



TWO-WEEK BIRDING/SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TRIP TO NICARAGUA (2017)

TENTATIVE ACTIVITIES

Travel to Nicaragua for two weeks, one week in León and one week in southern Nicaragua.
Dates: Saturday, February 25, to Sunday, March 12, 2017

WEEK 1: LEÓN AND SURROUNDING AREA

- **León is a colonial city**, the former capital, and the intellectual center of Nicaragua, with the second oldest university in Central America. Your group will stay in the same neighborhood with host families in **León**, receive an orientation about Nicaragua, and tour cultural and historical sites, and an art school supported by PML.
- Boat tour of the **Juan Venado Estuary on the Pacific Ocean** with great bird-watching, including grackles, Boat-billed Heron, Mangrove Cuckoo, Nicaragua Grackle, shorebirds, Magnificent Frigate birds, as well as reptiles and turtles. Learn about environmental issues affecting the area. Then swim and relax at the sandy **Poneloya Beach**. Enjoy a meal in the nearby village of **Las Penitas, a beach village**.
- Hike up the **Cerro Negro Volcano**, and enjoy a 360-degree view of surrounding countryside and other volcanoes.
- Enjoy **bird watching** and walking through the woods at **Los Alpes Ecolodge**, then relax on a porch overlooking a beautiful valley, while eating a delicious lunch.
- Hike and bird-watch in a **mountain rainforest** at the **Tisey Estanzuela Nature Reserve**. Enjoy the plentiful flora, fauna, and many birds: Turquoise-browed Motmot, Caracara, Acorn Woodpecker. Learn about conflicts between agriculture and wildlife conservation.
- Explore the **archaeological site** of **León Viejo, next to Lake Managua**, the original site of the city of León, and learn about the city's pre-colonial history. This is a **World Heritage Site**, and you can see the ruins of the 400-year-old city. Nearby, walk by a river at the base of the **Momotombo Volcano**, where you can view many shorebirds, herons, hummingbirds, and butterflies.
- Learn from **university professors** about a variety of topics, including birds, ecology, climate change, and the impact of development on the environment.
- Connect with locals in the **San Carlos community**, which PML works with, to learn about community initiatives to secure **clean drinking water** and other projects.
- Visit **SONATI, an environmental education and conservation program**, and learn about climate change, pollution, and deforestation.

**WEEK 2: TRIP TO SOUTHERN NICARAGUA
GRANADA, SOLENTINAME ISLANDS, and SAN JUAN RIVER AREA**

- Spend two nights in the beautiful **colonial city of Granada**, situated next to Lake Nicaragua, the largest lake in Central America, while taking daytime excursions.
- Ride a truck up the **Mombacho Volcano**, then eat lunch at a rustic lodge, and bird-watch at the top of the rim. See Mountain Elaenia, chachalacas, forest falcons, as well as Mombacho Salamanders and Red-eyed Tree Frogs.
- Take a **sunset boat tour of Las Isletas, an archipelago** of 365 small islands in Lake Nicaragua, and see abundant wildlife, including waterfowl, gulls, Black-necked Stilt, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Osprey, Royal and Elegant Tern, Montezuma Oropendula, Purple Gallinule, and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers.
- Fly to the isolated San Carlos area for two nights. Take small boats to the **Solentiname Islands, an archipelago of 36 small islands** on the southeastern side of Lake Nicaragua. Explore the tropical forests nearby with many bird species including Montezuma Oropendula and Bare-throated Tiger Herons. Wander through the **village on the Mancarron Island**, and see birds, as well as artisan crafts, carvings, and paintings.
- Enjoy a **rainforest river excursion on Rio Papaturro**. View birds along the way, and hike at a wildlife refuge near the border of Costa Rica. See six species of kingfishers, Gray-necked Wood Rail, Anhinga, White-tailed Kite, Agami Heron, as well as sloths and other animals.
- Boat around the **Zapote Island** to the **nesting site of tens of thousands of birds**. Observe spoonbills, herons, cormorants, Scarlet Spoonbill, Wood Stork, and White Ibis.
- Travel by boat on the **San Juan River**, and spend two nights in the **picturesque river town of El Castillo**. Visit the **old Spanish fortress** that surrounds the town. Travel a short distance down the river to the enormous **Indio-Maiz Biosphere Reserve**, a tropical jungle where you can see monkeys, reptiles, and a huge variety of birds: Sungrebe, Green Ibis, Limpkin, and Collared Aricari.
- **Hike and canoe** along the **Bartola River**, which is covered overhead by trees and vines and where you can go for a swim. See Rufus Motmot, White-collared Manakin, Mealy Parrot, Barred Antshrike, and Buff-rumped Warblers.

*The first week of the trip will be facilitated by Project Minnesota/León (PML) staff, Keith Olstad, and Nicaraguan bird expert Francisco Muñoz. The second week will be led by Keith Olstad—a former president of PML’s board, bird enthusiast, and frequent traveler to Nicaragua, and Francisco Muñoz. For more information, contact Emily Wallace-Jackson, PML Development and Outreach Director, at Emily.mn.leon@gmail.com.