

Nicaragua: Land of Lakes & Volcanos With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

February 17 – 25, 2018

866.900.1146

800.426.7781

520.558.1146

naturalistjourneys@gmail.com

www.naturalistjourneys.com

or find us on Facebook at
Naturalist Journeys, LLC



Nicaragua: Land of Lakes & Volcanos With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



Join Naturalist Journeys on a new Nicaragua nature tour. Nicaragua's varied natural landscapes are stunning and provide an incredible backdrop to our explorations; we also make time to learn about the Nicaraguan culture. Our tour is based out of two small eco-lodges within private reserves. From our lodges, we explore rain forest trails, mountain lakes, two different volcanoes, and a variety of cultural sites at a relaxed pace. There are very few places in the world where you can drive right up to a living, breathing volcano and Masaya is one of them — a highlight of our tour! We make time for plenty of bird watching in rain forest, cloud forest, and dry forest that offer a wide variety of birds, butterflies, and orchids ... Nicaragua is a neotropical wonderland.

Tour Highlights

- Spot hummingbirds like Violet Sabrewing, Green Violetear, Emerald-chinned Hummingbird, Violet-crowned Woodnymph, and Blue-throated Goldentail at El Jaguar Reserve
- Cruise Lake Apanás to spot a wide variety of water and shorebirds
- Visit two distinct volcanoes; one that is living and another adorned with cloud forest
- Take an evening excursion to Masaya Volcano to see the lake of lava at twilight
- Spend time at two sites where different styles of traditional ceramics are made
- Enjoy a chocolate-making workshop — yum!
- Stay at two private and secluded nature reserves filled with birds and other neotropical wildlife

Tour Summary

9-Day / 8-Night Nicaragua Nature Tour with Robert Gallardo

\$2890, from Managua

Airport is Augusto C. Sandino International (MGA)



Nicaragua: Land of Lakes & Volcanos With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

Itinerary



Sat., Feb. 17 Arrivals in Managua

Welcome to Nicaragua! Upon arrival today, you are met by your guide and transferred to our first hotel. Today is a day to relax and get your bearings before we gather as a group for dinner to kick off the tour.

Accommodations at Best Western or similar, Managua (D)

Sun., Feb. 18 & Mon., Feb. 19 El Jaguar Reserve



This morning we depart Managua for El Jaguar Reserve, high in the cloud forest of the Isabela Mountain Range in the northern province of Jinotega. A 100-mile drive from Managua, we enjoy the scenery as we make our way up to 4,500 feet above sea level, stopping en route as photo and birding opportunities present themselves.

Upon arrival, we settle into our lodging before venturing out on the trails. The accommodations and food here are basic, but clean and traditional, respectively. El Jaguar Reserve is a family-run, Rainforest Alliance certified coffee plantation and reserve. Declared an Important Bird Area (IBA) in 2006, the reserve boasts an impressive 350+-bird species list. It was here that the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler was seen in Nicaragua for the first time since 1891! The reserve also has an active MoSI (overwintering survival Monitoring of Migrant Birds) site. Mammals like Jaguarundi, Puma, Northern Tamandua, Collared Peccary, sloths, an endemic squirrel and gopher, and more have also been spotted on the property. Additionally, an impressive variety of butterflies



Nicaragua: Land of Lakes & Volcanos With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



are frequent visitors to the beautiful Porterweed planted around the reserve. What a great launching point for our trip!

The reserve's six trails host incredible biodiversity, and over these two days we wander the trails at a birder's pace, marveling at the stunning orchids and Jurassic-like tree ferns that give the whole reserve a feeling of stepping back in time. Hummingbirds like Violet Sabrewing, Green Violetear, Emerald-chinned Hummingbird, Violet-crowned Woodnymph, and Blue-throated Goldentail are everywhere; Highland Guans are almost like chickens behind the employee housing; and with luck, we spot the fascinating and vulnerable Three-wattled Bellbird. The reserve should also be packed with migrants at this time of year ... an added perk!

Accommodations at El Jaguar Reserve (B,L,D)

Tues., Feb. 20 Lake Apanás / Black Pottery Cooperative

After breakfast this morning, we travel the short distance to Lake Apanás where we embark on a boat ride to witness the wide assortment of waterfowl that call this lake home in February. The Tuma River was dammed in the 1960s to create Lake Apanás, which is now on the list of Wetlands of International Importance. This lake provides power to the whole country, as well as employment opportunities to the surrounding community; tourism is just beginning to take hold here.

After our boat tour, we make the short drive to a cooperative that makes black pottery. We have the opportunity to watch a full demonstration on how the pottery here is made. This is an old, traditional pottery style, unique to the region. Later on during our tour, we have the chance to see a different style of pottery making; it is interesting to see the great contrast between the two styles.



Nicaragua: Land of Lakes & Volcanos With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

This afternoon, you have a bit of free time to bird and explore the grounds of El Jaguar Reserve at your leisure, or indulge in a siesta if you prefer.

Accommodations at El Jaguar Reserve (B,L,D)

Wed., Feb. 21

Selva Negra Reserve / Montibelli

We say goodbye to El Jaguar Reserve today; after breakfast, we pack up and head south toward Montibelli. En route, we stop at Selva Negra, another private reserve. Selva Negra has found its niche as a bit of a tour trap for local Nicaraguans, but it is a nice experience, all round. Around the lodge, we have the chance to see birds like Tropical Kingbird, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Bushy-crested Jay, Yellow-winged Tanager, and Melodious Blackbird. As we explore the one of the loop trails here, we look for Three-wattled Bellbird, noisy mixedflocks, and flocks of North American migrants. With a little more effort we hope to find Green-breasted Mountain-Gem, Highland Guan, White-faced Quail-Dove, Long-tailed Manakin, and the iconic Resplendent Quetzal.

We then settle in for a delicious lunch. Selva Negra is proud of their farm to table menu, with most ingredients grown or raised on the sustainable on-property farm. After lunch, we continue on to Montibelli.

After we check in, you are free to wander the grounds before dinner, or if there is time we may organize a group walk. On our last trip here, a huge boa had captured a giant iguana right next to our room ... we can only hope for such a spectacle again on this tour! Eighty percent of Montibelli's 400 acres are Pacific slope deciduous forest, filled with motmots, Elegant Trogon, different wrens, Long-tailed Manakin, Gray-headed Tanager, Common Potoo, and more.

The food here is excellent, and this evening we tuck into a hearty dinner.

Accommodations in Montibelli (B,L,D)



Nicaragua: Land of Lakes & Volcanos With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



Thurs., Feb. 22 Montibelli / Masaya Volcano

We dedicate the morning today to walking the trails here at Montibelli. Long-tailed Manakin should be quite vocal as we work our way through the forest.

After lunch, we visit Masaya Volcano National Park to get a view of the impressive volcanos here during the day. This is one of the most popular tourist attractions in all of Nicaragua, and is comprised of two volcanoes and five craters. Feared by both the indigenous people and the Spanish conquerors, the active volcano was named “La Boca del Infierno” or “The Mouth of Hell,” and at one point during the 16th Century, there was an attempt to exorcise the Devil from the volcano!

Ash and volcanic rock still cover the ground here near the volcanoes; the scenery is rugged, yet peaceful and is home to fascinating flora and wildlife like skunks, coyotes, opossums, raccoons, iguanas, deer, and monkeys. The Tzinaconostoc Cave is also home to an impressive bat colony, but is unfortunately often closed to the public.

This evening we make the drive back to the entrance of the national park and here we have a bit of a wait. But good things come to those who wait! As night falls, we hope to be one of the first groups that is sent back up the hill to catch a glimpse of the volcano’s lake of lava, glowing in the dusky night sky. Each group is only allowed 15 minutes, so our time here is short, but was well worth it.

We then make the short drive to a nearby restaurant where we enjoy great food and company with the glow of the volcano in the distance.

Accommodations in Montibelli (B,L,D)



Nicaragua: Land of Lakes & Volcanos With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



Fri., Feb. 23

Mombacho Volcano / San Juan de Oriente Pottery Workshop

Today we explore the Mombacho Volcano, tall and dormant and mostly covered in vegetation. Here we are transported up the steep paving stone road to the visitor center on the top of the volcano — what a view! We listen to an introductory talk, and then embark on a slightly strenuous circular trail that loops around one of the extinct craters. Along the trail are several overlooks into the forested crater, and we watch for orchids and the star of the show: Purple-throated Mountain-gem. We enjoy lunch with a view at the visitor center before setting off.



Then we are off to visit the San Juan de Oriente engraved pottery making shop. This shop is actually a school where nationals (and sometimes foreigners) come to learn the art of pre-Colombian style pottery making. Every color we see on these stunning pieces is derived from natural rock/earth sources — amazing! We are given a tour during which we learn about the pottery style, how they color raw pottery, how it is engraved, exactly how it is baked, and more. And then of course we make a visit to the shop where they sell a large variety of the pieces. We're sure to stimulate the local economy with our visit!



Accommodations in Montibelli (B,L,D)



Sat., Feb. 24 Pineapple Plantation / Granada Chocolate Factory

This morning we have a leisurely start, taking in some morning birding around the hotel grounds. Then we visit a small, nearby pineapple plantation where they are continually planting and harvesting crops. We take a short tour of the plantation, then taste different products that are made there.

Nicaragua: Land of Lakes & Volcanos With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



We head back to Montibelli for lunch, then drive some 45 minutes to Granada, situated on the edge of Lake Nicaragua. Here we visit the “Choco Museo” (Chocolate Museum). There is plenty of interpretive information about chocolate and many products for sale here, but the real highlight of the museum is the chocolate-making workshop! During this two-hour long workshop, we take the chocolate through its entire process, including the roasting of the cacao bean. At the end of the workshop, we’ll have made a chocolate bar and chocolate drink from scratch — yum!

Tonight we end with a celebratory dinner, going over our final species list and reminiscing on the good times had on our journey through Nicaragua.

Accommodations in Montibelli (B,L,D)

Sun., Feb. 25 Departures

Today we say goodbye to Nicaragua, departing Montibelli after breakfast to catch international flights home. Please plan your flights out after 10:00 AM.

Cost of the Journey

Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with [Allianz Travel Insurance](#). Their website will show a grid of tour cost and your age category for you to make selections. As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

Cost of the Journey

Cost of the journey is \$2890 DBL / \$3095 SGL (limited availability) per person, from Managua. Cost includes: all accommodations; all meals as stated in the itinerary; group airport transfers; ground transportation within Nicaragua; professional guide services; park, preserve, and other activity fees; and miscellaneous program expenses. Tour price does not include: roundtrip airfare to and from Managua, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, portage, telephone charges, or alcoholic beverages. Gratuities for any local lodge guides in Nicaragua are not included; these are at your discretion, but highly appreciated and recommended. Please note that the cost of the journey is based on a minimum

Nicaragua: Land of Lakes & Volcanos With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

of 4 participants, with a limit of 12 persons; with fewer than 64 participants, a small surcharge of \$100 – \$300 dollars may apply.

Travel Information

Please plan to make air travel plans only after the minimum group size has been reached. Please arrive in Managua at the Augusto C. Sandino International Airport (MGA) by 4:00 PM on February 17. If you need to arrive a day early, we can help with hotel suggestions. Please plan outbound flights no earlier than 10:00 AM on February 25.

Naturalist Journeys, LLC is an equal opportunity service provider and committed to the goal of ensuring equal opportunity for all in employment and program delivery.

Photo Credits

El Jaguar Reserve Swing Bridge, Robert Gallardo (RG); Northern Tamandua, Howard Topoff (HT); Violet Saberwing, Sandy Sorkin (SS); Mombachu Sign, RG; Morpho Peleides, RG; Collared Aracari, James Adams; Lake Apanás, RG; El Jaguar Reserve Dining Room, RG; Three-toed Sloth, HT; El Jaguar Reserve Rooms, RG; Green Violetear, SS; Black Pottery, RG; Tropical Kingbird, SS; Resplendent Quetzal, Greg Smith; Masaya Volcano by Day, RG; Masaya Volcano's Lake of Lava at Night, RG; Trail at Mombachu Volcano, RG; Purple-throated Mountain-gem, RG; San Juan de Oriente Pottery Workshop, RG; Montibelli Reserve, RG; Choco Museo, RG; Montezuma Oropendola, Tom Dove.

