

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Cycle Nicaragua to the Panama Canal (CNCP 2017)



TRIPDURATION
14
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Accommodation
Grade: Standard

Tour Type: Small Groups
Cycling Grade: Moderate to Challenging

Trip Code: CNCP

Trip Highlights - Cycle Nicaragua to the Panama Canal

- ✓ Cycle Central America - An adventurous and exciting way to see the best of Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama
- ✓ Ometepe Island - Bike around this traditional island with a perfect volcanic cone
- ✓ Arenal Volcano - Cycle around the live volcano and expansive lake
- ✓ Caribbean Islands - Relax in paradise on Bocas del Toro
- ✓ Panama Canal - Cycle past ocean-going ships as they make their way between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 11 nights Standard Hotel
2 nights Premium Hotel

Included Meals: 13 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Granada

End Point: Trip ends: Panama City

Included Bike: 27 gear mountain bikes with front suspension

Transport: Bus, Boat, Bicycle

Countries: Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama

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Cycle Nicaragua to the Panama Canal

This tour takes us cycling through some of the most beautiful scenery in Central America. We ride past smoking volcanoes, through cloud forest and around national parks. We also cycle by lakes and see the famous Panama Canal. En route we visit the volcanic island of Ometepe and the tropical islands of Bocas del Toro for a little relaxation.

Why Book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

Cycling Information

On this tour we cycle 286 km over nine days (an average of 32 km per day) with further optional rides available. The terrain is often undulating to mountainous. 95% of the route is on tarmac roads in reasonably good condition while 5% is ridden on dirt or gravel roads which are rough at times. A support vehicle is available throughout the tour (except on days 3, 4 and 5). We have graded the route as moderate to challenging.



Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

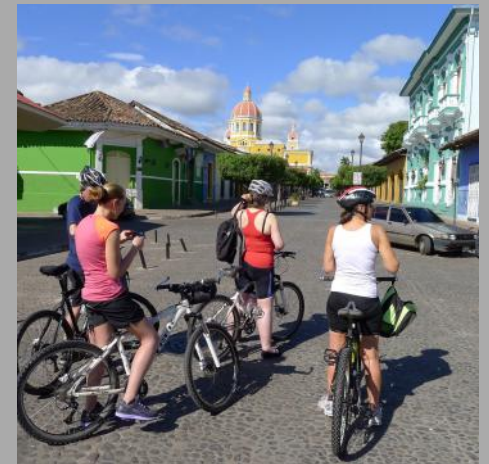
Cycling Grade: Moderate to Challenging

Combining moderate grade rides with some challenging days in the saddle, this grade is ideal for reasonably fit cyclists who want to challenge themselves.

Your trip itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.



Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Tour starts in Granada

Our journey begins in Granada, a colonial architectural gem, situated at the foot of Mombacho volcano on the north-west shore of Lake Nicaragua. Founded in 1524 by the conquistador Hernandez de Cordoba it was the first colonial city founded in Nicaragua. The baroque and renaissance buildings of the old town help to complement this wonderful setting.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 Cycle by Lake Nicaragua. Visit Masaya Volcano National Park

This morning we get used to our bikes on a short cycle from the hotel down to the shores of Lake Nicaragua and on to the Asepe Peninsula, covered with lush tropical forest. After returning to our hotel there will be time to explore Granada on foot and some freetime for lunch. In the afternoon we drive into the tranquil setting of Masaya Volcano National Park, Nicaragua's first and largest protected reserve. The views from Masaya Volcano provide us with a great panorama of the wider setting and we can explore the crater rim by foot. We return to Granada by bus later this afternoon. The city's narrow lanes and historic buildings are ideal to discover on foot. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 11 kilometres (total 50 metres ascent and descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 Cycle on Ometepe Island in Lake Nicaragua

Leaving Granada behind this morning we drive to the highland white villages, famed locally for their importance in ancient beliefs relating to witchcraft. High up in Catarina village we can enjoy the best views across the spectacular, blue Apoyo Lagoon in the volcanic crater before getting on our bikes for a 20 km ride through the tropical countryside, getting first impressions of villagers' and farmers' lives. Once we reach the Panamericana Highway we continue by bus and drive to the small town San Jorge where we make the one hour ferry crossing to the volcanic island of Ometepe, set in the expansive waters of Lake Nicaragua - the largest freshwater lake in Central America. On arrival we get back on the bikes and ride 1 hour/13 km to our hotel in Charco Verde (or 2 hours/ 26 km if our hotel is located on Santo Domingo beach), always with the imposing Concepcion volcano on our left. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 33-46 kilometres (Total 270 metres ascent and 650 metres descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 4 Ride around Maderas Volcano

Ometepe is made up of two volcanoes which rise up from the waters of Lake Nicaragua - the perfect cone of Concepcion and the slightly smaller Maderas Volcano. Today is left free and your Tour Leader will explain the different optional excursions open to you which will vary slightly depending if we are staying in Charco Verde or Santo Domingo. You may choose to go off road and cycle a section around Maderas island until reaching Finca Merida where you have the possibility of sea kayaking. There are plenty of birds and insects to be spotted in the area and en route we see rural Nicaragua at its best, with lush tropical vegetation and small hamlets. Later you might want to cycle to Alta Gracia village where you can relax and swim at the fabulous Ojo de Agua lagoon or you may prefer to cycle to Santo Domingo beach for some rest and relaxation. Our total optional cycling distance today is approximately 26-80 kilometres (optional) (Total 150 metres ascent and 150 metres descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 5 Over the border to Costa Rica

We start the day with a cycle ride back to the ferry port. From Charco Verde this is 13 kms and from Santo Domingo this would be 26 km. We then cross back to the mainland by ferry and drive the short distance to the Costa Rican border. After border crossing formalities (which may be extremely slow and require patience!) we drive 3 hours to Tilaran where we spend the night. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 13-26 kilometres (Total 250 metres ascent and 250 metres descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 6 Cycle around Arenal Lake and Volcano

A short 10 minute drive this morning brings us to the starting point for our ride around Arenal Lake; a challenging route that takes in the spectacular backdrop of one of the world's most active volcanoes. Set in an area of national park covering some 9,884 acres, Arenal volcano has been especially active since the massive eruption of 1968. This, along with the impressive manmade Lake Arenal, has helped the area to regenerate through tourism. Since 2010 Arenal's volcanic activity appears to be decreasing. Our challenging ride ends in the rural town of La Fortuna where we spend the next two nights. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 46 to 68 kilometres (Total 700 metres ascent and 1200 metres descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 7 Free Day in La Fortuna

Today is left free for resting or exploring the tropical rainforest in more depth on either a canopy excursion, a visit to the hot springs or a jungle walk across hanging bridges. Alternatively, you may wish to cycle in and around La Fortuna, taking in some of the impressive scenery, agricultural lands, cascading waterfalls and hot springs. This is one of the fertile high plateaux where most of Costa Rica's crops are grown. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 50 kilometres (optional) (Total 350 metres ascent and 600 metres descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 8 Cycle through the stunning Orosi Valley to Turrialba

We start the day with a four hour drive to the small town of Orosi, set in the impressive Orosi Valley, forged by the meandering course of the powerful Reventazón River. This picturesque valley is the setting for today's ride, as we discover the lush green vistas of what many consider to be some of the country's best landscapes. Our destination is Turrialba, a town set amid the central valleys and volcanic peaks of Turrialba Volcano National Park. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 46 kilometres (Total 800 metres ascent and 1300 metres descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 9 Cycle to the Panamanian border. On to Bocas del Toro idyllic islands

Driving up over the nearby mountain ridges this morning we then descend by bus towards the Caribbean coast. In Puerto Viejo we switch from the bus to our bikes and cycle to the border with Panama through a totally different side of Costa Rica; the lush, tropical Caribbean coast dotted with enormous banana plantations. We then cross the Panamanian border by way of an old railway bridge across which we push our bikes. Once again the border crossing may be very slow and require patience. We then continue by bus to the port of Almirante, from where we take a boat to the Isla Colon and the small town of Bocas de Toro, our base for exploring the stunning archipelago and the equally spectacular Parque Nacional Marino Isla Bastimentos. The archipelago itself is made up of a number of beautiful forested islands lying in warm Caribbean waters and the laid back beaches and dazzling reefs make this the ideal Caribbean paradise to relax or explore. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 31 kilometres (Total 300 metres ascent and 300 metres descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

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DAY 10 Free day on Bocas del Toro. Optional snorkel, boat trip...

Today is left free to enjoy the Caribbean with a number of optional activities that you might like to try. The islands boast stunning beaches and coral reefs and there are opportunities to snorkel or dive the rich waters. You may like to take a boat trip around the archipelago and marine park, or visit one of the unpopulated outlying islands. The bikes will not be available today as they cannot be carried across to the island on the ferry.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 11 Drive over the continental divide and ride on to Santiago

After taking the short ferry ride back to Almirante we drive south and then upwards over the Continental Divide and the cool Panamanian highlands. We commence today's cycle at Fortuna lake (1070 metres above sea level) and the route offers us a few ascents and a long downhill. We continue by bus to the centre of the country and our night stop in Santiago, a busy provincial town and one of the oldest settlements in the country. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 35 kilometres (Total 500 metres ascent and 1500 metres descent)

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 12 Cycle through farmland and ranches. Drive on to Panama City

Today's cycle ride begins near Santiago and on the bikes we pass farmland and ranches that offer an insight into a traditional and rural Panamanian way of life. After lunch we drive to Panama City (3 hours), hopefully with time for a swim in the Pacific Ocean before arriving into our final destination. In the evening we can explore the neighbourhood around the hotel - full of good restaurants and street life. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 38 kilometres (Total 400 metres ascent and descent)

Overnight: **Premium Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 13 Visit Panama Canal. Cycle along the Amador causeway

A short drive out of town takes us to Miraflores lock, one of the best viewing points on the Panama Canal. We can take time to explore the story of the canal construction in the excellent museum and see huge container ships making their way through this major lock separating the Pacific Ocean from the 26m higher Gatun lake in the interior of the Canal zone. After a short drive back to Panama City we will cycle along the short but impressive new cycle path that follows the coast line from the Canal Zone and through Panama Vieja, affording fabulous views of Panama City's impressive skyline. The afternoon is left free for you to take a walk through fantastic Panama Vieja - the historic town from colonial times - and can have our farewell dinner here. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 7 kilometres on the flat.

Overnight: **Premium Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 14 Tour ends in Panama City

The tour ends in Panama City after breakfast.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Notes

Standard - Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 13 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Nicaragua

Lunch £: 8.00 - 10.00

Dinner £: 10.00 - 12.00

Costa Rica

Lunch £: 13.00

Dinner £: 13.00

Panama

Lunch £: 7.00

Dinner £: 10.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Nicaragua

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00

Water £: 0.80

Costa Rica

Bottle of Beer £: 1.80

Water £: 1.30

Panama

Bottle of Beer £: 3.00

Water £: 0.70

International Departure Taxes

There are several border crossings on this tour - the total cost of border fees will be approx US\$10

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Ometepe - Sea kayaking USD 25, San Ramon waterfall USD 5

Arenal - Canopy - USD 50; Hanging bridges USD 60 ;Hot springs - USD 35

Bocas del Toro - Excursions include kayaking, snorkelling or dolphin watching, all approx. USD 25

Panama Canal - Museum entrance fee Miraflores lock USD 15

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly you should allow USD 40 for tipping.

Foreign Exchange

Nicaragua

ATM Availability: Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

Local Currency: Cordoba

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Carry all your funds in US cash NOT Sterling or Travellers Cheques which are more difficult to exchange. We recommend to take a minimum of US\$400-\$500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange. USD can be used in some places in Nicaragua.

Where to Exchange: Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Costa Rica

ATM Availability: Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

Local Currency: Costa Rican Colon.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Carry all your funds in US cash NOT Sterling or Travellers Cheques which are more difficult to exchange. We recommend to take a minimum of US\$400-\$500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange. USD can be used in some places in Costa Rica

Where to Exchange: Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Panama

ATM Availability: Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are not widely accepted outside Panama City.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

Local Currency: Balboa.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US dollars are legal tender in Panama. Notes should be in good condition, otherwise they might be difficult to use.

Where to Exchange: Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Joining your Trip

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

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The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

Explore Worldwide is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Travel Aware

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

Panama: Citizens from the UK, New Zealand, Australian, US and Canada do not require a visa for a stay up to 30 days. However, on entry you will be required to show that you have either 500USD in cash or a credit card. Please note that upon entering Panama by land from Costa Rica you may be required to present a copy of your return ticket home.

Costa Rica: Citizens from the UK, US, Canada and most EU countries do not require a visa for a stay up to 90 days. Citizen of Australia, New Zealand and the Republic of Ireland do not require a visa for stays up to 30 days.

Nicaragua: Visas are not required for UK, New Zealand, Australian, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

USA: (including those in transit) Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and passport holders from several EU countries can enter the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) - where you apply for an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation), which applies if you enter the country by sea or by air. This must be done on line - <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> no later than 72 hours prior to travel. Travellers who have not registered before their trip are likely to be refused boarding.

You must have an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information about the passport owner. UK passports which are biometric feature a small gold symbol (camera) at the bottom of the front cover.

If you have visited Iraq, Syria, Iran or Sudan since 2011 or are dual nationals of these countries, you cannot travel with an ESTA and

instead you will need to apply for a visa from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. If you are unable to provide a valid visa before boarding flights to the US, or entering via another method, you may not be permitted to travel.

Please note for your ESTA application you will be required to supply Point of Contact information. Explore's USA contact information will be listed on your final documentation which you will receive approximately 3-4 weeks before departure. If you are leaving for the USA before this, please call the Explore team to get this information. (Not necessary if in transit)

For further information please check out the US embassy website. Visa applications - <http://london.usembassy.gov/niv/apply.html>

Canada: An electronic travel authorisation (ETA) is required by British citizens transiting via Canada. For more information see the official Canadian government website: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/eta.asp>
Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on **0208 5431846**.

Vaccinations & Protection

Nicaragua

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended.. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Costa Rica

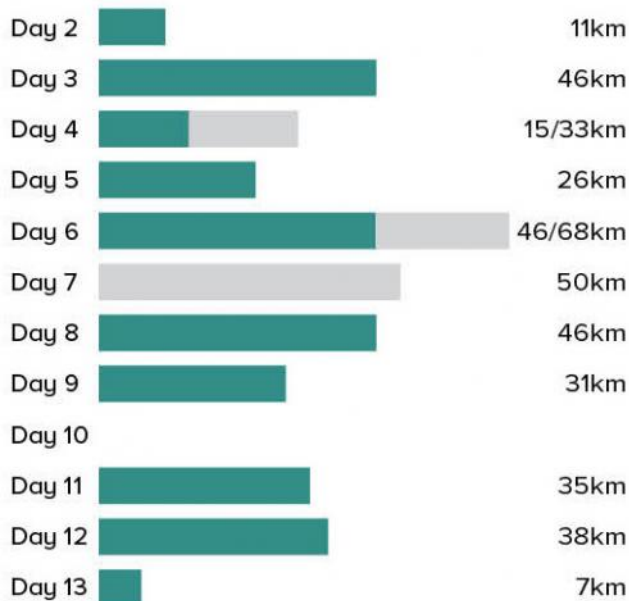
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Preparing for your Trip

DAILY DISTANCES



Optional Rides

Bike Details

Your included bike will be a 21-27 gear mountain bike with front suspension and will be the correct frame size for your height. A 24 gear mountain bike with v-brakes is used for the Nicaraguan section. A water bottle holder is included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour except on day 10. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

Climate

Nicaragua

Tropical, with little seasonal variation in temperature. The heavy rainy season is May to October but it can rain at any time along the Caribbean coast of Rio San Juan. There are 3 main climactic zones, the hot tropical lowlands and the cooler hill region, which has a larger range of daily temperature.

Costa Rica

Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page. Costa Rica has a tropical climate with high temperature humidity and rainfall. The average temperature is 21°C in the highlands and variable in the lowlands. The rainy season is from May to November and the summer from December to April, but it does still tend to rain, usually in short bursts. Bear in mind that Costa Rica has 12 microclimates and weather can vary significantly in one day.

Panama

Panama has a tropical climate with high temperature and humidity, the average temperature 30°C. The rainy season is from May to November and the summer from December to April. The rainfall is of a tropical nature, falling for 1-2 hours in the afternoon.

Clothing

Bring your cycling gear including shorts and gloves. Remember weather is changeable in the mountains and it can be cool and wet at higher altitude, and even on some evenings, so bring some warmer clothing too. A raincoat is essential at all times in case of rain. Don't forget your swimming costume.

Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. It is a legal requirement in Costa Rica to wear a helmet that meets current safety criteria. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. Panniers are not provided so you may wish to bring a light rucksack to wear whilst cycling. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, travel plug, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to tours that combine sightseeing with cycling. Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

Luggage: On Tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike. Please note that there is a weight restriction of 7kg for hand luggage/daypack for international and internal flights.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Nicaragua

Population: 5,891,199

Size of Country: 130,373 sq km

Major Language: Spanish

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: -6

Costa Rica

Population: 4,608,426

Size of Country: 51,100 sq km

Major Language: Spanish

Religion: Christian, Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: -6

Panama

Population: 3,405,813

Size of Country: 75,517 sq km

Major Language: Spanish

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: -5

Electric Supply & Plugs

Nicaragua

2 Pin Flat

Costa Rica

2 Pin Flat

Panama

2 Pin Flat

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic

local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to - and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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