



Costa Rica and Nicaragua

Cloud Forest, Volcanoes and Wildlife

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



ITINERARY

Costa Rica & Nicaragua • Cloud Forest, Volcanoes & Wildlife

14 DAYS • 13 NIGHTS

San José – La Fortuna de San Carlos – Volcan Tenorio – Los Chiles
– El Castillo – Isla de Ometepe - Granada

HIGHLIGHTS

- Rafting on the White Waters of Pacuare River
- Caimen spotting on San Carlos River
- Looking onto a glowing volcano at night
- Exploring Granada's beautiful colonial architecture
- Staying in an ecolodge with an unparalleled volcano view on Ometepe Island

TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Nature & Wildlife
Tour Start	San José
Tour End	Granada
Accommodation	Lodge & Hotel
Included Meals	13 Breakfasts, 1 Lunches, 0 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Medium



WILDLIFE ADVENTURE

You'll get an instant natural thrill rafting on the Pacuare river. Explore higher climbs in and around the central valley volcanoes. Sloping back down to the border with Nicaragua through cloud and tropical rainforest a bounty of wildlife experiences awaits. Nicaragua's stunning landscape is lesser visited than its neighbour but no less stunning and we conclude with one of the oldest colonial cities in the Americas- Granada.



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Stable Cottage • Chydyok Road • Chaldon Herring • Dorchester • DT2 8DN
t 01202 798922 • e info@pioneerexpeditions.com

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COSTA RICA , NICARAGUA *an overview*

Eco-diversity like no other - Costa Rica encases 500,000 different species which account for roughly 4% of the world's plant, insect and wildlife species. Witness Sloths, Monkeys, Frogs, Snakes, Turtles, Iguanas, Humming Birds and so much more. Wander through tranquil bird-packed cloud forests and rich rainforests brimming with a plethora of spectacular wildlife. As well as its head-turning abundance of wildlife, this Central American paradise is famed for its never-ending activities, making it an adventure-seeker's dream; the vast array of activities widely on offer include Zip-lining, White-Water Rafting and Trekking. The incredibly beautiful east and west shores that run down the sides of Costa Rica display gorgeous paradise beaches lined with jungle, such as the secluded sandy stretches of the laid-back Caribbean coastline and the 'sun and surf' pacific stretches containing some great marine life. Become acquainted with the warm friendly locals, offering huge smiles, an easy-going manner and 'Pura Vida's. Despite receiving a heavy influx of tourists in recent years, there are still some extraordinary hidden gems and quiet spots to be found which will allow the more adventurous of tourists to experience nature, activities and culture that the typical tourists let pass them by.

Nicaragua is the largest nation in Central America with amazing natural diversity. Coffee is the country's largest export which grows in the temperate, shaded Northern most mountains of the highlands. In the South the vegetation is more tropical as low lying rainforests and palms bend towards the sea. The west has world-famous surf and gorgeous beaches. Inland from the coast is the famous Cordillera Volcanica, offering an epic sight and trekking at all levels. Between the coast and the volcanoes stunning colonial cities pepper the interior around Lake Nicaragua and Lake Managua.

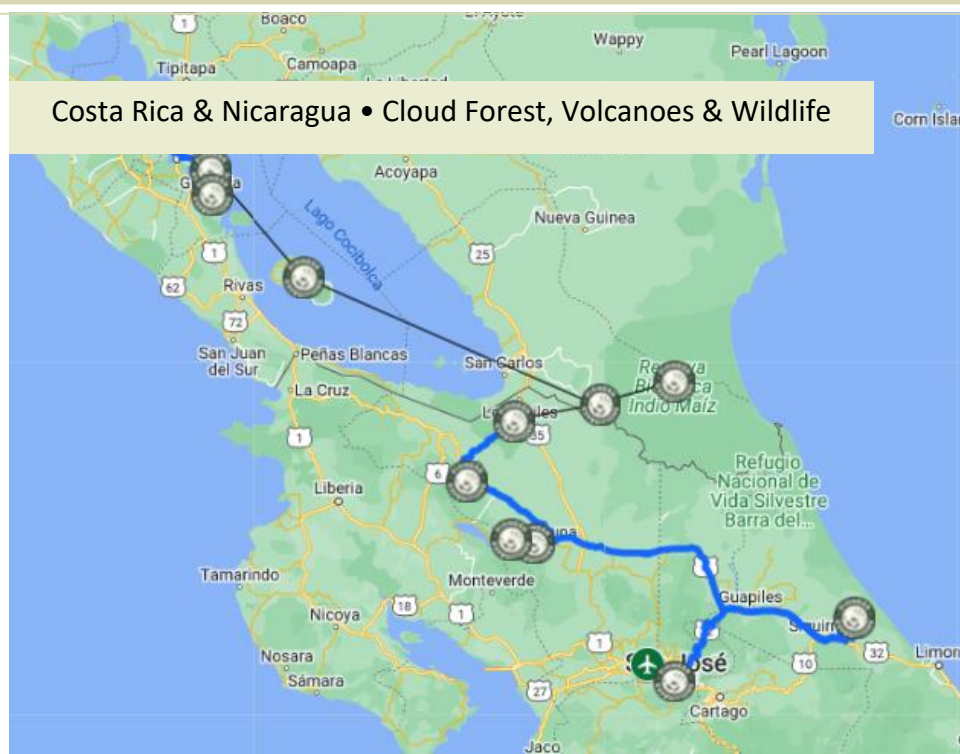
WHY PIONEER EXPEDITIONS?

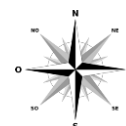
Pioneer Expeditions are one of the few specialists that really *do* off the beaten track and unique adventures. The team have a real passion for wildlife and adventure travel which we love to share with our clients. We delight in searching the world for new destinations, new experiences and creating the most incredible adventures.

We like to introduce our clients to unique, the different, and the incredible. Whether it is through wildlife tracking, sea kayaking, snorkelling, trekking, rafting, cycling or observing wildlife in its natural environment, we want to give you the real Pioneer experience.

From the moment you choose to travel with Pioneer Expeditions until you return back home, you are supported by our dedicated team. We listen to what you want and can create an itinerary around your specific needs, working with your budget and with a commitment to responsible travel.

ITINERARY





DAY 1: Welcome to Costa Rica

Welcome to Costa Rica! Upon arrival at San Jose International Airport you'll meet our representative, who welcomes you and takes you to your hotel.



San Jose, the capital and commercial centre, founded in 1738 is a modern city, complete with all conveniences. The city has beautiful art and architecture, and many excursion options. The city is complemented by a strong historical background, beautiful national parks and a national theatre. On December 1, 1948, Costa Rica became world renowned when its military was eliminated.

San Jose is an excellent point to begin many of the natural exploration tours available on Costa Rica and nearby Nicaragua.

Overnight Hotel KC (Double Room – Junior Suite)



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
Nil



Distance:
30min airport transfer



Activities:
Travel

DAY 2: Begin your RAFTING experience on PACUARE RIVER

After breakfast adventure awaits, paddling the class IV rapids of the Pacuare River. During your expedition lunch will be served by your guide.

Pacuare Rafting – Class IV

Here you enjoy the feeling of total isolation from urban life and the realness of being connected with nature. You see waterfalls cascade into the river from both sides as colorful, tropical birds fly right over your head. Amazing views of this virgin tropical rainforest area, appear before your eyes as you descend this true exploratory land. Wildlife is abundant, with sloth, toucans, parrots, coatis, morpho butterflies and colorful frogs being common sights.

The 18 mile one day run includes a total of 52 rapids. Few rivers in the world can offer you so many. The first 4 miles consist of fun class II-III rapids which is a perfect time to test your new river skills and gain confidence in your team. Here you can find pockets of secondary growth forest that is extremely beautiful. After about 40 minutes we will enter the famous Pacuare River Gorge, which is 5 miles of some of the best white water rafting Costa Rica has to offer. You will also see the Huacas waterfall, a 150-foot dramatic drop into the river. After the gorge the river opens up to a 5-mile stretch on the Valle del Pacuare, where the river has a different character. It is wide open, which gives you the opportunity to rest a bit and take the opportunity to do some wildlife spotting. The forest remains just as lush, and the rapids just as fun.



We finish in Siquirres, at our own private Exploration Center where you can take a shower, change and enjoy the gardens and terrace while having a beer or two and reflecting with your new friends about the great adventure you just shared.



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Overnight Hotel KC



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B,L



Distance:
N/A



Activities:
Rafting

DAY 3: Transfer to La Fortuna

After breakfast at 09:00 you will be transferred to your next destination:
La Fortuna!

La Fortuna is a town situated just a few kilometers from the Arenal volcano, one that is often named among the most active volcanoes of the world. Since 2010 however, activity has decreased significantly. From La Fortuna you have some breath-taking views of the volcano. Other attractions in the area include a 70 meters high waterfall, hanging bridges, ziplines, a butterfly farm and whitewater rafting. In the evening you can visit the hotsprings.



Overnight Monte Real Hotel (Double room – Standard))



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B



Distance:
N/A



Activities:
Travel

DAY 4: Hanging Bridges

After breakfast you are picked up for a panoramic walk through the jungle, crossing many hanging bridges.

The Arenal Hanging Bridges are a fun and educative option to learn more about the primary forest and the local environment. During a walk along the bridges and trails you'll be able to enjoy a unique and impressively close contact with nature. The trail makes a loop with a total length of 3100 meters within the mountainous area.

Along these three kilometers of trails you will be immersed in the divers fauna and flora of the rainforest and admire exotic animals, colorful birds and tropical plant species. While you're walking along the trails, the fascinating world of the tropical forest will open to you.



Overnight Monte Real Hotel



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B



Distance:
N/A



Activities:
Trekking

DAY 5: Transfer to Rio Celeste

After breakfast you are transferred to your next destination, at Rio Celeste, close to National Park Volcan Tenorio. Enjoy nature at the lodge, or take an optional tour.

Tenorio is an extraordinary tropical forest natural area. Hiking to the sky-blue Celeste waterfall is a highlight, but the hanging bridges in the rainforest and trail to Lago Danta through the cloud forest are equally amazing. The best way to properly experience the area, is on foot. Hike the azure blue Rio Celeste in Tenorio National Park or explore the rainforest



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COST

shrouded slopes of Miravalles Volcano. Anywhere you walk in the area you're likely to see birds and other wildlife.

Overnight Sueno Celeste Bed and Breakfast (Double room – Bungalow)



Overnight:
Lodge



Meals:
B



Distance:
**Approx.
2h Drive**



Activities:
Travel

DAY 6: Transfer to Cano Negro

After breakfast your transfer takes you to Cano Negro, a well-known wetlands nature reserve for birdwatching.

Los Chiles is Costa Rica's most northern town and only a stone's throw away from the border with Nicaragua. It is a great place to spend a few days and admire the astonishing amount of wildlife in this area.

The Cano Negro Wildlife Refuge is home to many different species of birds, lizards, monkey, bats and much more. You can join a relaxed boat ride in order to get to know this piece of paradise.

By travelling up the river Rio Frio, the archipelago in Lago de Nicaragua, Solentiname can be visited. This place is home to fishermen and farmers, as well as painters and crafters.



Overnight Natural Lodge Cano Negro (Double room – Standard)



Overnight:
Lodge



Meals:
B



Distance:



Activities:
Travel

DAY 7: Cano Negro Boat Tour

After breakfast a local guide takes you out for a boat tour on Cano Negro, to observe wildlife and the many resident and migratory birds of the reserve. Afternoon at leisure.

The Wildlife Refuge Cano Negro is considered one of the richest places on the continent for bird watching. Apart from an abundance of birds, it is home to many other animals such as sloths, three types of monkeys, alligators, lizards, bats, and a variety of flora typical of wetlands. Enjoy this floating safari through tropical rainforest and pastures until we arrive at the marsh. To name just a few bird species we have Anhinga or Snakebirds, Roseate Spoonbill, Wood Storks, the Olivaceous Cormorant, and the Jabiru, the largest bird in Central America and very endangered. Along the river we can see howler monkeys, spider monkeys, white-faced monkeys, also the tree-toed sloth and some reptiles like caimans, Jesus Christ lizard and turtles.



Overnight Natural Lodge Cano Negro



Overnight:
Lodge



Meals:
B



Distance:
N/A



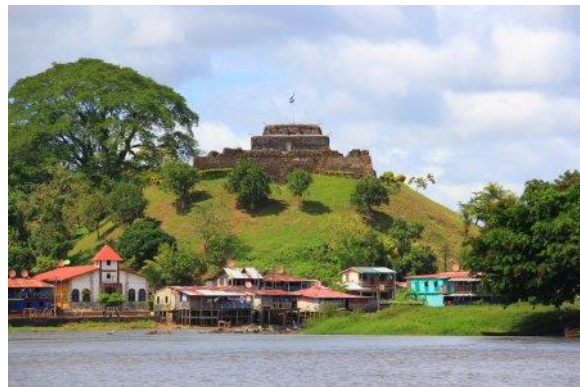
Activities:
Travel



DAY 8: Transfer to Nicaraguan border and boat to El Castillo

Breakfast and transfer to the border where a representative will be waiting for you on the Nicaraguan side. Then you continue to San Carlos where take a public boat to El Castillo.

The jungle town of El Castillo is a picturesque place filled with colorful riverside houses, cobbled streets and fruit trees. The town has a rich history filled with conquerors and conflict, and the 17th century hilltop Spanish fortress, built to protect Lake Nicaragua from English pirates, serves as a reminder of those days. You'll find an easy-going and welcoming atmosphere in El Castillo, with plenty of culture, history and beautiful jungle surroundings.



Overnight Hotel Victoria (Double room – Standard)



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B



Distance:
Approx. 2hr drive
Short flight



Activities:
Travel

DAY 9: Hiking Indio Maiz

After breakfast you take a boat for a scenic journey over the San Juan River, visiting Indio Maiz Biosphere Reserve. This tropical rain forest is home to the conspicuous Green Parrot (Ara Ambigua), often feeding on the prevalent almond tree. The reserve is also home of the elusive jaguar, toucans, howler monkeys, and different varieties of colourful hummingbirds. Return to El Castillo and enjoy the afternoon at leisure.

From El Castillo you ride down San Juan river for about 45 minutes until you reach the Indio Maiz Reserve. The Indio Maiz Reserve is home to numerous animal species, among which are deer, wild boars, pumas, sloths, jaguars, manatees, howler monkeys, white-faced monkeys, spider monkeys, poison dart frogs, snakes, crocodiles, turtles, and iguanas.

You have a 2-hour hike in the rain forest, after which you jump back in the boat to witness wildlife.



After hike we take the boat and going to explore Bartola river, where you have chance for swimming in the middle of the forest.

Overnight Hotel Victoria (Double room – Standard)



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B



Distance:
N/A



Activities:
Trekking



DAY 10: Cross Lake Nicaragua – Ometepe Island

Early breakfast and departure back to San Carlos in a public boat, from here you take a private boat towards Puerto Colón, bordering the Southside of Lake Nicaragua. Upon arrival, you are transferred by land to San Jorge to embark the public ferry to Ometepe Island. Then continue to your lodge to rest after a long day of travel.

Once thought to have been the promised land by Aztec explorers, Isla de Ometepe is made up of two imposing volcanic cones rising out of western Lake Nicaragua. Ometepe has been inhabited for thousands of years due to its fertile volcanic soils, and evidence of its past can be found in archeologic sites dotted all around the island. Most travelers come here for the sandy beaches, clean waters, diverse wildlife and stunning scenery, with numerous forests, waterfalls and springs in the island's center. Ometepe is beautiful, unique and one of Nicaragua's lesser-known highlights.



Overnight Totoco Ecolodge (Double room – Standard Lodge)



Overnight:
Lodge



Meals:
B



Distance:
N/A



Activities:
Travel

DAY 11: Ometepe Nature Experience

Your local guide meets you at your hotel for a tour across Ometepe Island, exploring this remarkable destination's abundant nature and wildlife.

Discover the natural beauty of Ometepe as you explore the island with a local guide. Your experience starts at the Peña Inculta nature reserve where you see lava rocks overgrown by primary forest, home to white-faced monkeys, howler monkeys, squirrels, iguanas, bats and many birds. After hiking through the reserve for approximately 45 minutes, you'll visit Hacienda Finca Magdalena, a community-run farm founded in 1888, where you get insight into the process of organic coffee cultivation. A short hike brings you to a site with remnants of pre-Columbian times, before your tour finishes at Ojo de Agua, a pristine natural spring surrounded by dense forest.



Overnight Totoco Ecolodge (Double room – Standard Lodge)



Overnight:
Lodge



Meals:
B



Distance:
N/A



Activities:
Trekking



DAY 12: Transfer to Granada – Lava Night Experience

After breakfast you continue to your next destination, the colonial town of Granada, where you have the afternoon at leisure to stroll around and relax. Late afternoon you head to the first national park of Nicaragua, Masaya Volcano, for a spectacular nocturnal visit, observing a glowing lava lake.

Granada, or the "Gran Sultana", is one of Latin America's most beautiful cities, and is listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Founded in 1524 on the shores of vast Lake Nicaragua, this ancient town is full of history and Spanish colonial charm, and is famed as one of the oldest European settlements in the western hemisphere. Amongst the narrow streets and glorious architecture, you'll find some excellent hotels, fine restaurants and plenty of interesting sites and museums to fill your days.

The city also makes a great base for exploring the surrounding area, with volcanos, beaches, national parks and the incredible water world of Las Isletas de Granada all within easy reach.



Masaya Volcano National Park is one of the most famous volcanoes in the pacific region of Nicaragua due to its constant activity, and was known to the Spanish at the "Mouth of Hell". It offers the unique experience of seeing an active volcano up close, and watching as molten lava glows in crater just meters away from you. It's an awe-inspiring experience allowing visitors to experience a phenomenon once sacred to the pre-Columbian Nicaraguans, who were inspired by the raw power and beauty of nature.

Overnight Hotel Plaza Colon (Double room – Superior)



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B



Distance:
N/A



Activities:
Trekking

DAY 13: Mombacho Volcano Nature Reserve

After breakfast, you visit the dormant Mombacho Volcano, which is covered by tropical dry forest, coffee plantations, and cloud forest. Arriving at the crater, your local guide takes you on a short hike where you discover local wildlife and enjoy, on a clear day, the many spectacular vistas.

Afternoon at leisure.

Journey into the lush cloud forest around the majestic Mombacho Volcano, spotting wildlife and taking in the incredible panoramic views from the top. After travelling to the Mombacho Nature Reserve, you'll begin to climb the volcano by 4x4 truck, stopping for a delicious local coffee at one of the plantations along the way. Once near the top you'll enjoy a short, guided hike along the trail, passing through a variety of landscapes - keep an eye out for the howler monkeys and white-faced monkeys, sloths, dart frogs, and the endemic Mombacho salamander along the way. Once at the peak, you can enjoy views over Granada, the Las Isletas archipelago and Masaya Volcano.



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Overnight Hotel Plaza Colon



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B



Distance:
N/A



Activities:
Trekking

DAY 14: End of Tour

Your Costa Rica- and Nicaragua nature experience has come to an end. You are transferred to Managua International Airport for your flight back home. We hope you enjoyed your time in Central America!



Overnight:
N/A



Meals:
B



Distance:
1h airport transfer



Activities:
Travel

NB: This itinerary is subject to change – arrangements, routes and facilities are subject to variation depending on local conditions.

ACCOMMODATION, at a glance

Accommodation subject to availability

Hotel KC

San Jose

<https://www.kchotelsanjose.com/>



Monte Real Hotel

La Fortuna

<http://www.monterrealhotel.com/cms/>



Sueno Celeste Bed and Breakfast

Rio Celeste

<https://sueno-celeste.com/>



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Photos from TripAdvisor

Natural Lodge Cano Negro

Cano Negro

<https://www.canonegrolodge.com/>



Hotel Victoria

El Castillo

(No Website)



Totoco Ecolodge

El Castillo

(No Website)



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Hotel Plaza Colon

Granada

<https://hotelplazacoln.com/>



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

INCLUDED

- Meet and greet
- Information package with maps and a detailed itinerary
- Reusable bottle
- Lodgement at hotels as mentioned or similar
- Transfers and Ferry tickets
- Breakfast
- Tours mentioned with an English speaking guide + entrance fees
- VAT/Taxes

NOT INCLUDED

- Meals other than mentioned
- Migration fees
- Personal expenses
- Optional tours/activities
- Tips nor porters
- International flights

WHEN TO GO

- Costa Rica's weather is affected by its proximity to the equator and the varying altitudes, meaning temperatures can vary depending on where about you are in Costa Rica.
- The wet season is roughly between May to the middle of November, with the heaviest rains in September and October. Costa Rica can still be quite pleasant in the wet season with rainy afternoons but sunny mornings.
- The dry season, therefore, is between the middle of November to April, bringing you sunshine and warm temperatures
- Temperatures can be anything from 16°C to 32°C. However, higher altitudes can exceed 0°C during the night.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACTIVITY DURATION	5 – 7 hours per day
SEASON	December through June
BEST TIME TO GO	January through April



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GROUP SIZE	Tailor-made
EXPEDITION SCHEDULE	This is run as a private trip, so we are able to suit your dates and requirements. We can also tailor the trip to suit.
DIFFICULTY LEVEL	Our grades have been designated based on our perception of the degree of physical activity you are likely to require to enjoy the adventure. These are only a guideline. This itinerary has a 'difficult level' (5 – 7 hours of activities per day. This means you will need more than a basic level of fitness and some specific training may be required.

THE PIONEER BOOKING PROCESS

Where do you go from here? Well, you can feel free to email us at info@pioneerexpeditions.com if you're interested in this trip, or any of our other expeditions from around the world. Visit our website www.pioneerexpeditions.com to unearth all of our other equally amazing trips and destinations.

1. Contact us -

We will be happy to answer any questions or enquiries you may have. From here we will begin to plan and put together your dream adventure holiday! Alternatively, on our website you will find our booking and enquiry forms; once filled in, we will be notified of your enquiry and will get back to you ASAP.

2. Leave everything to us -

Everything will be arranged and booked by us, but we will make sure to keep you updated every step of the way. In addition, we can arrange your international flights if needed, as we have access to competitive airfares. We can also arrange any additional tours or additional night's accommodation.

3. Wait for your adventure to begin -

Sit back and count down the days until your trip of a lifetime with Pioneer Expeditions. We'll handle all of the last minute preparations and provide you with everything you need. All practical information will be sent out to you, prior to your trip.

If you feel like altering this itinerary to suit your personal preferences, we can arrange all of that and more – just get in contact with us and let us know your requirements and wishes. From here, we can simply tailor-make your dream holiday.



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