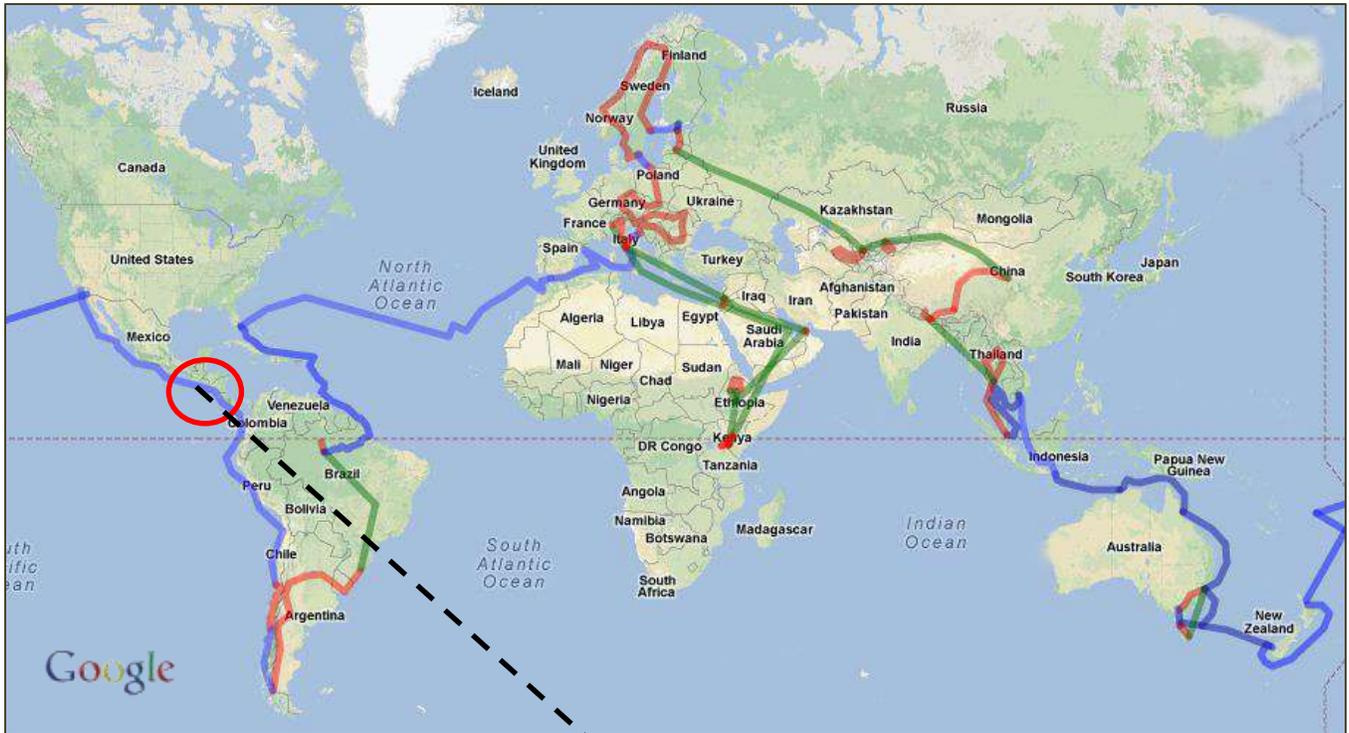




Trekking the Planet

Discovering the Cultural and Natural Significance of the World



Where are we now?

- Darren and Sandy are in Puntarenas, Costa Rica, located at 10° N and 85° W.
- We have traveled approximately 72,142 miles (116,149 kilometers) from our starting point in California.



People and Culture

- What is now Costa Rica and Nicaragua were both visited by Christopher Columbus on his fourth and final voyage in 1502. Costa Rica, meaning "rich coast", was named by Columbus.
- The Spanish colonized both countries later in the 1500's, but they never received the same level of interest as Mexico to the north and Peru to the south, due to the natural resources present in both those other countries.
- Following Mexico's victory and independence from Spain in 1821, Costa Rica and Nicaragua both became part of the United Provinces of Central America. State independence was achieved by each in 1838.
- Costa Rica has historically been a stable country and abolished its army in 1949. Its population of about four million is driven by an economy focused on technology and tourism.
- Conversely, Nicaragua has undergone periods of dictatorships and instability. The United States occupied it from 1912 to 1933. Dictators ruled it from 1933 to 1979. Civil wars, financed by Cuba, the Soviet Union and United States, raged in the 1980's. Today, the country of five million is a democracy and one of poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere.

Did you know?

The city of Granada, Nicaragua is one of the oldest European settlements in Central America. It was founded in 1524 by Spanish explorer Francisco Hernandez de Cordoba, and is located on the shore of Lake Nicaragua. Granada attracted the attention of pirates, who captured it and burned it down several times. The colonial buildings attract tourists today and it is Nicaragua's fourth largest city with 116,000 people.



sources: Spanish1on1.net,
Granadanicaragua.net, Wikimedia.org



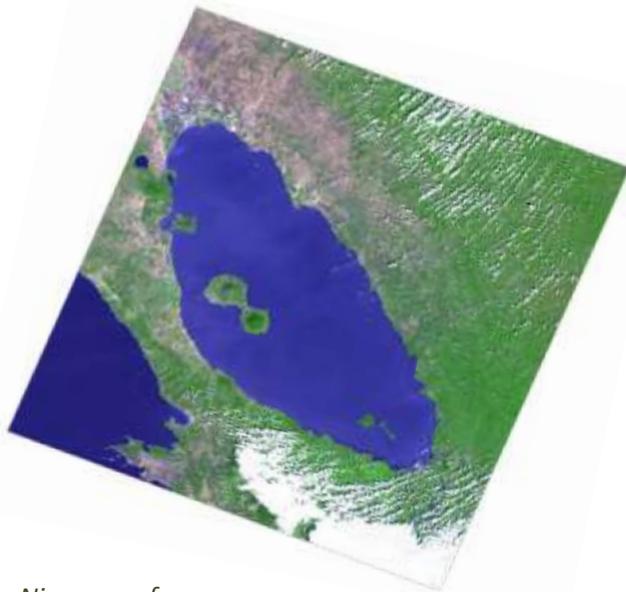
The Nicaraguan flag, as with all former United Provinces of Central America members, uses some type of blue and white pattern. In this case, the blue stripes symbolize the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea, with the white representing peace.
(source: worldflag101.com)

The Spider Monkey

One of four different monkey varieties found in Costa Rica, the Spider Monkey get its name from swinging through trees with its long limbs and tail. The tail alone can hold its full weight (up to 15 pounds / 6.8 kilograms). They move from tree to tree looking for fruit, leaves, flowers and insects to eat. These monkeys are important in natural seed dispersal. The diminishing forests of Costa Rica have made them an endangered species.



sources: Nicoyapeninsula.com,
Suite101.com, Thefullwiki.org



Lake Nicaragua from space

(source: Nicaragua-from-space.wikispaces.com)

Nature and Environment

- Costa Rica is a small country, comprising only about .03% of the earth's surface. However, it accounts for more than 5% of the world's biodiversity. This includes more than 1,000 species of butterflies, 850 types of birds, 9,000 varieties of plants and 208 species of mammals.
- More than 25% of Costa Rica is set aside as national parks, reserves and wildlife refuges. It is about 200 miles (322 kilometers) wide, from the Pacific Ocean to the Caribbean Sea. There are more than 800 miles (1,287 kilometers) of coastline between both coasts.
- Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America and about the size of New York State. It is the most sparsely populated country in the region because the majority of people live on the more fertile Pacific Coast. The swampy Caribbean side is known as the "mosquito coast".
- Lake Nicaragua is the largest lake in Central America. A freshwater lake, it attracts sharks, sawfish and tarpons that come through the San Juan River from the Caribbean Sea.

Our Plans

- After spending time in Puntarenas, exploring the nature of Costa Rica, we will visit Nicaragua for the day. We plan to visit the colonial city of Granada and Lake Nicaragua.
- The ship will next stop in Mexico, our last country before reaching the United States. We will spend a day in Cabo San Lucas.
- We have just a few days left on our worldwide journey, so let us know if you have any questions or comments before we arrive in California next week.

Breakfast in Central America

Gallo pinto is a common dish in both Costa Rica and Nicaragua. It consists of rice and beans fried together. The name means "spotted rooster" in Spanish. It comes from the speckled appearance of the dish, resembling a rooster, when the rice gets colored by beans while cooking together. It can be eaten at any meal, but it is popular for breakfast.



*sources: Wikipedia.org,
Whats4eats.com*

More Information

- <http://www.funtrivia.com/en/subtopics/Republic-of-Costa-Rica-336739.html>
- <http://www.everyculture.com/Ma-Ni/Nicaragua.html>
- <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107839.html>
- <http://www.geographia.com/costa-rica/history.htm>
- <http://www.visitcostarica.com/ict/paginas/ictnota.asp?idnota=209>
- <http://costarica.com/travel/fun-facts>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Costa_Rica
- <http://lifestyle.iloveindia.com/lounge/facts-about-nicaragua-3323.html>

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