

Nicaragua

Geography

Location: Middle America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Costa Rica and Honduras

Area:

total area: 129,494 sq km

land area: 120,254 sq km

Land boundaries: total 1,231 km, Costa Rica 309 km, Honduras 922 km

Coastline: 910 km

Maritime claims:

contiguous zone: 25-nm security zone

continental shelf: natural prolongation

territorial sea: 200 nm

Climate: tropical in lowlands, cooler in highlands

Terrain: extensive Atlantic coastal plains rising to central interior mountains; narrow Pacific coastal plain interrupted by volcanoes

Natural resources: gold, silver, copper, tungsten, lead, zinc, timber, fish

Land use:

arable land: 9%

permanent crops: 1%

meadows and pastures: 43%

forest and woodland: 35%

other: 12%

Irrigated land: 850 sq km (1989 est.)

Environment:

current issues: deforestation; soil erosion; water pollution

natural hazards: destructive earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, and occasionally severe hurricanes

People

Population: 4,206,353 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 44% (female 921,356; male 930,594)

15-64 years: 53% (female 1,146,485; male 1,097,811)

65 years and over: 3% (female 62,607; male 47,500) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 2.61% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 33.73 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 6.45 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: -1.19 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 50.3 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 64.54 years

male: 61.67 years
female: 67.53 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 4.17 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:
noun: Nicaraguan(s)
adjective: Nicaraguan

Ethnic divisions: mestizo (mixed Amerindian and Caucasian) 69%,
white 17%, black 9%, Indian 5%

Religions: Roman Catholic 95%, Protestant 5%

Languages: Spanish (official)
note: English- and Indian-speaking minorities on Atlantic coast

Literacy:
total population: 57%
male: 57%
female: 57%

Government

Names:

conventional long form: Republic of Nicaragua

conventional short form: Nicaragua

local long form: Republica de Nicaragua

local short form: Nicaragua

Capital: Managua

Independence: 15 September 1821 (from Spain)

National holiday: Independence Day, 15 September (1821)

Constitution: 9 January 1987

Suffrage: 16 years of age; universal

Flag: three equal horizontal bands of blue (top), white, and blue with the national coat of arms centered in the white band; the coat of arms features a triangle encircled by the words REPUBLICA DE NICARAGUA on the top and AMERICA CENTRAL on the bottom; similar to the flag of El Salvador, which features a round emblem encircled by the words REPUBLICA DE EL SALVADOR EN LA

AMERICA CENTRAL centered in the white band; also similar to the flag of Honduras, which has five blue stars arranged in an X pattern centered in the white band

Economy

Industries: food processing, chemicals, metal products, textiles, clothing, petroleum refining and distribution, beverages, footwear

Agriculture: crops account for about 15% of GDP; export crops - coffee, bananas, sugarcane, cotton; food crops - rice, corn, cassava, citrus fruit, beans; also produces a variety of animal products - beef, veal, pork, poultry, dairy products; normally self-sufficient in food

Illicit drugs: transshipment point for cocaine destined for the US

Transportation

Railroads:

total: 376 km; note - majority of system is nonoperational

Highways:

total: 15,286 km

Inland waterways: 2,220 km, including 2 large lakes

Pipelines: crude oil 56 km

Ports: Bluefields, Corinto, El Bluff, Puerto Cabezas, Puerto Sandino, Rama, San Juan del Sur

Airports:

total: 198

Defence Forces

Branches: Ground Forces, Navy, Air Force