Surf the Waves Fantastic



Story by Ashley Blaylock
Photos by Roberto Garcia

Nicaragua is quickly becoming recognized as one of the best places to visit in Central America for surfing. With its uncrowded waves and offshore winds almost year round, there is no reason to wonder why.

I first came to Nicaragua in June 2003. In law school in Texas at the time, I was on a summer program to study international law in Costa Rica and one of the students suggested we visit San Juan del Sur. He'd heard it was a place becoming known among surfers as a good central launching point to get to see and surf some of the Coast's best waves.

At that time, I honestly don't know whether I could have pointed to Nicaragua on a map. Although I'd been to Costa Rica before, it hadn't dawned on me to look north. I didn't know anyone else who was looking in that direction either. I arrived late at night after a three-hour cab drive, alone, down what looked to me like a dirt road in the middle of nowhere, going to nowhere. The next day, we hit the surf.

Although I spent the better part of my time that first summer going over the falls almost the entire time, I was glad to be doing it because I knew I was paying dues that would come back to me in full. I returned a few weeks later, and then again, and again. Finally, I moved here full time to enjoy the sun, surf, and offshore winds creating some of the most perfectly formed waves I've ever seen.

Needless to say, from June 2003 to January 2007, things have changed... a bit. Tourism has grown exponentially, as has the real estate market (going from one real estate marketing operations when I first came to more than a dozen now). And the waves have inevitably become more crowded. But "crowded" for us in Nicaragua is more like "empty" in many places from which surfers come originally. Even still, I thought I had discovered paradise. Now, I'm convinced I have.

If you've never visited Nicaragua before, it is beautiful and most of the coastline remains undeveloped. It may also surprise you to know that the coastline changes dramatically as

Surf Lingo For Dummies

Barrel = hollow wave breaking in the form of a barrel
Beach Break = waves breaking over sand bottom
Reef Break = waves breaking over reef (rock or coral)
Snaking waves = stealing someone else's wave
Paddle-battling = aggressively competing for waves
Going over the falls = getting sucked up the face of the wave and going over with the lip of the wave as the wave brakes.