THE REPUBLIC OF NICARAGUA

LOCATION

Nicaragua is located in Central America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Costa Rica and Honduras. Honduras lies at 13 00 N and 85 00 W. This country has an total area of 129,494 sq km.

GEOGRAPHY

The highest point in the country is Mogoton which is 2,438 m; and the lowest is the Pacific Ocean or 0 m. Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America and contains the largest freshwater body in Central America, Lago de Nicaragua.

CLIMATE

Climate in Honduras is subtropical in the lowlands regions and cooler at higher elevation.

HISTORY

The Pacific Coast of Nicaragua was settled as a Spanish colony from Panama in the early 16th century. Nicaragua’s independence from Spain was declared in 1821 and the country became an independent republic in 1838. Britain occupied the Caribbean Coast in the first half of the 19th century, but gradually ceded control of the region in subsequent decades. Violent opposition to governmental manipulation and corruption spread to all classes by 1978 and resulted in a short-lived civil war that brought the Marxist Sandinista guerrillas to power in 1979. Nicaraguan aid to leftist rebels in El
Salvador caused the US to sponsor anti-Sandinista contra guerrillas through 1980s. Free elections in 1990, 1996, and again in 2001 saw the Sandinistas defeated. The country has slowly rebuilt its economy during the 1990s; however, it was heavily damaged by Hurricane Mitch in 1998.

**POPULATION**

Honduran people are an ethnic mix of native Indian, Spanish, and other nationalities. The populations are comprised of mestizo (mixed Amerindian and white) 69%; white 17%; black 9% and Amerindian 5%. According to the statistics of 2004, Nicaragua's population is 5,359,759 with a population growth rate of 1.97%. Some other demographic characteristics of Nicaragua for the year 2001 are as follows; death rate is 4.54 deaths/1,000 population. On the other hand, the birth rate for the country, 25.5 births/1,000 population. The age structure of the country is as follows: 0-14 years representing 38.1%, male 1,038,887 and female 1,322,684; 15-64 years, 58.9% comprising male 1,570,494 and female 1,586,706; and 65 years and over, 3%.

**CURRENCY**

The Nicaraguan currency is the gold cordoba (NIO).

**EDUCATION**
According to the statistics of 2003 the Literacy rate in Nicaragua, that is people in the age of 15 and over that can read and write in the total population. is 67.5%; males representing 67.2% and females 67.8%.

LANGUAGE

The official language is Spanish; however English and indigenous languages are spoken on the Atlantic coast.

RELIGION

The majority of the population in Nicaragua are Roman Catholic (85%), most of the rest are Protestant.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Some of the Natural resources that can be found in Nicaragua are gold, silver, copper, tungsten, lead, zinc, timber, and fish.

Regarding agriculture Nicaragua has 880 sq km of Irrigated land. Arable land represents 20.24% and 2.38% of this is dedicated to permanent crops and 77.38% other purposes. Some of the agricultural goods produced in Nicaragua are coffee, bananas, sugarcane, cotton, rice, corn, tobacco, sesame, soya, beans; beef, veal, pork, poultry, and dairy products.

TRADE
Nicaragua imports an average of 1.658 billion $ f.o.b. Nicaragua’s imports are mainly machinery and equipment, raw materials, petroleum products, and consumer goods. Statistics show that these products are imported from U.S.-23.6%, Costa Rica-10.2%, Guatemala-7.8%, Venezuela-7.1%, El Salvador-6%, Mexico-4.9%, and South Korea-4.6%.

Exportation represents 632 million $ f.o.b. for the Nicaraguan economy. Nicaraguan main commodities that are exported are coffee, shrimp and lobster, cotton, tobacco, bananas, beef, sugar, and gold. These products are exported mainly to U.S.-59.4%, El Salvador-7.5%, and Honduras-4.8%.

FOOD

Nicaraguan food is full of variety. Some of the following are served as appetizers: *Queso frito* or fried cheese, and *tajada* or plantain chips. Some Nicaraguan soups are *Mondongo* (Tripe soup), and *Sopa de Cola* (Oxtail soup). The most typical meat dishes are for example, *Salpicón* (Shredded, marinated meat), *Lengua en Salsa* (Beef tongue with sauce), *Vigorón* (Pork with yuca), *Bistec Entomatado* (Steak in tomato sauce), and *Baho* (Steamed beef with yuca and banana). A very typical beverage in Nicaragua is *Chicha*, which is fermented corn beverage.

IMPORTANT DATES

Nicaragua’s main important dates include Independence Day, 15 September (1821). Independence commemoration is observed as a national holiday; and Constitution day is 9 January approved in 1987, with reforms in 1995 and 2000.
LANDMARKS

Many of Nicaragua's cultural landmarks are in Granada and Leon, the two cities that have long served as the country's military, cultural, and religious centers. Great examples of colonial architecture in Granada start with the La Merced Church, the construction of which began in 1543. The main Cathedral of Granada makes up one side of the central plaza, as cathedrals do in all Spanish colonial cities. Xalteva Church, and the walls that surround its neighborhood, date to the early 17th century. The original city of Leon, at the foot of the Momotombo volcano, was destroyed by an earthquake in 1609, but the ruins have been excavated. In the resettled city of Leon, the Metropolitan Cathedral represents massive religious architecture from the mid-18th century and is the largest cathedral in Central America. This cathedral not only houses artistic masterpieces, but is the final resting place of the country’s most prestigious figures, including Dario, who is buried at the foot of a statue of St. Paul, guarded by a sorrowful lion.

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