

Doing Business in Nicaragua: A Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies

Chapter 8: Business Travel

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Business Customs

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Business customs in Nicaragua, while often based on personal relationships, are relatively straightforward. Many Nicaraguan executives have been educated in the United States and are familiar with U.S. business customs. Business lunches can last longer than an hour and are a good way to build a personal relationship. Open-collar attire is acceptable for many meetings, but Nicaraguans accustomed to dealing with foreigners may dress more formally. Nicaraguans may arrive late for scheduled appointments, but concern for punctuality is improving. Businesses remain open at midday, but executives are often unavailable between noon and 2:00 p.m. Most business people rely heavily on cellular phones and will continue to receive and place calls during meetings.

Travel Advisory

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For up-to-date information on safety and security issues related to travel to Nicaragua, see U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, [Nicaragua: Country Specific Information](#).

Visa Requirements

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The Ministry of Governance, [Immigration Office](#) is the definitive source for visa requirements for Nicaragua. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular

Affairs, [Nicaragua: Country Specific Information](#) also provides relevant information.

U.S. companies that require travel of foreign businesspersons to the United States should allow sufficient time for visa issuance if required. Visa applicants should consult U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, [Visas](#); [Destination USA](#); or the [Consular Section](#) of the U.S. Embassy in Managua

Telecommunications

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The [Nicaraguan Institute for Telecommunications and Postal Service](#) (TELCOR) reports that there are 247,862 conventional phone lines installed in Nicaragua as of December 2007. Cellular phones have far surpassed land lines, with 2.12 million lines installed as of December 2007. The former state-owned telephone company ENITEL, now owned by América Móvil of Mexico, provides all land-based phone services and competes with only one other private company, Telefónica Movil of Spain, in cellular service. Nicaragua's telecommunication system is being upgraded through the installation of fiber optic technology and costs are expected to decline. Communication with the United States is readily available through major U.S. long-distance carriers.

Transportation

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U.S. airlines operate several daily roundtrip flights from the United States to Nicaragua, including American (Miami), Continental (Houston), Delta (Atlanta), and Spirit (Fort Lauderdale). Central American airline TACA operates flights to the United States through San Salvador, El Salvador. Most hotels offer airport shuttle services for their guests. Visitors commonly drive rental cars and a U.S. driver's license is valid for 60 days. Taxicab services within the perimeter of business class hotels are reliable. Public transit is not recommended.

Information on transportation safety is available from the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, [Nicaragua: Country Specific Information](#).

Language

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The official language of Nicaragua is Spanish, but some business persons and government officials speak English as a second language. English is also widely spoken as a first language on the Atlantic coast and on Corn Island.

Health

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For up-to-date information on health concerns related to travel in Nicaragua, see U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, [Nicaragua: Country Specific Information](#).

Local Time, Business Hours, and Holidays

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The following holidays are observed in Nicaragua:

- New Year's Day: January 1
- Holy Thursday: Variable (April 9, 2009)
- Good Friday: Variable (April 10, 2009)
- Labor Day: May 1
- Sandinista Revolution Day: July 19
- Festival of Santo Domingo (Managua only): August 1 and 10
- Battle of San Jacinto: September 14
- Independence Day: September 15
- Immaculate Conception Day: December 8
- Christmas Day: December 25

It is customary for the government and most private businesses to close for the entire week before Easter Sunday, known as "Semana Santa." Similarly, most government offices and private businesses close between Christmas and New Year's Day. When a holiday falls on a weekend, the government may declare a day off for government workers the preceding Friday or following Monday to create a three-day weekend, but the decision is often announced on short notice.

Temporary Entry of Materials and Personal Belongings

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The Nicaraguan Customs Authority does not apply import charges or duties to goods such as laptop computers, professional equipment, or exhibit materials brought into Nicaragua for temporary personal or professional use. Business samples ordinarily may be brought in free of duty as well. See Chapter 5: Trade Regulations, Customs, and Standards, [Temporary Entry](#) for more information.

The U.S. Embassy, Managua, Economic/Commercial Section takes no responsibility for actions readers may take based on the information in this guide. Readers should always conduct their own market research and due diligence before entering into any commercial arrangement.