

NICARAGUA WINTER GET-AWAY

January 21, 2019 - 18 Days



a world to experience



Fares Per Person:

\$7270 double/twin

\$8695 single



- > This tour is limited to 25 people. Early booking recommended! 
- > Tour is exempt from GST.
- > **Early Bookers:** \$300 discount on first 8 seats; \$150 on next 4
- > **Experience Points:** Earn 136 points; redeem 136 points by October 4.

Includes

- Coach transportation to/from Seattle Airport
- Flight from Seattle to Managua, Nicaragua
- Current air taxes, fees and fuel surcharges
- Transfer from Managua Airport to hotel
- 17 nights accommodation and hotel taxes
- Coach transportation throughout Nicaragua
- Expert local guides and naturalists
- Basilica Catedral de La Asuncion
- Ruben Dario Museum
- Ortiz Gurdian Art Foundation
- Leyendas y Tradiciones Museum
- Subtiaba Indigenous Town
- San Jacinto Hot Springs
- Coffee plantation tour at Matagalpa
- Sustainable farm tour
- City tour of Esteli
- Agriculture tour of La Garnacha
- Cultural Center Convento San Francisco
- Dona Elba Cigar Factory tour
- Truck transportation to top of Mombacho Volcano with bird walk
- La Merced Church and bell tower
- Choco Museo tour with chocolate tasting
- Boat tour to Zopango Island with bird watching
- Ferry to/from Isla de Ometepe
- Tour of island with Punta Jesus Maria and Ojo de Agua
- Village tour of San Juan del Sur
- City tour of Managua with Cathedral and National Palace
- Transfer from Managua hotel to airport
- Flight from Managua to Seattle
- Luggage handling at hotels and airlines
- Gratuities to local guides, drivers and naturalists
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
- **47 meals:** 17 breakfasts, 15 lunches, 15 dinners

Kamloops > 250-374-0831
Kelowna > 250-762-3435
www.wellsgraytours.com

Penticton > 250-493-1255
Vernon > 250-545-9197
Toll Free > 800-667-9552



NICARAGUA — A WINTER PARADISE

Nicaragua is the largest country in the Central American isthmus, bordering Honduras to the north and Costa Rica to the south. The Pacific Ocean lies to the west and the Caribbean Sea to the east. The country's physical geography divides it into three major zones: Pacific Lowlands, Central Highlands, and Caribbean Lowlands. Nicaragua has an abundance of biologically significant and unique ecosystems, and nearly one fifth of the country is protected in national parks, nature reserves, and biological reserves. Tourism is growing rapidly and became Nicaragua's #1 industry in 2007. There are still more tourists who visit Costa Rica, but Nicaragua is catching up and is still more reasonably priced in the winter months.

During this unique tour, we travel through some of the richest habitats of Nicaragua, from the Pacific Lowlands to the Central Volcanic Highlands, from Central America's two largest fresh water lakes (Lago de Managua and Lago de Nicaragua) to the Pacific beaches, and from colonial towns built in the 16th century to modern cities. The tour is accompanied throughout by a Wells Gray tour director and a bilingual Nicaraguan guide. A variety of fine hotels is arranged such as Barcelo in bustling Managua, El Convento in historic Leon, and Hotel Colonial in Granada. One highlight of the tour is our four-night stay at Pelican Eyes Resort, situated on a hillside overlooking the Pacific at San Juan del Sur.

Come and admire the natural and historic wonders of Nicaragua and get away from a Canadian winter for 2½ relaxing weeks.

Itinerary

Monday, January 21:

Meals: L

We travel via the Coquihalla Highway, cross the border, and follow I-5 south to Seattle. We stay overnight near Seattle airport.

Tuesday, January 22:

Meals: B,D

We fly to **Managua**. Our overnight stay is at the four-star Hotel Barcelo. **Welcome to Nicaragua.**

Wednesday, January 23:

Meals: B,L,D

Leaving Managua, we drive about two hours northwest to the **colonial city of Leon**. It was founded in 1524 by Spanish conquistadors at the base of Momotombo Volcano. We check in for two nights at Hotel El Convento, the finest in Leon. The San Francisco Convent was founded in Leon in 1639 and operated for two centuries until it became a school. The hotel is a modern building on the site of the school with architecture that respects the convent and school. Our afternoon tour includes the impressive **Basilica Catedral de La Asuncion**, Ruben Dario Museum which celebrates Nicaragua's greatest poet, and the Ortiz Gurdian Art Gallery with paintings, sculptures and contemporary works.

Thursday, January 24:

Meals: B,L,D

We spend the morning at **Las Peñitas Beach**, a splendid stretch of sand on the Pacific Coast. In the afternoon, back in Leon, we go to the Sutiaba Indigenous Town where pre-Columbian artifacts have been found. Next, we visit **Museo Leyendas y Tradiciones**, built inside an old prison, where 14 odd legends about Leon are explained.

Friday, January 25:

Meals: B,L,D

We take a walk around the **San Jacinto Hot Springs**, viewing its bubbling mud pots and steaming fumaroles. The road ascends into the forested mountains of the Central Highlands. We stay two nights at **Selva Negra Mountain Resort**, one of Nicaragua's most famous hotels according to Fodor's. In the 1850s, a couple from Germany settled here and named their coffee plantation for the Black Forest in Spanish, Selva Negra. The resort opened in 1976 on the plantation.

Saturday, January 26:

Meals: B,L,D

The morning is devoted to a tour of **sustainable farming methods**, an organic laboratory, greenhouses, and homes of workers. This afternoon, there is a tour of the farm and coffee processing plant, along with delicious tasting. Some optional eco-tourism activities are available such as bird watching or mountain hiking and horseback riding on 20 km of trails. Selva Negra covers 1,000 acres and includes a cloud forest, the coffee plantation, and a wildlife sanctuary that protects many species of birds, animals and plants.

Sunday, January 27:

Meals: B,L,D

We drive to **Esteli** on the Pan-American Highway. It is a modern city since it was mostly rebuilt after the civil war of 1978. Esteli is best known for tobacco production with plantations and quality cigar factories. We have a city tour in the afternoon. Accommodation for two nights is at Hotel Hex.

Monday, January 28:*Meals: B,L,D*

This morning, we drive to **La Garnacha**, a community and natural reserve near Esteli. Attractions here are a cheese factory, the stone craft workshop "zopilote", a medicinal plants farm, and a goat farm. The afternoon is free time in Esteli.

Tuesday, January 29:*Meals: B,L,D*

We drive south out of the highlands and down to **Lago de Nicaragua**, the country's largest lake (and 19th largest in the world) covering 8,288 square km. Over a century ago, a canal across Nicaragua was proposed instead of the Panama Canal and this idea has been periodically revived; the lake would be an integral part of this project. We arrive at **Granada** on the northwest shore of the lake. The city was founded in 1524 by the Spanish explorer Cordoba (who also founded Leon) and he named it for Granada in Spain. It has a rich colonial heritage which is seen in its architecture, huge plazas, and restored buildings. Our first stop is at the Cultural Center Convento San Francisco which offers a fascinating collection of historical objects, paintings and statues. After lunch, we tour **Dona Elba Cigars** where you can roll your own and purchase a souvenir. We stay three nights at the four-star Hotel Colonial, located right on the Central Plaza.

Wednesday, January 30:*Meals: B,L,D*

In the morning, we visit **Mombacho Volcano** which rises to 1,300 metres south of Granada. It last erupted in 1570 and is considered extinct. We drive to the top in a truck and admire the panoramic view over Granada and Lago de Nicaragua. We take a walk on the 1½ km trail around the crater which offers excellent bird watching and a cloud forest. This afternoon, we tour La Merced Church which dates to 1539 and was rebuilt in 1781. You can climb the stairs to the bell tower for a panoramic view. Next is **Choco Museo** where we taste chocolate in its purest form, learn how to make a chocolate bar from cacao seed, and listen to the stories about how cacao was first used in Central America.

Thursday, January 31:*Meals: B,L,D*

Offshore from Granada is a group of over 300 little islands in Lago de Nicaragua. We take a boat excursion out to one of them, **Zopango Island**, which is a private ecological reserve. Swimming, boating, bird watching and trail walking are some activities. The imposing Mombacho Volcano rises just west of the islands. Lunch is included on the island and there is free time after returning to Granada.

Friday, February 1:*Meals: B,L,D*

We board a ferry to **Isla de Ometepe** in Lago de Nicaragua. The island was formed by two volcanoes and the western one, Concepcion, last erupted in 2010 and is over 1,500 metres tall. We have lunch at Hotel Charco Verde, located in a Natural Reserve on the lakeshore. The island was settled about 2000 BC and natives carved petroglyphs that date to about 300 BC. We take the ferry back to the mainland and continue to **San Juan del Sur**, a Pacific Coast town and a major tourist beach resort. A crescent-shaped bay with splendid sandy beaches fronts the town. We stay four nights at **Pelican Eyes Resort** which has a stunning location on the hillside above the town with panoramic views of the Pacific. Facilities include infinity pools, a spa, two restaurants, open-air bars, and lush gardens. The resort is located several hundred metres from the beach and transportation is available (there is only one small hotel on the beach).

Saturday, February 2:*Meals: B,L,D***Sunday, February 3:***Meals: B,L,D***Monday, February 4:***Meals: B,L,D*

Mornings of these three days are leisure time. In the afternoons, transportation is provided to nearby beaches such as Majagual and Playa Hermosa. As an alternative, you may wish to stay around Pelican Eyes and enjoy the resort facilities.

Tuesday, February 5:*Meals: B,L,D*

Leaving the Pacific Coast, we return to **Managua**. In the afternoon, a city tour is included with visits to Salvador Allende Port on Lago de Managua, the old and new Cathedral of Managua, the National Palace, and the Tiscapa viewpoint. The overnight stay is at Hotel Barcelo. Our farewell dinner is at Intermezzo del Bosque which offers a panoramic view over the city.

Wednesday, February 6:*Meals: B*

A transfer is provided to Managua Airport and we fly to Seattle.

Thursday, February 7:*Meals: B*

There are shopping stops at **Bellis Fair Mall** in Bellingham and the Duty-Free Store, then we cross the border and travel home via the Coquihalla.

Tour Notes:

Currency & Expenses: The currency in Nicaragua is the cordoba, \$1 CDN = 24 cordobas as of April 2018. US dollars are widely accepted and exchanged. Gratuities have been included for all group meals and for local guides, naturalists and drivers. As this tour has been planned and priced nine months before departure, it is possible that exchange fluctuations could affect the fare, in which case you will be notified of the increase or decrease. All meals are included in Nicaragua. The US\$10 per person Nicaragua entrance fee is included.

Documentation: A passport is required, valid 6 months after return date. A visa is not required.

Triples: Triples are not available on this tour due to the different nature of hotel rooms.

Health Clinic: Visit a travel vaccination clinic two months before departure to discuss possible inoculations for this tour. Bring this itinerary. There are currently no required inoculations, but you may want to discuss Hepatitis A/B.

Beverages: In many countries outside Canada and USA, it is not standard practice to include beverages with tour meals. On this tour, coffee, milk or bottled water is included at breakfast, and a soft drink, juice or water is included at lunch and dinner; wine and beer can be purchased.



Activity Level: Due to the historic nature of some cities and attractions, and walks looking for birds and animals, it will be necessary to climb stairs, walk on uneven surfaces and walk at least a kilometre, plus stand for an extended time on walking tours. Pelican Eyes Resort is on a hillside with many steps or inclined walkways, but our rooms are close to dining and the pools. The coaches cannot carry a scooter. The tour director and driver have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. Prior to Wells Gray accepting your booking, you will be required to sign a declaration that you are capable of travelling on an Activity Level 3 tour. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or need ongoing assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some days of the tour. In extreme situations, you may be required to leave the tour and travel home at your own expense; travel insurance will probably not cover you.

Tour Policies

Payments: A deposit of \$800 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due October 4, 2018. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

Discounts: Early bookers receive \$300 discount on first 8 seats and \$150 on next 4 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after October 4.

Cancellation Policy: Up to September 4, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From September 5 to October 4, the cancellation charge is \$500 per person. From October 5 to November 2, the cancellation charge is 50% of the tour fare. From November 3 to December 4, the cancellation charge is 80% of the tour fare. After December 4, there is no refund.

Fare Changes: Changes to currency exchange rates and taxes, and surcharges from airlines and other tour suppliers can occur at any time and are beyond the control of Wells Gray Tours, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up until the time of departure.

Travel Insurance: A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause for medical and cancellation claims, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

Photo Credit: San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua Tourism Board

Tour 25: This is a Tour 25 departure, meaning capacity of tour is limited to 25 participants for a more intimate travel experience.

E-points: This tour earns 136 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until October 4.

Consumer Protection BC Licences: Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924



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This tour is rated “Activity Level 3” by the tour planners at Wells Gray Tours. This rating is the highest activity level assigned to a tour, meaning that there is a lot of activity which could include one or more of (but is not limited to) the following:

- You can walk 3 kilometres in 1 hour.
- You can walk on cobblestones, uneven sidewalks, and beaches with sand or rock.
- You can climb one or two flights of stairs to a hotel room if there is no elevator.
- You can carry your own luggage in airports.

Since a few people who are not capable of doing the above activities can hold up the entire group, Wells Gray Tours expects everybody booking a tour with “Activity Level 3” to be reasonably fit. You must be able to participate in activities without the assistance of the tour director, driver or other travellers.

Please read the following and sign acknowledging that these statements are true. The tour deposit will be due after you have signed this statement.

- I want to travel on a Wells Gray tour with a rating of “Activity Level 3”.
- I have read the brochure with the full itinerary and description of the activities that are typical on this tour.
- I understand that this is the highest activity level that a Wells Gray tour can be rated.
- I am confident that I can participate in tour activities at this level and I will not hold up or delay the other members of the tour.
- I do not require the use of a wheelchair or a walker.
- If my physical condition changes between booking and departure date such that I can no longer do this level of activity, I will notify the Wells Gray office or agent. The specified penalties will apply for cancelling and insurance may cover this.
- If I am not capable of keeping up with the group or I require ongoing assistance, I understand that the Wells Gray tour director has the right to not allow me to participate in some activities or some days of the tour. In extreme situations, I acknowledge that I may be required to leave the tour and travel home at my own expense, and that travel insurance will probably not cover me.

This statement has been implemented by Wells Gray Tours to maintain high quality itineraries, accurate timing, and the enjoyment of all tour participants. Everybody booking this tour must sign this statement. Thank you for your understanding.

Signature _____ Name _____ Date _____