

Nicaragua vs. Costa Rica: Choose Your Next Travel Destination

Two gorgeous countries in Central America. Both offering the allure of natural beauty, exotic wildlife and adventures. How do you choose? While Costa Rica is more published, polished and set up to accommodate a larger stream of tourists, Nicaragua is an uncut gem whose beauty has been catching more attention since 2015 and getting deserved recognition as a must-visit destination. It comes down to your travel style and preference. Here are 6 key reasons why adventurers are choosing Nicaragua over Costa Rica.

1. Nicaragua is Less Touristy and Becoming More Ecologically Responsible

Tourism is big business in Costa Rica, and Costa Rica has been in the tourism game longer than Nicaragua. You won't have a shortage of tourism infrastructure, including an overwhelming number of day trips, transport services and tours available in Costa Rica. But big tourism also means big crowds and high impact. Nicaragua, in comparison, has fewer tourists and more travelers from a mix of nationalities looking to explore the less beaten paths. Taking cues from their southern neighbor, Nicaragua is more keen to develop a sustainable tourism industry that invests in preserving their natural and cultural resources, while still developing infrastructure to accommodate everyone from backpackers to high-end travelers. Activists are putting great energy into cleaning up the large central lakes, rivers and jungle and conserving the local flora and fauna.

2. Nicaragua is Safer Than Costa Rica

Nicaragua is an increasingly safer travel destination as Costa Rica street crime has been on a sharp rise with increased tourist traffic in the past three years. Complacent travelers often have a false sense of security in tourist-ready and tourist-dense places. Costa Rican criminals will capitalize on the foreigner's naiveté with opportunistic crimes like pickpocketing, adventure package scams and even robbery. Nicaragua's crime comes in the more obvious developing-world forms of phone snatching and a grab for your pocket-change.

The crime index for Nicaragua is 39.04 while Costa Rica's is 54.85. Big difference. Nicaragua also beats Costa Rica on the safety scale: 60.96 compared to 45.14 in Costa Rica. Needless to say, you have to travel smart and safe in both places, but Nicaragua presents less dangers.

3. Nicaragua is Much Less Expensive

It would be a mistake to think that because Costa Rica is set in Central America, it would be cheap to travel. More infrastructure means big crowds and higher prices. Be ready to budget properly. Costa Rican prices are comparable to those in the United States and parts of Central Europe. A comparable beer in Nicaragua costs double the price in Costa Rica. You can expect to pay the same for a meal in Costa Rica as you would in the United States, while a meal in Nicaragua will cost you as little as \$1. A seaside villa in a Nicaraguan resort town on Air BnB goes for \$50 a night, while comparable accommodations in Costa Rica costs \$150. While the options are not as vast as Costa Rica, accommodations in Nicaragua range from simple and rustic to high-end luxury yet still cost less. Aside from getting to Nicaragua, which is more expensive because there are far fewer flights to and from Managua than there are to San Jose, Costa Rica is literally two or three times as costly to enjoy.

4. Nicaragua's Nature is Equally Stunning, Its Historical Sites More Vibrant

Nicaragua has the rainforests, beaches, lagoons, nature reserves and volcanoes that Costa Rica does, and more. Wildlife is abundant in Nicaragua, letting explorers experience exotic birds, butterflies, monkeys and vibrant marine life. You'll find more active volcanoes in Nicaragua, 19 to be exact, compared to the six in Costa Rica, for you to climb, board and discover along with the cloud bromeliad forests of their slopes and the Segovia Mountains in the state of Estelí. Nicaragua also has the world's largest island in a freshwater lake, the Miskito Coast or site of historically fluctuating kingdoms, small indigenous villages and beautiful colonial towns. Granada, in particular, is an architectural dream, being one of the oldest Spanish settlements in Central America. The name Nicaragua comes from the Nahuatl-speaking tribe who originally inhabited the country.

5. Nicaragua's Adventures Rival Costa Rica, With Less Traffic

Because Costa Rica is a more established tourist destination, you have to do a little bit more digging to find the unbeaten path. National parks and other natural highlights crowd up fast. Nicaragua offers the excitement of adventures and nature exploration without the craze of crowds. You'll get the diverse immersive experiences of volcano and rainforest hikes, biking, ziplining, scuba diving, surfing, sailing, horseback riding and more, without the booking waits and high price-tags.

6. Nicaragua's Food Is Better

Nicaragua's gallo pinto is legendary. The staple rice-and-beans dish can be found all over Central America, but the Nicaraguan red-bean version has more depth of flavor with onions, garlic, peppers and sometimes greens than Costa Rica's black-bean variant. Nicaragua boasts some of the best fresh seafood from its coasts and loads of tropical fruits and vegetables. Nicaraguan cuisine dates back to the pre-Colombian times. Like the Nicaraguan people, the food is warm, generous and open, which invites the use of different local ingredients. Every restaurant in Nicaragua has its own family recipe for hot sauce and *chilero*, a concoction of vinegar peppers, veggies and spices. Costa Rica goes for the straightforward store-brought Salsa Lizano. You also won't see as many franchise chains in Nicaragua like you would in Costa Rica, which means you're invited to sample the delicious local food styles. With world-class chefs now discovering Nicaragua, you'll also get to taste the meeting of exquisite world fusion.

Book your next trip with TreeCasa Resort, located in the beach town of San Juan del Sur, to get a rich, immersive experience of all Nicaragua has to offer.