

Puntos de Vida in Nicaragua

Vibrant culture & nature in Central America

16 Days
30.11. - 15.12.2024

10-15
Participants

From/back to
Frankfurt

This trip shows you the diversity and beauty of Nicaragua: the original Solentiname archipelago and the island of Ometepe in the great Lake Nicaragua, the colonial pearls of Granada and León, the lush green highlands with their coffee and cocoa plantations, the Caribbean coast and the impressive Volcanoes of Central America. You will immerse yourself in the abundant diversity of the fauna and flora of the cloud and rainforest, peer into the bubbling maw of a volcano, learn about the traditions of the Arte Naif artists and indigenous potters and taste one of the most famous liqueurs on earth. You will visit a coffee plantation in the highlands, a cocoa finca in the east of the country and enjoy fresh seafood on a sandy beach lined with mangroves. The many '*Puntos de Vida*' where you can meet the locals and get to know their culture are also an enriching experience. At the beginning and end of the trip you will spend the night in Costa Rica.



Experience
culture



Enjoy
nature



This trip is partly off the tourist routes, so you will partly stay in more rustic/simple accommodation. However, all of the accommodations are clean, the rooms have private bathrooms, and the hospitable atmosphere makes up for the missing stars.

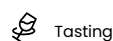
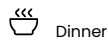
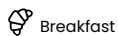


Authentic & sustainable

- Small group (10-15 travelers)
- CO2 compensation for flights and country-based services (4,821 t per passenger) via Atmosfair
- Overnight stays in Nicaragua in family-run and owner-run hotels
- « **Puntos de Vida** » On this tour we always invite you to linger at so-called "Puntos de Vida" ("places of life"). These are places where people authentically live and preserve their traditions and culture. In these places, the living culture of Nicaragua can be experienced in an outstanding way for visitors. The "Punto de Vida" are shaped by locals who, for years and from generation to generation, have taken care to protect their culture, their traditions, their language, their cuisine, their music, their dances, their roots and the protection of their natural resources because in doing so they preserve their Nicaraguan identity. You will see that these encounters will be enriching moments of your trip and will bring you closer to the people and their culture. You will meet interesting people almost everywhere and the smiles of the hospitable Nicaraguans will always greet you warmly.



Travel itinerary



Day 1

Flight to Costa Rica

At 1:30 p.m. flight with Lufthansa to San Jose (flight duration approx. 12.5 hours/arrival at 7:00 p.m.). Welcome by your local tour guide and transfer to the hotel (approx. 11 kilometers/approx. 25 minutes drive).



Overnight stay at the Hotel Buena Vista**** in Alajuela

Day 2

Arenal: Vulkan & Wasserfall



Drive along green coffee, fern and strawberry plantations to Arenal Volcano National Park (approx. 135 kilometers/approx. three hours driving time). In the afternoon you hike at the foot of the **volcano** through secondary tropical **cloud forest** and lava fields. On the way, you will be amazed by the **panoramic views** of the majestic volcanic cone.



Overnight stay at the Hotel Arenal Observatory Lodge*** in the Arenal Volcano National Park

Day 3

Art & Culture on the Solentiname Archipelago



After breakfast, you continue your journey to the "Las Tabillas" border crossing (approx. 130 kilometers/approx. 2.5 hours travel time). Your Costa Rican tour guide will support you in completing border formalities. In **Nicaragua** you will be welcomed by your local tour guide and you drive together to **San Carlos** (approx. 30 kilometers/approx. 40 minutes travel time). After the tour of the historic fishing village, you will take a boat (approx. one hour) to the main island of Nicaragua's National Monument, **the Solentiname island archipelago**. It consists of 36 islands with tropical forests, colorful houses and an Arte Naif painters' colony. Marvel at the **archipelago's 2,000-year-old indigenous stone drawings and creative balsa wood artists (Punto de Vida)**. If you want, you can paint your own bird of paradise.



Dinner and overnight at the Hotel Mancarrón-Solentiname***

Travel itinerary

Day 4

Los Guatuzos nature reserve & artist family on La Vernanda



The **Los Guatuzos Nature Reserve** is the first internationally recognized RAMSAR wetland in Nicaragua. A boat trip takes you up the small jungle river **Rio Papaturro**. Experience a beautiful tropical gallery forest and a **unique biodiversity**: monkeys, crocodiles, iguanas, sloths, turtles, toucans and white herons, the natural guardians of the nature park. On the way, you'll learn the deeper secrets of the rainforest on a two-hour hike and maybe even meet a small poison dart frog. Lunch at the hotel. In the afternoon you take a boat tour on the lake and visit a **family of naive art painters on the island of La Venada** (Punto de Vida).



Dinner and overnight at the Hotel Mancarrón-Solentiname***

Day 5

Ometepe island



After breakfast, a private boat will take you across the "Sweet Sea" to the twin **volcano island of Ometepe** in approximately three hours. Legend has it that the 8,264 km² Lake Nicaragua was once created from the tears of an indigenous people - which is why it is still a sacred body of water for shamans today. Around midday you arrive in the idyllic harbor town of Moyogalpa and continue by bus (approx. 45 minutes) to the legendary **Charco Verde** lagoon. If you're lucky, you can hear and see howler monkeys on a **short hike** around the lagoon. In the Ometepes Archaeological Museum - a little gem - the history of the island's indigenous people is explained using great finds (Punto de Vida). In the afternoon you will reach your hotel in the center of the island.



Overnight stay at the Finca Hotel San Juan de la Isla*** on Ometepe

Day 6

Colonial pearl Granada



Today you leave the paradise, drive (approx. 45 minutes) to the island port and from there take a private boat to **Granada** in about an hour. The beautiful colonial city is celebrating its 500th anniversary this year. Let yourself be surprised by the charm of the impressive architecture, the old streets and lively squares. **The horse-drawn carriages (Punto de Vida)** will be waiting at the harbor to take you to your hotel. After checking in, immerse yourself in **the history of the oldest colonial city on the American continent**.



Overnight stay at the colonial hotel Plaza Colon**** in Granada



Travel itinerary

Day 7

Day Trip: Artisan Villages & Volcanoes



The view from the village of Catarina across **Laguna Apoyo** to **Lake Nicaragua** and the **Mombacho volcano** is simply stunning! You will visit the **handicraft villages** - the Pueblos Blancos - and the city of **San Juan de Oriente**. In the Valentin Lopez pottery school and workshop (Punto de Vida) you will learn the secrets of indigenous pottery. Afterwards visit the Masaya handicraft market. Would you like some refreshment? How about a refreshing swim in the clear water of the lagoon? At dusk you will experience an unforgettable moment in the Masaya Volcano National Park: close to the Santiago crater you can look directly into the deep vent in which a large glowing lava lake is constantly bubbling. The information center displays provide a fact-filled history of the volcano as well as other relevant information about the national park. (Today a total of approx. 130 kilometers / approx. 3-4 hours driving time.)



Overnight stay in the colonial hotel Plaza Colon****

Day 8

Walk in the dwarf cloud forest, free time in Granada



In the morning you will visit the sleeping **Mombacho volcano**. You climb the 1,344 m high summit in a rustic vehicle. From the mountain hut of the "Fundación Cocibolca", which manages this protected area, you hike (approx. one hour) through the **mystical tropical dwarf cloud forest** (Punto de Vida). You will always be surprised with wonderful views of Lake Nicaragua and the 365 small isletas in the lake off **Granada**. In the afternoon there is free time for your own discoveries in **Granada**. (Today a total of approx. 60 kilometers/approx. two hours driving time.)



Overnight stay in the colonial hotel Plaza Colon****



Travel itinerary

Day 9

Managua & Viejo Leon, sugar cane & rum



The destination for the day is the university town Leon. On the way there, you'll stop in **the capital Managua** and walk through the old town to Parque Central, Revolution Square and the historic cathedral. As you continue towards the Pacific you will visit **León Viejo** (Old León). Only the foundation walls of the old city's foundation can still be seen there, but they are fascinating; and unique in Latin America: the city, buried under its ash in 1610 by eruptions of the nearby Momotombo volcano, was not changed later and thus gives a wonderful Evidence of the first settlements of the conquerors and the suffering of the local indigenous people at the time (**UNESCO cultural heritage**). In Chichigalpa, **home of the San Antonio sugar mill, the Flor de Caña rum distillery beckons**. There you will immerse yourself in the world of rum and visit the bottling plant, the rum barrel warehouse and the museum, where you will learn more about the process and history of one of the most famous liqueurs in the world. Of course, you will also taste some of the good wines from the "Flor de Caña". In the evening you arrive in what is now León, the capital of Nicaragua for a long time (today's driving distance is approx. 270 kilometers / approx. 4-5 hours driving time).

Overnight stay at the colonial hotel El Convento***(*) in León



Day 10

Cultural León, walk along the Pacific



The walk in the historic center of León will show you the beauties of this cultural pearl: you will visit the famous cathedral (UNESCO World Heritage Site), the Bishop's Palace, an allegorical mural on the history of the city, the small museum dedicated to the writer Ruben Darío and the local fruit market. From the tower of the cathedral, you can enjoy a wonderful view over the city and the nearby volcanic chain. Spend the afternoon with a relaxing walk **on "Las Penitas" beach**. Listen to the waves of the Pacific Ocean - with a bit of luck the weather will be kind to you and your leisure time will be crowned by a unique sunset. (Today's total distance is approx. 42 kilometers/approx. one hour driving time).

Overnight stay in the colonial hotel El Convento***(*)



Day 11

Matagalpa: coffee finca in the highlands



Today you travel to northern Nicaragua, to the **highlands of Matagalpa** (approx. 150 kilometers/approx. 3-4 hours driving time). The region has been known for growing high-quality coffee since the mid-19th century. In one of the most beautiful private cloud forest reserves in the country, hidden among the towering jungle trees, lies **Selva Negra (Punto de Vida)**. Enjoy the tour (approx. 3-4 hours) through the coffee farm. You will learn interesting facts about **gourmet coffee production** and the history of the finca, about the sustainable use of by-products and social programs. Of course, a cup of delicious highland coffee is included.

Overnight stay at the Berghotel Selva Negra*** in Selva Negra



Travel itinerary

Day 12

Basalt statues in Juigalpa, Finca "El Cacao"



A long day of driving - ideal for reflecting on what you've experienced so far. You leave the mountains and travel towards the legendary **Caribbean coast**, observing the gradual change in the landscape along the way (a total of approx. 365 kilometers / approx. 6-7 hours driving time). In the Gregorio Aguilar Barea Archaeological Museum of **Juigalpa** you will be amazed at the extraordinary stone carvings and other artifacts of **the Sierra de Amerisque**. Some of the impressive basalt statues, some over four meters high, have already been loaned to famous museums (e.g. the Louvre). Continue to El Rama. The name of the place refers to the Rama ethnic group, who lived in this area and did not allow themselves to be subjugated by British pirates and other Europeans. This is where Nicaragua's Caribbean culture begins to become noticeable. The last kilometers to **the finca "El Cacao"** lead through bamboo and palm tree plantations. A warm welcome awaits you on the plantation - a perfect approach to the "basic material of happiness", the precious cocoa, with which Ritter Sport makes its well-known squares in Germany Chocolate bars produced. Let the cocoa specialists surprise you and get to know the **chocolate production** process. Dinner at the finca.



Overnight stay in the rustic guest house of Finca El Cacao**

Day 13

Day trip to the Caribbean coast



The majority of residents on the **Caribbean coast** are of Creole descent; Creole and English are spoken here. You drive to Laguna de Perlas and from there take a boat to **the paradisiacal Pearl Keys** (Cayos Perlas). Along the mangrove-lined sandy beaches, 18 small communities of **Garifuna** indigenous people make their living from shrimp and lobster fishing. Enjoy the beautiful sandy beaches, crystal clear water and picture-perfect coconut palms. **A local seafood specialty is served for lunch.** (Total distance approx. 100 kilometers / travel time approx. two hours.)



Overnight stay in the rustic guest house of Finca El Cacao**

Day 14

Departure from Nicaragua, Wellness in Costa Rica



From El Cacao you drive south to San Carlos, walk a little through the fishing village on southern Lake Nicaragua. After the lunch break, the journey continues (a total of approx. 240 kilometers / approx. four hours) to the border **town of Las Tabillas**. Your Nicaraguan guide will help with border formalities. Your tour guide will be waiting in Costa Rica and will take you to **La Fortuna** (distance approx. 100 kilometers / approx. two hours travel time). In the afternoon, the hot, sulphureous springs of the hot spring pool area entice you. End your trip in a relaxing way with a bath in the hot springs. The mineral-rich thermal water has a positive effect on relaxing the muscles, cleansing the skin and balancing the entire body.



Overnight stay at the Hotel Volcano Lodge***(*) in La Fortuna

Travel itinerary

Day 15

Departure from Latin America



You can spend the morning according to your own taste. In the afternoon you will be picked up and taken to San Jose (approx. 125 kilometers/approx. three hours drive) so that you arrive at the airport there in good time. At 8:50 p.m. departure with Lufthansa towards Europe (flight time to Frankfurt approx. eleven hours)

Day 16

Arrival in Frankfurt

You will land in Frankfurt at 3 p.m.

Program and flight times subject to change. The travel times stated are the actual travel time (excluding breaks and photo stops).



Included services:

- Flight with Lufthansa Frankfurt – San Jose – Frankfurt (economy, fare class Q, subject to availability)
- Airport fees and kerosene €441.00 (as of 02/2024)
- CO2 compensation via Atmosfair
- Entry and exit fees Costa Rica and Nicaragua, tourist card Nicaragua (as of 03/2024)
- 1 night at the Hotel Buena Vista**** in Alajuela, in a double room including breakfast.
- 1 night at the Hotel Arenal Observatory Lodge*** in the Arenal Volcano National Park, in a double room including breakfast.
- 2 nights at the Hotel Solentiname-Mancarrón*** on the Solentiname archipelago, in a double room including breakfast.
- 1 night in the Finca Hotel San Juan de la Isla*** on Ometepe, in a double room including breakfast.
- 3 nights at the Hotel Plaza Colon**** in Granada, in a double room including breakfast.
- 2 nights at the Hotel El Convento***(*) in León, in a double room including breakfast.
- 1 night at the Ecolodge Selva Negra *** in Selva Negra, in a double room including breakfast.
- 2 nights in the guest house of Finca El Cacao** on Finca El Cacao, in a double room including breakfast.
- 1 night at the Hotel Volcano Lodge***(*) in La Fortuna, in a double room including breakfast.
- 4x lunch, 5x dinner
- San Juan-Solentiname, Solentiname-Ometepe and Ometepe-Granada crossings by private boat
- Transfers, excursions and sightseeing according to the program.
- Local English speaking tour guides (Costa Rica/Nicaragua)
- Travel literature

Not included are: Lufthansa seat reservations, additional excursions, meals not mentioned, drinks, individual travel insurance, tips, local tourism tax, personal expenses.

Prices (per person)

Double/twin room	5.295,00 €
Single room	6.390,00 €

Minimum number of participants: 10, maximum number of participants: 15.

Important information

To enter Costa Rica and Nicaragua, Luxembourgers and Germans need a passport that is valid for at least six months at the time of entry. The passport must be in good condition and have at least two blank pages left. All Covid-19-related restrictions have currently been lifted. We would like to point out that this can change depending on the pandemic situation (as of February 2024).

This trip is partly off the beaten track, so you will sometimes stay in more rustic/simple accommodation. However, all are clean, the rooms have private bathrooms, and the hospitable atmosphere makes up for the missing stars. Almost all accommodations offer WiFi, although network coverage is not always perfect. Please note that many hotels and lodges only offer non-smoking rooms. If some of the accommodations we have booked are unforeseen to be unavailable, we will book a (preferably) equivalent alternative.

For air travel, our sales prices are generally based on special and tour operator tariffs of the airline(s) selected for the relevant trip. Therefore, the space available is limited; additional charges may apply for bookings made three months before the start of the trip.

With the travel documents you will receive further information about the trip and the destination country.

No insurance is included in the travel price. We strongly recommend taking out travel cancellation insurance that includes Covid-19 as well as appropriate travel health insurance that includes treatment (including quarantine) for Covid-19.

This trip is not suitable for guests with mobility issues. If necessary, please tell us the type of mobility restriction you have before booking and clarify with us whether we can meet your individual needs.

Planet B is a brand of Bollig Tours s. à r. l. Bollig Tours is therefore named as the organizer in our general travel conditions.



The accommodations

The Hotel **Buena Vista****** in Alazuela is a good choice for your first night, you can relax wonderfully after the long flight. The approximately 35m2 large, stylishly furnished rooms are equipped with free WiFi, a flat-screen cable TV and a coffee machine. The hotel offers a restaurant serving international cuisine and a small outdoor pool.



The **Arenal Observatory Lodge***** blends harmoniously into the lush green landscape of the Arenal Volcano National Park. The approximately 20m2 rooms are spread across different buildings, with views of the rainforest, the volcano (weather permitting) or Lake Arenal. All rooms have a balcony or terrace to enjoy the view and are equipped with a fan and coffee/tea making facilities. The hotel attaches great importance to sustainability.

The Solentiname archipelago is still a very pristine paradise, far away from the tourist crowds. You stay in the family-run **Hotel Mancarrón-Solentiname***** (sustainable tourism concept), located directly on the shore of Lake Nicaragua. The 15 simply furnished rooms feature private bathrooms, wardrobes and safes. You can walk through the tropical garden to the hotel's own beach. You can relax wonderfully in the hammocks, and Nicaraguan specialties are served in the restaurant. The unique atmosphere in the middle of nature is unbeatable.



The accommodations



Located directly on Lake Nicaragua, with a wonderful view of the Concepcion volcano, the **Hotel/Finca San Juan***** is also a little paradise. The approximately 20m2, rustically furnished non-smoking rooms are spread over several units and are equipped with a private bathroom, air conditioning, fan, safe and terrace. The hotel has a restaurant and a casual bar.

In Granada you will stay at the **Hotel Plaza Colon******, the authentic gem from the colonial era is located in the historic center of the city. The approximately 26m2 non-smoking rooms are furnished with dark wood furniture and have air conditioning, safe, minibar (payable locally), flat-screen TV and desk.



The **Hotel El Convento***(*)** in León is also a gem. Located near the cathedral, the former monastery impresses with its historical charm. The approximately 26m2, ground-floor non-smoking rooms are equipped with air conditioning, refrigerator, minibar (for a fee locally), safe, desk, flat-screen TV and free WiFi. The hotel has a bar and a small outdoor pool.

The accommodations

The **Selva Negra Eco Lodge***** is located in the green highlands of Nicaragua - the organic farm is also a coffee farm. The rooms are spread over several units and have a veranda where you can relax. The water in the shower in the (private) bathroom is heated with solar power. The motto in the restaurant is "from the farm to the table", and all products come from our own cultivation.



The El Cacao cocoa plantation is located in the east of Nicaragua, where you will stay overnight in the rustic **El Cacao**** guesthouses. The rooms are clean and simply furnished, all have a private bathroom. Clearly, no luxury is to be expected here, but rather an authentic experience and comprehensive insights into the sustainably managed plantation.

The **Volcano Lodge***(*)** in La Fortuna is located at the foot of the picture-perfect Arenal volcano, surrounded by a tropical garden. The approximately 40m² rooms (with a partial view of the Arenal) are rustically and comfortably furnished with hand-made furniture and works by local artists. All have air conditioning and ceiling fans, flat-screen TVs, refrigerators, coffee-making facilities and a terrace. There is a wellness area with thermal water, an outdoor pool, a restaurant and a bar. The hotel places great emphasis on sustainability.



Copyrights of the photos used: Milosk50_adobe.stock, chris_adobe.stock; Carlos_adobe.stock, RioDeluz_adobe.stock, per_adobe.stock, Immanuel Zerger, Esdelval and the accommodations mentioned.