Ashley Blaylock, A Chica Brava.
-by Ericka Espinosa

We live in a world of men. As such, it's remarkable to find a woman who excels in a sport dominated by men. From Houston, Texas to San Juan del Sur, Ashley Blaylock felt the impetus to establish the first surf camp for women: CHICABRAVA. This athlete has won the title of national champion in surfing in Nicaragua for five consecutive years and has managed to turn her hobby into a business.

Ashley Blaylock is from Houston, Texas and comes from a large family of eight children. In 2003, she came to Nicaragua for the first time and fell in love with our country. She was studying to be a lawyer at the University of Houston and while on a summer program in Costa Rica, she decided to visit San Juan del Sur. She spent the next two years traveling to Nicaragua and, after graduation in 2005, she took up permanent residence in San Juan del Sur. She worked in real estate as an investment advisor before starting her own business. While in school, she worked at the Innocence Network, an NGO that helps prove the innocence of inmates on Death Row awaiting death for crimes they did not commit. However, her passion has always been surfing; it is her greatest source of happiness. Besides surfing, this brave girl, loves to travel, read, learn, sing, dance, and "especially being with my dear Walter, and my family (and all my nephews) and friends". When surfing she says: "I am living fully in the present moment and enjoying nature. There is always a challenge, always something to do. There are triumphs and there are moments of extreme difficulty. When I catch a wave, I'm flying. I'm always looking how to flow with the sea. It's a force that we cannot control; we can only learn how to work with it and dance on it's waves. Besides all this, and fact that it's healthy and great exercise, above all, surfing is suuuuper fun! "

Her life philosophy is: Life is short, life is unique. We need to know what we want and what we love and do it now. We have to make the most of every moment, taking advantage of the incredible opportunity we have to be, to live, to enjoy, to give and to love. Our family and loved ones are paramount. We must have compassion for others, especially the less fortunate, and always share what we have. We should strive be loving, grateful and kind to everyone. We must always follow our passion and live free, happy and without fear.

Ashley is the founder of CHICABRAVA, a surf camp dedicated especially for women. "When I came in 2003, I was one of the first women to surf in Nicaragua with the local guys. None of the local women surfed and tourism had not yet hit. They looked at me like I was crazy and were surprised to see a girl out in the line-up. They began to yell out "chica brava" to me because I wasn't afraid to go for big waves. In 2006, when I finally decided to develop a surf camp for women, I knew I had the perfect name for the place," recalls Ashley.

The idea behind CHICABRAVA is to provide an experience where women can support each other and feel empowered; a place where women can "feel just as capable as men doing something that increases their confidence, where they can address their fears

and achieve something that previously seemed very difficult. Surfing with other women, you feel like “if she can do it, I can do it too!”, says Blaylock. However, what finally determined her to open ChicaBrava was a sad event in her life: "In July 2007, my grandmother died. She was like my best friend in life. This woke me up to the reality that life is short and we have to do what really makes us happy because we don’t get a second chance in life. It was then I realized I had to get going and make my dream come true, and so... ChicaBrava was born. "

CHICABRAVA consists of three main offerings: First, a luxury women’s surf retreat, including surfing lessons, yoga, massage, healthy food, and more. Second, a surf academy offering surf lessons daily. Finally, a beach-front surf shop with the latest trend in swimwear and clothes, including her own line of CHICABRAVA clothing and accesories.

What CHICABRAVA really wants to promote most is to get more Nicaraguan girls surfing! For more information visit their website or write to info@chicabrava.com.