

Nicaragua



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Nicaragua

Most Nicaraguans are mestizos. That is that they have white and Indian ancestors. Their way of life is somewhat similar to that of Spanish Americans in other Central American countries. Most people belong to the Roman Catholic Church and speak Spanish. Most of Nicaragua's people are poor farmers. Many of those in the Pacific Region are peasants who work on their own farms, cooperatives, state farms, or large private farms. In warmer areas, agriculture workers live in metal roofed houses. In the colder areas of the Central Highlands, they live in adobe houses with tile roofs.

The only Indian groups in Nicaragua that follow their own languages and their old ways of life are in the thinly populated Caribbean Region.

In the early 1980's some of these Indians became involved in anti-government things. Because of this, the government moved some Indian groups from their homes near the border to areas in the interior of Nicaragua.

Nicaragua has a law that requires children to go to school from the age of six through twelve. Before 1980, only about half the children did so because they were poor and couldn't afford to be sent or it was that there weren't many schools around where they lived. Nicaragua did not have

enough schools, and many rural areas had no schools at all. But since then the new government has built hundreds of schools. The government also held

a successful literacy campaign headed mainly by young volunteer teachers.

Nicaragua has two universities. The national University of Nicaragua, in Leon and Managua, is the older and larger one. It was founded in 1812 and has more than seven thousand students. The Central American University

is a Roman Catholic institution in Managua.

A president heads the government of Nicaragua. The people elect the president and a legislature called the National Assembly. The president appoints a Cabinet to help carry out the operations of the government.

This government is very similar to our own government.

The president, most of the Cabinet members, and the majority of the National Assembly members belong to a political party called the Sandinista National Liberation Front. In 1979, the Sandinistas led a revolution that overthrew the government of the Somoza family, which had long ruled Nicaragua. From 1979 to 1984 the Sandinistas controlled the government largely through a three-member junta, or a ruling body. The president and the national assembly were elected in 1984.

In 1502 Christopher Columbus claimed Nicaragua for Spain. The Spaniards did not really settle in Nicaragua. Many pirates set up hideouts and Dutch as well as others went to Nicaragua instead.

On September 15, 1821 Nicaragua and other Central American states declared their independence. They later became part of the Mexican Empire but broke away in 1823. They formed the United Provinces of Central America. This union generally followed liberal economic and political policies. The union began to fall apart because of conservative landowners and the clergy to regain their old privileges. In 1838 Nicaragua left the Union.

In 1979 there was a civil war which drove the Somoza family out of government office. They had ruled from 1937 to 1979. Somoza was assassinated in 1980 while leaving the country as an order by the rebels who fought and won.