

RUNNING HEAD: Nicaragua Culture

A Blend of Culture

Summer Threadgill

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## Introduction

The country of Nicaragua was domesticated by two countries with a rivalry dating back to the 1500s. Because of this diversity in domestication, Nicaragua has a diverse culture with abundant colors, flavors, and ideas. Through the growth process of this country, the citizens have begun to take the best of both countries and make their own unique blend, creating their own culture. While Nicaragua has a complicated history, the citizens tend to live simple lives in order to have harmony with one another.

## History

During Christopher Columbus' voyage of 1502, the Spanish arrived to the land that is now known as Nicaragua. "Before this, the land was inhabited by indigenous people linked to the Aztec and Maya civilizations." (*Nicaragua - history*) Once discovered, the Spanish waited almost twenty years before trying to conquer the land. It was in 1524 that Francisco Hernández de Córdoba conquered the land and began to colonize the area. (*Nicaragua - history*) The native people tried to fight but were ultimately enslaved for labor and died out due to the common cold brought from Europe.

The West side of the land was colonized by Spain, while the East was colonized by the British in 1665. (*Nicaragua - history*) During the time, Nicaraguan ports were being used for the British navy and for global trade. (*Nicaragua - history*) By 1860, the British had left Nicaragua and by 1823, Nicaragua broke free of Spanish control. (*Nicaragua - history*) During this time, immigrants from Germany, Spain, Italy, and France came to Nicaragua, creating the diverse mix that exists to this day. (*Nicaragua - history*)

The name "Nicaragua" has its origin in the indigenous chief that reigned at the time the Spanish invaded the land. (*Nicaragua. Countries*) The chief's name was Nicarao, coming from

the Aztecs. (*Nicaragua. Countries*) The Spanish also combined the chief's name with the geographic location. "Nicaragua" can be translated to mean "here united with the water."

(History)

### **Demographics**

Currently, Nicaragua has 6,735,127 residents. (*Nicaragua population*) Concerning the nation's population growth, the birth rate has significantly decreased in the past decade,

"currently lower than the worldwide average at roughly 2.2 births per woman in the country."

(*Nicaragua population*) Overall, the growth rate has been decreasing since the 1970s, while the

overall population is still increasing at a slower rate. (*Nicaragua population*) On average per

day, there are 357 births, 93 deaths, and 50 migrations out of the country. (*Nicaragua*

*population*)

The country is densest in Managua, the capital, with 973,087 people. (*Nicaragua population*) Coming in second is the district of Leon with 144,538 people. "Nicaragua's

population is 69% Mestizo, 17% white, 5% Amerindian and 9% black and other races, although its demographics change with migration. 84% of the country's population lives in urban areas.

17% of the population is of European descent." (*Nicaragua population*) Concerning the

indigenous people of the area, they have mostly assimilated into the Mestizo's majority.

### **Culture**

#### **Food**

Nicaragua has deep roots within Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala cultures. (*Nicaragua. Countries*) Because of this, Nicaragua has similar flavor profiles. The staples within the pantry

are corn, beans, garlic, and onions. (*Nicaragua. Countries*) These flavor profiles are eaten with

corn tortillas, often being used as a utensil. (*Nicaragua. Countries*) The average drink to find with a meal is coffee. (*Nicaragua. Countries*)

Food and meals are not just a time to gain energy in order to work but meals act as an everyday celebration of family and friends. (*Food*) The idea that food was a sign of unity began as early as Nicaragua's creation. (*Food*) Towns will feed pilgrims coming to festivals dedicated to the patron saint and corn is often given magical and religious properties. (*Food*)

### **Lifestyle**

Nicaragua is known to have a beautiful balance of pride and humility. (Lonely Planet) This thought refers to Nicaragua being a country continuously on the move. With 84% of the population living in urban areas, "regular jobs are difficult to find, and more than half of employed Nicaraguans are in the 'informal sector' – street vendors, cleaners, artisans." (Lonely Planet) Two major mindsets exist between the urban and the rural. The urban area tends to have a big interest in the world and social media, while the rural tends to be laid back and the interest is rooted in traditions. (Lonely Planet) The rural area also tends to be more hospitable, knowing their neighbors very well. (Lonely Planet) The urban area tends to work a 9 - 5 job while the rural areas tend to specialize in long hours with physical labor. (Lonely Planet)

The life of someone living in Nicaragua is marked with "creativity, lively, blissful, warmth, and hospitality." (History) Nicaragua has a great variety in dances, customs, and traditions due to the diverse heritage that began at the founding of Nicaragua. Nicaraguans love to celebrate for any reason and are noted for their friendliness. They are quick to give a helping hand and due to their simple lifestyle, they are usually willing to take time and chat with others.

### **Government**

Nicaragua identifies itself as a presidential republic with the power being divided between the executive, legislative, judicial, and the electoral branches. (Encyclopaedia) Nicaragua is also divided into regions, then departments, then municipalities with each municipality having a council and mayor elected by the local citizens. (Encyclopaedia) With each municipality, there is no separation between church and state, giving each area an official patron saint. (Encyclopaedia)

Between the years of 1838 and 1979, Nicaragua had nine constitutions. (Encyclopaedia) The last constitution in 1979 was drafted by the Somoza family and in it, they annulled the presidency, congress, and the courts. (Encyclopaedia) This family was overthrown in 1985 with a new constitution being drafted in 1987. (Encyclopaedia) Within this constitution, the presidency returned, stating that the president would be elected by popular vote for a five year term. The 1987 constitution also gave birth to the national assembly, which makes up the legislative branch of government. (Encyclopaedia) The national assembly has five year terms with two seats being reserved for the past immediate president and the runner up of the immediate preceding presidential election. (Encyclopaedia)

The court system include civilian, military, appeals, and supreme. (Encyclopaedia) The Nicaragua Constitution “states that the justices and judges in their judicial activity are independent and must obey only to the Constitution and the law; they are governed, among others, by the principles of equality, publicity and right to defence.” (*Update*) Within the court rooms, trials have no more than two opportunities for review and the constitutionality of a trial can be brought before the supreme court.

The judicial system has been one marked with inconsistent decisions, trial delays, and politicization. (Encyclopaedia) Nicaragua has accepted international assistance, but it has not

been proven to help long term. (Encyclopaedia) The most recent issue involving the government involved the 2006 election of Daniel Ortega as president. The election was marked by significant abuse of human rights and the Nicaragua government described the election as one that was free and fair. (*Nicaragua - justice.gov*) Because of this contradiction, international governments have stepped in to help. (*Nicaragua - justice.gov*)

### **Economy**

As of 2020, Nicaragua was ranked as “the poorest and least developed countries in Central America.” (*Nicaragua population*) Nicaragua’s economy is rooted in their agriculture and the ability to trade, but during the 1985 civil war within Nicaragua, President Reagan of the United States declared a trade embargo on Nicaragua due to a faulty view of the presidential election. (*Nicaragua - justice.gov*) Since this declaration, Nicaragua’s economy has decreased significantly. (*Nicaragua population*)

Being an agriculture focused society is both a blessing and a curse. (Lonely Planet) Nicaragua is open to a variety of threats, such as “plunging world commodity prices, natural disasters and environmental factors such as soil degradation and water shortages.” (Lonely Planet) Despite these problems that Nicaragua faces regularly, they still have a large production and export system. The main exports from Nicaragua include coffee, beef, and dairy products. (Lonely Planet) Industrial production was hit severely by the civil war. (Lonely Planet) Despite this, the textile industry is growing and the cigar industry is the largest growing industry. (Lonely Planet) Nicaragua relies heavily on the gold mining and tourism industries. (Lonely Planet)

### **Religion**

Nicaragua gives its citizens the right to religious freedom and tolerance. (*Religion*) Even with this freedom, 90% of the country state themselves to be members of Christian

denominations. (*Nicaragua population*) 73% of Nicaragua claim Roman Catholicism as their religion and 15% attend Evangelical churches. (*Nicaragua population*) The remaining 10% of the community are most commonly either Jewish or Muslim. (*Nicaragua population*)

The Catholic faith arrived when the Spanish did in 1524, but has never been proclaimed as the official religion. (*Religion*) Even though this proclamation has never been made, the church does have political influence in Nicaragua as bishops are often invited to offer opinions on issues. (*Religion*) Education is often run by Roman Catholic bodies and “yearly festivals are held throughout Nicaragua in honor of the patron saints as well as several other religious celebrations.” (*Religion*) Many citizens attend services and often “utter phrases like ‘if it is God’s will’.” (*Religion*)

### **Communication**

At the root of communication, Nicaragua is a collectivist culture. At the end of the day, Nicaraguans work for the family and live a simple life to spend more time with friends and family. Nicaragua is known for having a harder time when answering questions about the individual but easily answers questions that involve marital status and opinions about their home country. Children are taught to control desires in order to save the family from any embarrassment. Another reason that Nicaragua is considered to be a collectivistic country is because the people of Nicaragua highly value hospitality and generosity.

Latin America as a whole depicts a high power distance society, where power is spread thin and is not commonly questioned. High power societies rely on traditions and often have specific roles. It seems contradictory that Nicaragua is considered a high power society taking into consideration the emphasis that they place on the family.

Feminism is supported by the people of Nicaragua with women being “educated and work in professional opportunities just like men.” (*Nicaraguan customs*) Women being in the workplace is popular within urban areas, such as Managua. This idea has been embedded in the minds of Nicaraguans since the Spanish invaders. (*Nicaraguan customs*) In rural areas, the traditional route is taken. (*Nicaraguan customs*) Women tend to stay in the home and raise children, but women are also seen in the fields whenever time allows them to be out of the home.

The citizens of Nicaragua tend to support a low uncertainty avoidance. People openly express their emotions and ask blunt questions. This openness is often due to curiosity and friendliness. The uncertainty is not high because if it was high, it would be due to an uncomfortability. Nicaraguans are blunt because they genuinely want to know more about the person in order to be in a better relationship. They are comfortable with being told no or even being given an incorrect answer.

Due to the fact that 50% of the Nicaragua population lives below the poverty line, the population of Nicaragua does not all live in an urban society. Parts of Nicaragua resort back to Tribal societies, seen in part of the rural population. These societies are large enough to be stationary and can farm the land they call home. In this society, the family is of great value and the individual is seen in light of their heritage.

In light of time, Nicaragua is polychronic in its view. (Michaelameneghini) Time seems to be almost limitless and schedules can be rearranged. (Michaelameneghini) Events do not start at a specific time but instead start when the people need it to start. It would be expected for a person to show up an hour late to an event. At the same time, multiple things could be happening at the same time. Individuals in this culture thrive on the business that multiple tasks bring “as



long as they can be executed together with a natural rhythm.” (VP) Ultimately, this view of time focuses on others for the time cues.

### **Conclusion**

Despite government inconsistencies and trade downfalls, Nicaraguans have found joy in the simplicity of human interaction. The communication patterns of Nicaragua do seem contradictory but due to the roots of the country, Nicaraguans blend the three almost seamlessly. Nicaraguans have taken their history from the British, Spaniards, and the Aztecs and have combined the three to make their own blend of culture.

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