



SPECIALITY

LATIN AMERICA · RECOMMENDED 15 DAYS

✦ Concepción volcano, Ometepe

Nicaragua

Volcanoes, colonial cities and a Caribbean island

RECOMMENDED LENGTH

15 days

DEPARTURE

Any day

you pick the dates

TRANSPORT

Private driver

and private transfers

ESTIMATED FROM, EXCL.
FLIGHT

€1,520 p.p.

My recommended private route through Nicaragua: revolutionary León and the black Cerro Negro, three nights on the volcanic island of Ometepe, colonial Granada with Las Isletas, the glowing crater of Masaya and the cloud forest of Mombacho. You finish with four nights on Big Corn Island in the Caribbean Sea. You travel with your own party on your own dates; airport pickup, hotels, private drivers, the ferry and the domestic flight are arranged in advance.

✓ Put together personally

✓ No group travel

✓ At your own pace

✓ Leave out or add what you like

✓ Dates completely free

✓ Eat wherever you like

Highlights

- ★ On the white roof of León cathedral (UNESCO), overlooking the volcanic chain
- ★ Sliding down the black ash slope of Cerro Negro on a wooden board
- ★ Ometepe: two volcanoes in Lake Nicaragua, a waterfall, a kayak trip and a natural spring
- ★ The colourful colonial streets of Granada and a boat trip among Las Isletas
- ★ The glowing lava in the crater of Masaya volcano at dusk
- ★ Cloud forest, orchids and howler monkeys on Mombacho
- ★ Four nights on Big Corn Island: snorkelling on the reefs, a walk up to a lookout tower and a bike ride round the island

Best time to travel

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

best time to travel: advice only, you travel when you like

TRAVELLERS

Private: only your own party, from 1 traveller. No group travel, no fellow travellers you don't know.

LENGTH

Recommended: 15 days · shorter or longer is always possible

DATES

Completely flexible: you leave on the day that suits you.

Your route on the map



- 1 Managua**
2 nights · day 1, 14
- 2 León**
2 nights · day 2–3
- 3 Ometepe**
3 nights · day 4–6
- 4 Granada**
3 nights · day 7–9
- 5 Big Corn Island**
4 nights · day 10–13

---> overland, arrow = direction of travel
--> flight day trip

Map: Natural Earth (public domain) · the arcs show the order of the route, not the exact road



DAY 5 Maderas volcano on Ometepe seen from the beach



DAY 8 Glowing lava in the Masaya volcano crater

My recommended route

This is the route as I put it together for you. It is a starting point, not a fixed programme: leave out what doesn't appeal to you, add what you would like to do and travel at your own pace. Everything below is arranged for you in advance. Prefer a guide? I can add a local guide to any activity.

DAY 1 Arrival in Managua MANAGUA

Flight from Brussels with one or two connections to Managua; you usually land late in the evening. Your mandatory registration with Nicaraguan immigration is taken care of; have 10 US dollars in cash ready for the tourist card. A driver is waiting in the arrivals hall with a name sign. Your hotel is five minutes from the airport, so you can go straight to bed after the long journey.

DAY 2 Managua in brief and on to León LEÓN ♦ BREAKFAST

After a relaxed breakfast you leave at about 9.30 am with your private driver for a short visit to Managua: the Plaza de la Revolución with the old cathedral, empty since the 1972 earthquake, and the view over the city and the lake from Loma de Tiscapa. Then a drive of approx. 2 hours (100 km) to León. After lunch comes the first part of the city walk: the cathedral (UNESCO), where you walk on the white roof with a view of the volcanic chain, and the colonial quarter around it.



On the white roof of León Cathedral

DAY 3 León: Cerro Negro and the city LEÓN ♦ BREAKFAST

Early in the morning, while it is still cool, you are collected for Cerro Negro, a young black volcano an hour from León. You climb to the crater rim in 45 to 60 minutes and slide down the ash slope on a wooden board; if you would rather not, you walk down. The afternoon is for the second part of the city walk, at your own pace with our route notes: the Ortiz-Gurdián art museum, the murals about the revolution and La Recolectión church. Prefer something else? A visit to the Flor de Caña rum distillery in Chichigalpa, towards Chinandega (approx. 45 minutes), is also possible.

DAY 4 To the volcanic island of Ometepe OMETEPE ♦ BREAKFAST

Your private driver collects you at 9 am. The drive to the port of San Jorge takes approx. 4 hours (190 km); you have lunch close to the dock. You take the 2.30 pm ferry (approx. 1 hour), with views of the perfect cone of Concepción. In Moyogalpa a local driver is waiting and takes you in about an hour to your lodge in Balgüe, at the foot of Maderas volcano. You arrive before dark.

DAY 5 Ometepe: waterfall and kayak OMETEPE ♦ BREAKFAST

In the morning your driver takes you to the start of the trail to San Ramón waterfall, on the slope of Maderas: a walk of 3 to 4 hours there and back through the forest, with a steep climb at the end. After lunch you paddle up the Río Istián, the wetland between the two volcanoes, where you see herons, turtles, caimans and howler monkeys.

DAY 6**Ometepe: around Concepción** OMETEPE ♦ BREAKFAST

A day with your driver around the other half of the island. You start furthest from your lodge: the El Ceibo museums with pre-Columbian pottery and old coins, a walk in Charco Verde reserve (howler monkeys, birds, a green lagoon) and the sand spit of Punta Jesús María, which reaches far into the lake. On the way back you swim in the natural spring of Ojo de Agua. You set the pace.

DAY 7**To colonial Granada** GRANADA ♦ BREAKFAST

Your driver takes you to Moyogalpa for a morning ferry. In San Jorge your private driver is waiting for the drive of approx. 1.5 hours to Granada, where you arrive around midday. In the afternoon you walk through the oldest colonial city on the American mainland: the yellow cathedral, the bell tower of La Merced, the San Francisco convent and Calle La Calzada.



Granada Cathedral at sunset

DAY 8**Las Isletas and Masaya volcano** GRANADA ♦ BREAKFAST

In the morning you cruise in a private boat among the 365 islets of Las Isletas, formed by an eruption of Mombacho. In the afternoon your driver takes you to the Catarina viewpoint above the crater lake Laguna de Apoyo and to the Masaya handicraft market. At dusk you stand at the rim of the active crater of Masaya volcano, where with some luck you see the lava glow (subject to volcanic activity).

DAY 9**Mombacho nature reserve** GRANADA ♦ BREAKFAST

A full day on Mombacho, the volcano above Granada. Your driver takes you to the entrance; a reserve truck drives you up to the cloud forest at 1,150 metres. You walk the crater trail and, with a certified reserve guide (compulsory on this trail), the longer El Puma trail, among orchids, howler monkeys and fumaroles, with views of Granada, Las Isletas and the lake. On the way back you stop at a coffee estate on the slope. Bring a jumper: it is cool and often misty at the top.

DAY 10**Flight to Big Corn Island** BIG CORN ISLAND ♦ BREAKFAST

At 10 am your driver takes you in approx. 1 hour to Managua airport. Your large suitcase can stay in Managua; for the small plane you take a light bag. The 2 pm La Costeña flight takes approx. 1 hour 20 minutes (ticket included), sometimes with a short stop in Bluefields. On Big Corn Island a taxi takes you in a few minutes to your beach hotel, in the Caribbean Sea.

DAY 11**Snorkelling around Big Corn** BIG CORN ISLAND ♦ BREAKFAST

With a local snorkel boat you go to the reefs around the island: coral, rays, nurse sharks and shoals of tropical fish, in water of 28 degrees. The rest of the day is free on the beach.

DAY 12**A walk and the beach on Big Corn** BIG CORN ISLAND ♦ BREAKFAST

A quiet island day. In the morning, while it is still cool, a taxi takes you to South End. From there you walk in under an hour to the top of Mount Pleasant, the hill in the south of the island, where the lookout tower gives you a view all round Big Corn and its reefs. You spend the afternoon on Picnic Center beach in Southwest Bay: fine white sand, calm water for swimming and a restaurant under thatched shades. Fancy something extra? At the island's dive centre you can make a first dive with an instructor in the afternoon (Discover Scuba, indicative price approx. 70 US dollars p.p., not included).



Otto Beach on Little Corn Island

DAY 13**Big Corn on foot or by bike** BIG CORN ISLAND ♦ BREAKFAST

A free day. Bikes are ready for you: the ring road around the island is 12 kilometres long and takes you past Long Bay, the Quinn Hill viewpoint and the harbour of Brig Bay. My tip for the evening: lobster or rondón, the Caribbean fish stew with coconut.

DAY 14 **Back to Managua** MANAGUA ♦ BREAKFAST

Free morning on the beach. A taxi takes you to the airstrip for the afternoon flight to Managua (approx. 1 hour 20 minutes). A driver takes you to your hotel in Managua, where your suitcase is waiting. This night is a deliberate buffer: if the domestic flight is delayed by the weather, you still make your flight home.

DAY 15 **Flight home to Brussels** AAN BOORD ♦ BREAKFAST

A driver drops you at departures in good time, five minutes from your hotel. You fly home with one or two connections and land in Brussels the next day. A few days later I call you to hear how it went.

Good to know

Travel advice (Belgian FPS Foreign Affairs, updated 30 September 2026): travel to Nicaragua is possible with the usual precautions; there is no negative travel advice. However, the FPS calls the political situation very tense and asks for extra caution on the Caribbean coast, specifically on Corn Island and Little Corn Island (days 10–14 of this route). The FPS advises against the town of Bluefields; you do not stay there (the plane may at most make a short stop). Would you rather skip the Caribbean coast? Then we replace those days with the crater lake Laguna de Apoyo and a few beach days on the Pacific coast (e.g. Las Peñitas near León or the Tola coast). That also saves the domestic flight. We re-check the advice before every booking and before every departure.

What I arrange for you**1 Airport pickup**

At Managua airport a driver waits in the arrivals hall with a name sign; he tracks your flight and also waits if you land late or are delayed. Have 10 US dollars in cash ready for the tourist card. Your hotel is five minutes away. A driver is also waiting after the flight back from Big Corn Island, and on the last day you are dropped at departures in good time.

2 Hotels

Every night is booked and confirmed in advance, at the level you choose: Budget, Comfort or Premium. Prefer another hotel? I change it.

3 Transport

A private driver and private transfers for the whole route, with domestic flights, trains and boats where they make sense. All booked in advance.

4 Activities, at your pace

The activities and entrance tickets on the route. No guide or group travels with you: you set the pace, and anything you would rather skip, you simply leave out.

5 Eat wherever you like

Breakfast is included, as are the meals at remote camps and lodges where there is no alternative. For the rest I give you my restaurant tips, but you are completely free to choose where you eat. I never send you somewhere because it earns me something.

Estimated prices per person

PER PERSON, BASED ON 2 TRAVELLERS, EXCL. INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT

ACCOMMODATION LEVEL	Self-drive rental car, everything pre-booked	Private driver private transfers and driver
Budget simple, clean and well located	—	€1,520 p.p.
Comfort characterful mid-range	—	€1,990 p.p.
Premium the best addresses on the ground	—	€2,330 p.p.

WITH 4 TRAVELLERS approx. 13% off per person: you share the car and driver. E.g. Comfort, private driver: approx. €1,730 p.p.

TRAVELLING SOLO supplement of approx. 68%: you carry the room and transport alone. E.g. Comfort, private driver: approx. €3,345 p.p.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT

I book your flight as part of your trip; the flight price for your dates is in your personal quote. Return flight Brussels–Managua not included: allow about € 600–1,130 p.p. depending on the month (cheapest in April, most expensive in June and July). I find you the best flight with your quote.

SELF-DRIVE: NOT OFFERED ON THIS ROUTE

We do not offer self-drive in Nicaragua. The main roads are good and distances short, but the political situation is tense, police checkpoints are frequent and after an accident you may not move the car until the police arrive; as a foreigner you are then in a weak position, all the more because Belgium has no embassy in the country. Moreover, you do not need a car for half the trip: on Ometepe a local driver takes you around and you fly to the Corn Islands. In Nicaragua a private driver costs hardly more than a rental car with full insurance.

WITH A PRIVATE DRIVER

You travel with trusted private drivers: one for the mainland (Managua, León, San Jorge, Granada, Masaya, Mombacho) and a local driver on Ometepe, who is at your disposal for three days. They collect you at your hotel, the airport or the dock at the time stated in your travel documents and drive in daylight only. The ferry and the flight to Big Corn Island are included; on the island you take a taxi for a dollar, or the bike. Drivers speak Spanish and sometimes English; I can always interpret over WhatsApp.

ESTIMATED PRICES

Estimated prices: per person, based on 2 travellers sharing a room, excl. international flight, estimated from desk research (2027 price level). The binding price is the one in your personal proposal and booking confirmation.

Estimated price. In high season the price can be higher, in low season lower; your exact price is in your personal quote.

Three accommodation levels

Budget

Simple, well-reviewed guesthouses and small hotels, always with a private bathroom: e.g. a small guesthouse with a plant-filled terrace in Managua, a private room in a friendly hostel in a historic house in León, a garden hotel looking out on Concepción volcano on Ometepe, a courtyard hostel with a pool in Granada and a simple seafront guesthouse on Big Corn Island. Where a hotel has no breakfast, I add it. Indicative price approx. €35–65 per room per night.

Comfort

Characterful boutique and garden hotels: e.g. a colonial boutique hotel in Managua on the first night and a garden hotel with a pool on the last night, a restored colonial building facing an old church in León, a beachfront hotel on Santo Domingo beach on Ometepe, a colourful garden hotel with a pool in Granada and bungalows among the palms on the beach of Big Corn Island. Indicative price approx. €85–145 per room per night.

Premium

The finest addresses on the route: e.g. a large hotel with a pool and spa right next to Managua airport, a stately colonial mansion with a colonnaded courtyard and a pool in León, a suite with a mountain view in a small guesthouse at the foot of Maderas on Ometepe, a guesthouse with a long courtyard pool in Granada and a sea-view suite with a pool on Big Corn Island. On Ometepe premium stays small-scale and charming rather than international luxury. Indicative price approx. €110–250 per room per night.

Possible guided moments

Prefer a guide? I can add a local guide to any activity.

- ✦ Mombacho: the El Puma trail is only allowed with a certified reserve guide; this guide is included
- ✦ Managua: a local guide for Plaza de la Revolución and Loma de Tiscapa
- ✦ León and Granada: a city guide for the cathedral and the colonial quarter
- ✦ Ometepe: a driver-guide instead of just a driver for the island day
- ✦ Masaya: a guide for Catarina, the market and the crater at dusk
- ✦ Ometepe (as an extra): climbing Concepción or Maderas, only with a local guide
- ✦ Prefer a guide? I can add a local guide to any activity.

Ideas to adapt the route

- Shorter (10–12 days): without the Corn Islands, with a last night at Laguna de Apoyo
- Prefer to skip the Caribbean coast: Laguna de Apoyo and beach days on the Pacific coast (Las Peñitas or Tola) instead of Big Corn Island
- The Flor de Caña rum distillery in Chichigalpa and Chinandega as an extra half day from León
- Climbing Maderas or Concepción on Ometepe, only with a local guide (strenuous day hike)
- Longer: the coffee highlands of Matagalpa or the Río San Juan, or an extension to Costa Rica

Included

- ✓ 14 nights at the comfort level of your choice (Budget, Comfort or Premium): hotels and small lodges, double room with breakfast
- ✓ Airport pickup in Managua and drop-off at departures on the last day
- ✓ All private transfers and private drivers on the mainland and on Ometepe, the ferry to Ometepe and the taxis on Big Corn Island
- ✓ Domestic return flight Managua–Big Corn Island, with baggage
- ✓ The El Puma trail on Mombacho with the compulsory certified reserve guide
- ✓ All listed excursions and entrance fees: León cathedral roof, volcano boarding on Cerro Negro, San Ramón waterfall, Río Istián, Ojo de Agua, Charco Verde, El Ceibo, Las Isletas, Masaya at dusk, Mombacho, snorkel trip and bikes on Big Corn
- ✓ Advance registration with Nicaraguan immigration: I help you with it

Not included

- International flight (optional add-on; allow approx. €600–1,130 pp, depending on the month)
- Nicaragua tourist card (USD 10, cash on arrival)
- Meals other than breakfast, and drinks (you get my restaurant recommendations)
- Optional activities (e.g. Flor de Caña rum distillery, diving on the Corn Islands, climbing Maderas or Concepción, only with a local guide)
- Tips for drivers, skippers and guides
- Travel and cancellation insurance
- Personal expenses

Practical information

VISA (BELGIAN CITIZENS)

No visa required for a tourist stay (up to 90 days). Passport valid for at least 6 months on arrival. Mandatory online registration with immigration, according to the FPS at least 8 days before arrival (I help you with it). Tourist card and arrival tax USD 10, cash. The Nicaraguan government can refuse entry without explanation (journalists, NGO staff, religious workers and researchers are most at risk).

HEALTH

No mandatory vaccinations when arriving from Belgium (a yellow fever certificate is only required after a stay in a risk country; a transit of less than 12 hours does not normally count). Hepatitis A recommended; Wanda reports a chikungunya outbreak in the Managua region. Dengue and Zika occur: protect against mosquitoes. Malaria: low risk on this route, including the Corn Islands (mosquito protection is sufficient). Medical care is limited, especially on the Corn Islands: travel assistance insurance with repatriation is essential. Consult a travel clinic (ITG/Wanda).

CURRENCY & PAYMENT

Córdoba (NIO), approx. 36.6 per US dollar; US dollars are accepted almost everywhere. Bring small, undamaged dollar notes. There are few ATMs on Ometepe and the Corn Islands: withdraw cash beforehand.

FLIGHT TIME FROM BRUSSELS

No direct flight; approx. 17–22 hours with one or two connections (e.g. via Madrid and Panama City or San Salvador). A routing via the United States requires an ESTA.

TIME DIFFERENCE

UTC-6: 7 hours behind Belgium in winter, 8 hours in summer.

LANGUAGE

Spanish; Creole English is also spoken on the Corn Islands.

MEALS

Breakfast is included every day. For the other meals you get my restaurant recommendations, but you are completely free to choose where and when you eat: I never steer you to expensive restaurants in return for a commission.

GUIDES

By default you travel without a guide. Prefer a guide? I can add a local guide to any activity.

As of September 2026 — check diplomatie.belgium.be (travel advice) and wanda.be (health) before you travel.

Travelling responsibly

In Nicaragua we deliberately choose small family-run hotels, local drivers, skippers and, if you want one, local guides so tourism money reaches ordinary Nicaraguans. On Ometepe you stay at lodges that work with solar power, compost toilets and people from the village. On the Corn Islands we use local skippers, you use reef-safe sunscreen and you do not touch coral. The only domestic flight is the one to the Corn Islands; everything else is done by road and water. Flight CO₂ offsetting is available.



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Contact & booking

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Put together personally by Yari, down to the last detail. — Yari Steennot

No group travel and no fixed dates: you travel privately, at your own pace. Leave out what doesn't appeal to you, add what you like. I give you my restaurant tips, but you choose freely where you eat: nobody sends you to expensive restaurants for a commission.

MY CONTACT ON THE GROUND: [\[contact name\]](#)

ESTIMATED PRICES

Estimated prices: per person, based on 2 travellers sharing a room, excl. international flight, estimated from desk research (2027 price level). The binding price is the one in your personal proposal and booking confirmation. Ask for a no-obligation personal intake call or a proposal. Other dates, more or fewer days, something left out or added? Everything can be adapted.

This trip is a package under the Belgian Act of 21 November 2017 on the sale of package travel, linked travel arrangements and travel services. Before you sign, you receive the standard information form and our travel conditions. Steennot Travels is insured against insolvency with [insurer, address, policy number — to be completed]: in case of insolvency, payments are refunded and, where transport is included, repatriation is guaranteed. All prices are indicative estimates; the binding price is the one in your booking confirmation.

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COVER Concepción volcano, Ometepe — Photo: Hulivili · CC BY 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Concepción_volcano_-_Ometepe_island.jpg · *cropped, resized*

DAY 2 On the white roof of León Cathedral — Photo: Adam Jones from Kelowna, BC, Canada · CC BY-SA 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0) · [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:View_of_Cathedral_from_Roof_-_Leon_-_Nicaragua_\(31548746806\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:View_of_Cathedral_from_Roof_-_Leon_-_Nicaragua_(31548746806).jpg) · *cropped, resized*

DAY 5 Maderas volcano on Ometepe seen from the beach — Photo: BluesyPete · CC BY-SA 3.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:OmetepeView_07.jpg · *cropped, resized*

DAY 7 Granada Cathedral at sunset — Photo: JacobKlinger · CC BY-SA 3.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cathedral_of_Granada_at_sunset.jpg · *resized*

DAY 8 Glowing lava in the Masaya volcano crater — Photo: Leon petrosyan · CC BY-SA 4.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Masaya_Volcano_-_crater.jpg · *cropped, resized*

DAY 12 Otto Beach on Little Corn Island — Photo: Brian Johnson & Dane Kantner · CC BY-SA 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Otto_Beach,_Little_Corn_Island.jpg · *resized*