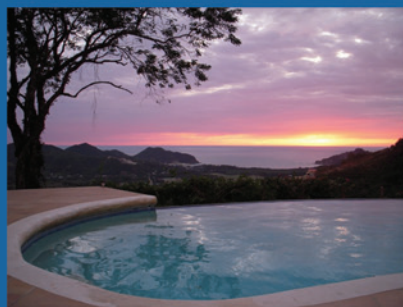




CHICABRAVA

The first. The best. All-Girls Surf Camp in Nicaragua



CHICABRAVA™ is an elite camp
for adventurous women who
appreciate comfort as
well as challenge.

Located in the quaint fishing village of San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua, only 30 minutes north of Costa Rica, CHICABRAVA™ offers a variety of surf/travel packages, which include **surfing** world class waves, spectacular accommodations, authentic local cuisine, **yoga**, soothing **massage**, and a variety of exciting activities in a safe environment.

Get Stoked... in Style.
The **ultimate** surfing experience for women...

CHICABRAVA.com

nicaragua

By Dan Olson

Epic Surf, Fascinating Culture, Beautiful Countryside




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The CHICABRAVA Surf House, only
steps from the ocean and surf



CHICABRAVA owner, Ashley Blaylock, clearly in her element at her home break in Nicaragua. Photo courtesy of CHICABRAVA



Popoyo Surf Lodge Surf Guide/Photographer, Renato CG. Thanks for the photos!



Every surf trip leaves it's mark. My new battle wound/tattoo, after getting wrapped up in my board at Romanzo



Sunset at Popoyo Beach

When we left Hawaii, we knew that if we wanted the biggest and craziest waves, we should just drive up north here on Oahu, Hawaii, to our own backyard. But if we were looking for an adventure, a memory creating surf trip that we would dream of for years to come, then we should head to Nicaragua as planned. Regardless of the size of waves we would get, we were looking for a vacation away from the crowds and aggression.

Blast off from Hawaii... touchdown in Florida

I grabbed my Fluid surfboard from a friend in New Smyrna (thanks Gabriel & Amanda), who had been storing it and Sandra's brand new "Chicks Stick by Lola- Little Screamer" that she was dying to try out for the very first time. Rental car jammed with boards and bags, we made our way to the Taca Airlines counter at the Orlando Intl. airport.

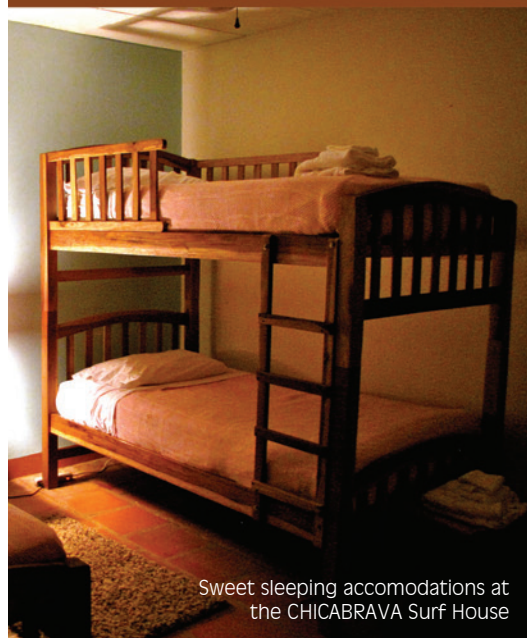
Flying TACA is always a pleasure. The staff is friendly, and they don't act as though you are wasting their time, trying to check in surfboards. They're eager to help you explore their country, and it shows, and with surf travel and tourism just beginning to boom in their country, they're always curious and excited for you to experience "some of the best waves in the world".

There are several ways to get to Central America on Taca, such as non-stop flights, that are a little pricier, but get you there super fast- and are great for those with schedule restraints, or the option of multiple stops, which gets you a better rate, AND the opportunity to see other countries like Guatemala, and El Salvador, en-route. Though you're only visiting the airports, it's a great way to stretch your legs, cruise the gift shops for souvenirs and coffee, and then hop back on board a Taca flight, where you're served ANOTHER free meal, and complimentary juices, sodas, coffee, and yes- even adult beverages, too. International travel on Taca is like no other these days—they still believe in customer service.

Touchdown: Managua, Nicaragua

We made it! CHICABRAVA's driver was waiting for us to take us back to camp, so after loading our boards, we piled in the A/C'd van, and eagerly took off. The main roads and highways were extremely busy, and packed with cars, horses, moped-taxi services and yoke-laden oxen pulling heavy wooden carts. What a trip!

The Nica's are a very friendly people, much like the Salvadorians we met on our previous surf trip to El Salvador (Read about it in our Wtr/Spr '11 issue).



Sweet sleeping accomodations at the CHICABRAVA Surf House



Ashley Blaylock, owner/operator of CHICABRAVA
Photo courtesy of CHICABRAVA



JJ & Kims girls (also below), owners of the Popoyo Surf Lodge. How killer would it be to grow up surfing at Popoyo?!



I once caught a fish...

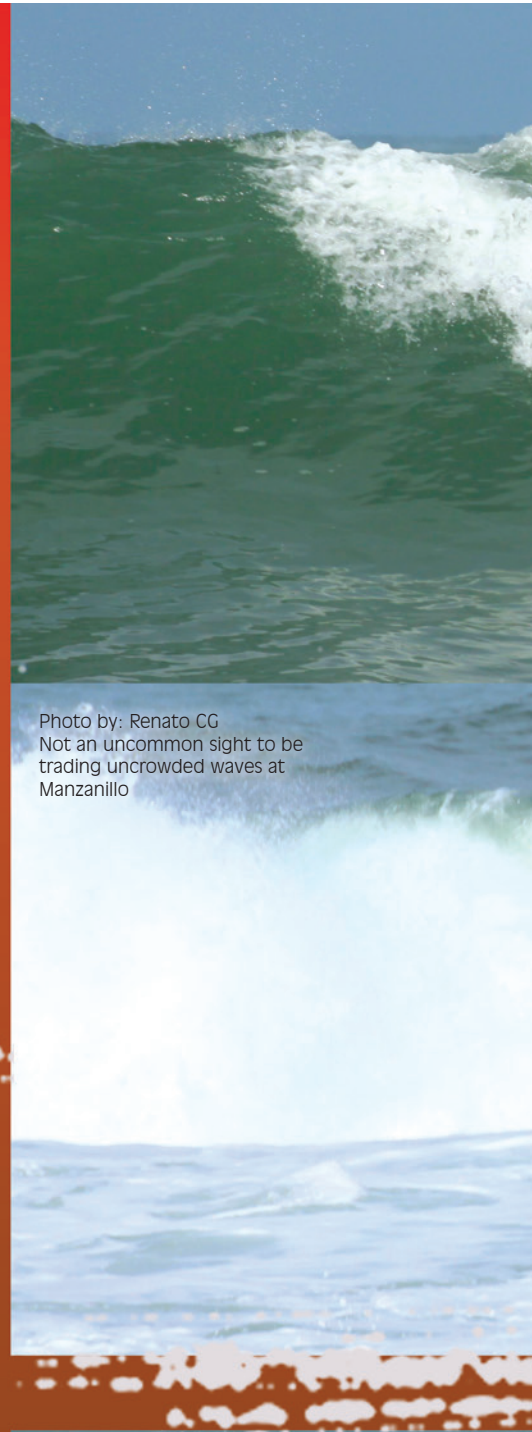


Photo by: Renato CG
Not an uncommon sight to be trading uncrowded waves at Manzanillo

nicaragua

Epic Surf, Fascinating Culture, Beautiful Countryside

Unlike our less-welcoming closer neighbor, Mexico, who in recent years hasn't been the biggest fan of their neighbor to the north, the Nica's greet you with a shine in their eye and big, welcoming smiles, un-begrudging you of your American heritage, while eager to have you there and enjoying yourself.

About 2 hours later, and after a quick stop for lunch, we arrived at our first stop, CHICABRAVA, where we were met by its lovely owner, Ashley Blaylock. A transplant from the USA, Ashley set out on her own down here, dancing to the sound of a different beat, and making her dream of running her own surf camp a reality.

She offers two different styles of lodging, from the eco-conscious, boutique style Cloud Farm (yes, you're practically in Heaven when you're up there), located on hundreds of acres of indigenous forest, fruit orchards and organic gardens. It's quiet and peaceful- perfect for the surf/yoga enthusiast, to the Surf House, which is located on the main street, beachfront road in the town of San Juan Del Sur. Here the surf breaks are within a rock-throwing distance, as well as nighttime entertainment and local restaurants galore.

We chose the Surf House, since we would only be there for one night and we wanted to experience the Nica culture. After a quick nap that day, we loaded up the van with our boards and headed out for our first surf of the trip, to a spot called Romanzo. We were told that Nicaragua boasts off-shore winds over 300 days per year, so the CHICABRAVA staff assured us that the conditions we would see were NOT normal (messy), but should clean up the following morning. Regardless of conditions, we were stoked to be in the water and were charged up.

Romanzo is a great left-hander that offers a peak for almost all levels of surfing, but that night it was heavy and heaving, as the remnants of one of the biggest swells of the year continued to pound Nica's shores further north. We scored, enjoying solid 8' - 12' sets, with a couple super long lefts that made it all worthwhile. This place rocks for the goofy-footers!

Back in San Juan, the CHICABRAVA Surf House was a bed & breakfast style lodging, with a full Nicaraguan breakfast included, so that left us free to choose from many of the local restaurants for lunch and dinner, which was a nice cultural experience. After a great dinner with Ashley and

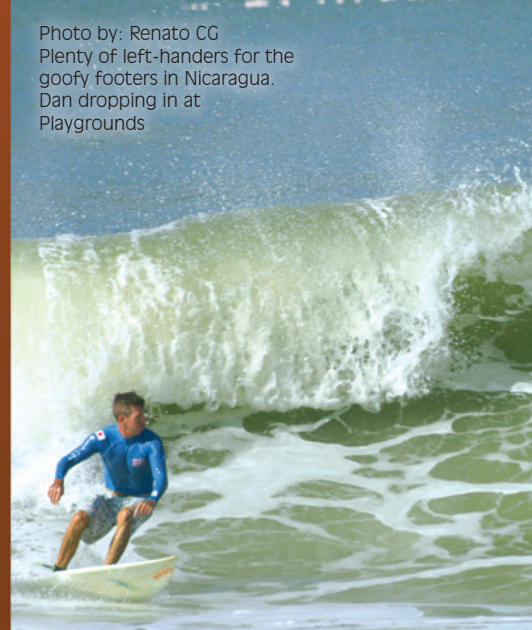


Photo by: Renato CG
Plenty of left-handers for the goofy footers in Nicaragua. Dan dropping in at Playgrounds