega is situated in the north central mountains of Nicaragua. The city itself lies in a picturesque valley, surrounded by high pine-tree covered mountains and rain forests. The urban center is rather peaceful and a good base from which to explore the surrounding areas. In the city, the Harvey Wells Museum displays an interesting assortment of artifacts relating to the history of the area going back to pre-Columbian times when indigenous tribes inhabited the area. The mountains around the city of Jinotega offer hikers several trails, some of which lead to historical sites such as the spot where Augusto C. Sandino had his headquarters during the struggle against foreign invaders. The surrounding area has many coffee farms, making it one of the most important places for coffee production in the country.

Source: Nicaragua.com

**León:** Situated in western Nicaragua, Leon is the second most important city after Managua. Blessed with graceful old architecture and a fascinating history, Leon has played a pivotal role in the country's history many times over. Modern day Leon may not be as important as it once was, but it serves as home to the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua, León, which has proved to be add constant liveliness to the city. One of the most popular attractions is the 18th century cathedral, officially known as the Basílica de la Asunción, which is the largest cathedral in Central America. Also of interest are the La Merced and the Xalteva churches, the Old Spanish Ammunition Fortress, the San Francisco Convent, and the beautifully carved Casa de los Leones.

Source: Nicaragua.com

## PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



### GRUPO FENIX ASSOCIATION

Grupo Fenix is a non-governmental organization (NGO) with a focus on sustainable development. They achieve the organizational sustainable development goals through inclusive small businesses that facilitate educational tourism opportunities. These activities cover topics such as solar energy, agroecology, and natural construction.

**Vision:** They are a sustainable organization that works with appropriate and innovative technologies to improve the quality of life of rural families and communities in the areas of health, education, employment, environment, and gender equity.

**Mission:** The mission of Grupo Fenix is to promote development through community empowerment by facilitating professional and cultural exchanges. Additionally, they also offer courses and continuing education for nationals and foreigners and in this way, they can generate employment and opportunities for growth.

**How we will work with Grupo Fenix:** They will be our primary partner agency on this program. During our time with the organization, we will learn about all the different activities that they facilitate in addition to participating in solar panel repairs, solar oven repairs, and the creation of natural insecticide among other things. It is an opportunity to learn from an organization that excels in sustainable community development.

# GENERAL PROJECT CALENDAR

This is a tentative calendar; the activities and days are subject to change.

Calendar of Activities	
Day 1	Arrive to the airport in the capital of Managua. Spend 1 night at a hotel in Managua.
Day 2	Eat breakfast at hotel in Managua and travel to Leon. Get settled at the house on the beach near Leon and participate in team-builders and orientation activities.
Day 3-10	Briefing + Quarantine: Spanish classes, briefing activities, outdoor fun, 1 COVID test (day 5), icebreakers, team building, and group tone setting.  Visit the geo-thermal plant near León and the mud pits of San Jacinto. Take a walk around the beautiful colonial city of Leon. Enjoy some time on the beach.
Day 10	Travel to Ocotal and get settled into the hotel.
Day 11-16	Learn from Grupo Fenix and get to know the area. Repair solar ovens, study photovoltaic systems, repair solar panels, and make natural insecticides.
Day 16	Travel to Jinotega, get settled in hostel, take a walk around the area.
Day 17-20	Learn about the different ways water is used to produce renewable energy. Visit the Lago de Apanas hydro-electric project, visit the ceramic cooperative, service project, and intercultural activities.
Day 20	Travel to Managua, get settled in the hotel, and begin debriefing activities. Spend the night before flying out the next day.
Day 21	Fly out of the Managua airport! Hasta Luego!

## POSSIBLE EXCURSIONS

On this program, you will get to know 3 different parts of the country. The dry highlands in and around León, the dry forest near Ocotal, and the humid and tropical forest in Jintoega. Each region offers something different and will provide us with a glimpse of Nicaragua.

**Mud pits of San Jacinto:** The earth literally boils! It's hot! San Jacinto is a little town about 20 kilometers northeast of León. Behind the village lie boiling mud holes, likely connected to the Telica volcano. The field is not big, but it is interesting as well as extremely hot. The holes, which differ in size and color, are pools of boiling mud. The mud sometimes throws little rocks in the air and steam is continuously emitted. The scenery is beautiful, with views over the volcanoes and mud pools. Source: Nicaraguan Trails



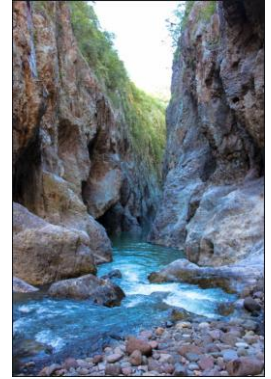
**Beach at Las Peñitas:** Las Peñitas is a fishermen beach, located very close to Poneloya. It has an estuary that connects it to the Juan Venado Island, a wildlife sanctuary that was declared a natural reserve due to its ecological diversity. Source: ViaNica.com

**Black Clay Ceramic Cooperative:** The San Expedito Cooperative is a women's ceramics co-op dedicated to producing high quality, artisanal Black Pottery. Made up of talented local artisans from the Las Cureñas community in the Department of Jinotega, they utilize traditional methods and designs to make Black Pottery the same way their ancestors did centuries ago. From harvesting the clay in local mines, to firing each piece in hand-built artisan kilns, each piece is meticulously made by hand, and their complete process pays tribute to Nicaraguan heritage and the authentic production of Nicaraguan Black Pottery. Source: Cooperative Website



**Lago de Apanás:** Built in 1964 after damming the Tuma River, Lake Apanás is –as of today- the habitat of a variety of lacustrine Flora and Fauna. Therefore, this artificial body is on the List of Wetlands of International Importance, declared by the Ramsar Convention in 2001. Additionally, it is a source of employment for the surrounding communities and hydropower for the country, without forgetting its stunning natural beauty that contributes to the gradual development of tourism in the area. Source: ViaNica.com

**Canyon de Somoto:** The Somoto Canyon, one of oldest rock formations in Central America. The vertical walls extend for approximately five miles, on a sinuous path whose width varies between 10 and 15 meters. The waters from the Comali River (from Honduras) and Tapacali join to form the extensive Coco River. In its bottom, the calmness of the water is interrupted by rocky formations that have created seven or eight small ponds filled with life, plants, and fish. The cliffs have a height of 120 and 150 meters. In the narrowest area, they are located five meters away from each other. According to the Nicaraguan Institute of Territorial Studies (INETER), these interesting columns are the result of a geological formation, combined with the erosive action of the water. It is said that it took between 5 to 15 million years to form, a period that belongs to the Quaternary and Tertiary Miocene. Source: ViaNica.com



\*\*This excursion is dependent on the water levels in the canyon. We may not be able to visit depending on the rain.\*\*

# PACKING LIST

You should bring clothes you already have from home and are comfortable wearing! You do not need to purchase a whole new wardrobe. Bags can get lost on their way to Nicaragua. Please remember to pack any essentials; including a change of clothes, toiletries, and prescription medications, in your carry-on luggage to tide you over should that happen.

Please be sure to read to entire packing list and all the extra tips. Remember that you will be living in a tropical and humid climate during the rainy season. For the first part of the trip, you will be at the beach in a hot climate and in mountainous areas with cooler climates where it is cold at night during the second half of the trip. **Note: Nicaragua is near the equator and the sun is very strong. Always wear sunscreen even if it is cloudy outside. Pay special attention to the suggested quantities.** If you have questions while you are packing, please do not hesitate to email us: [amigosprogramas@amigosinternational.org](mailto:amigosprogramas@amigosinternational.org)

## Clothing

- 1 pairs of jeans
- 2 pairs of work pants that you don't mind getting dirty (good for hikes and for excursions)
- 2 pairs of shorts,
- 1 pair of sweats, or yoga pants for exercise or for hanging around the house
- 5 comfortable t-shirts for working outside and/or exercising
- 1 nice shirt (polo, blouse, button-up, or t-shirts)
- 1 skirt or dress (if desired)
- AMIGOS polo
- 1 warm fleece jacket
- 7 pairs of underwear & socks
- 2 bras (if desired)
- 1 set of warm & conservative sleepwear
- 1 set of lightweight sleep wear for a warmer climate
- 1 pair of comfortable closed-toed shoes/tennis shoes
- 1 pair of hiking boots
- 1 pair of flip flops
- 1 pair of rubber sandals (e.g. Tevas, Chacos, Crocs, etc.)
- 1 swimsuit

## All Volunteers Should Bring

- 1 waterproof rain jacket (should fit over warm fleece jacket)
- 1 bottle of sunscreen (SPF 30 or greater)
- 1 hat with a brim (a baseball hat is fine)
- 1 reusable water bottles (1 liter—two 1-liter water bottles if not bringing a LifeStraw)
- 1 [LifeStraw Waterbottle](#) (highly recommended)\*

- 1 mosquito net and hanging supplies (refer to Required Immunization and Medication List)
- 1 pair of garden/work gloves
- 1 bottles of mosquito repellent
- A day bag/small backpack for carrying stuff on short trips
- Thermometer and basic first aid kit
- 2 washable face masks
- Prescription medications (if applicable)
- Toiletries: soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, shampoo, conditioner, razor, deodorant, hairbrush.
- 1 Washcloth and 1 towel (quick drying is recommended)
- Luggage Locks (these are useful for independent travel)
- Spanish-English dictionary
- Health, Safety, and Travel Guidelines*
- Project Information Packet (this packet)*
- Money & ATM card
- Passport & two copies of the first page of your passport
- COVID negative test results
- Plane tickets, if applicable, and confirmation codes for e-tickets

### Recommended Items

- Small, inexpensive camera and extra batteries or charger
- Journal & pens
- Small photo album with extra pictures of yourself or your family to give away
- Umbrella
- Sunglasses

### Optional Items

- Reading books (limit 2 - you can trade books with others)
- Board games & cards
- Multi-vitamins

\*\*LifeStraw water bottle information from website:

- Protects against 99.999999% of bacteria (including E. coli, Salmonella), 99.999% of parasites (including Giardia and Cryptosporidium), 99.999% of microplastics, chlorine, organic chemical matter, dirt, and, and cloudiness; improves taste
- Long-lasting membrane microfilter lasts up to 1,000 gallons (4,000 L) and the activated carbon filter lasts up to 26 gallons (100 L) of water with proper use and maintenance
- Durable and BPA-free, independently lab tested to meet drinking water protocols established by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and NSF International/ANSI
- 22oz and 1L capacity. Every fill avoids single use plastic bottled water! Easy to use, easy to clean bottle and cap are dishwasher safe once the filter is removed.