

Sight Seeing in Nicaragua ? Top Ten Volcanoes

Volcan Concepcion ? 1610 meters

Nicaragua is known as the land of lakes and volcanoes and when you look at a map it is easy to understand why. Lake Nicaragua is one of the largest in the America's and there is a long chain of volcanoes running the length of the pacific coast From Honduras to Costa Rica. One the most enjoyable and rewarding things you can do while traveling in Nicaragua is to climb a volcano. There are many volcanoes to choose from and it can be a daunting task.

Here are the Top Ten:

1. **Volcan San Cristobal** ? 1745 meters

This is the tallest volcano in Nicaragua and that is only one reason it has earned the number one spot. San Cristobal is still active and a smoke plume can be seen puffing from the top most days. How many people can say the climbed an active volcano? The climb is arduous, and after you get above the tree line it feels like your climbing a post-nuclear moonscape. For every two steps up, you slide a step back in the volcanic sand. If the noxious gases clear you can see easily to the Gulf of Fonseca and Honduras and El Salvador. If you leave from the coffee plantation in the saddle before first light you can be back down to eat your gallo pinto lunch before 11am.

2. **Volcan Concepcion** ? 1610 meters

Concepcion is found on the island of Ometepe and is shaped like the quintessential cone volcano. It rises from the northern side of the island and is still quite active with the last real eruption in 1986, although it spit ash in 2005. The first portion of the climb is through a forest filled with monkeys and birds rising up above Lake Nicaragua. As you enter La Floral, the area above the forest, the views are breathtaking and you can see all the way over the lake and the narrow isthmus of San Juan del Sur to the Pacific. Concepcion can be summited in one tough day.

3. **Volcan Consignina** ? 859 meters

Consignina presides over the Gulf of Fonseca, where Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador share a bay. It last erupted in 1835 when a third of the crater exploded. Now it is home to a giant crater lake. Atop the coastal volcano the views of the pacific are incredible and the greenish blue crater lake is one of a kind. It is possible to drive most of the way up the volcano and the hike to the top is only 3 hours round trip.

4. **Volcan Masaya** ? 635 meters

It is possible to drive all the way to the top of Volcan Masaya. The parking attendants make sure that you park your vehicle facing the exit as you never know when Masaya will start spitting up chunks of rock. The sulfur smell hangs heavily in the air and burns deep in your lungs as you look into the steamy pit. The entire

drive up the slopes you will see endless lava fields on either side of the road. This the most accessible volcanic crater in Nicaragua and the only volcano that you can drive up. There are a few little hikes you can do to the surrounding craters once you are up at the top and there is a little museum worth a minute on the way up. It is well worth visiting.

5. Volcan Maderas ? 1394 meters

Maderas is a dormant volcano that makes up half of the island of Ometepe. The slopes are covered in thick cloud forest teeming with howler and white-faced monkeys. Near the crater's lip you will find a unique dwarf forest reminiscent of a Tolkien created world. It is possible to climb down into the crater to reach the crater lake in the center for a swim. This volcano is covered in mist and clouds most of the time and you will be lucky to catch a glimpse of the spectacular views.

6. Volcan Mombacho ? 1345 meters

On the shores of Lake Nicaragua, Volcan Mombacho looms above the colonial gem of Granada. The 365 isletas found in Lake Nicaragua are a result of an eruption many years ago. Now Mombacho is home to coffee farms, a zip line and a few nice hiking trails. The steep sides of the volcano are under cloud cover most of the time and the cloud forest makes for great hiking. Mombacho is about 20 minutes from Granada.

7. Volcan Momotombo ? 1258 meters

Momotombo is shaped in a perfect cone and can be seen from Managua and Matagalpa. It is located on the banks of Lake Managua along with it's "son" Momotombito. This is one of the most challenging volcanoes to climb because of the steepness and lack of shade near the top. The views of the countryside once you get to the top are unparalleled. It is a grueling two day climb which should be done with a local guide.

8. Volcan Telica ? 1061 meters

Starting at the boiling mud pits of San Jacinto you can begin your trek to reach the top of Telica. There are no roads that pass close to Telica so the majority of the hike is through farms on the way to the foot of the volcano. If you are lucky, once you reach the top you can look a few hundred meters down into the caldera to see the bubbly molten orange soup at the bottom. The hike should take 6-8 hours. The climb is not as steep as some of the other treks.

9. Volcan Cerro Negro ? 728 meters

Cerro negro or black hill is named for the black sand that covers it's slopes. In 1999 its eruptions blew ash to the city of Leon 25 kilometers away. Today you can go volcano boarding and cruise down the black ash slopes. Eric Barone reached record speeds of 107 miles per hour on a mountain bike flying down the slope of Cerro Negro before his bike disintegrated. This volcano is a short relatively easy climb and can be scaled in 40 minutes. It is easily accessible from Leon.

10. Volcan El Hoyo ? 1050 meters

El hoyo means "the hole" and that is this volcano's most impressive feature. The dormant volcano has an enormous hole in it's side which is impressive to see. El Hoyo is found near Telica in the department of Leon.

About the author: Zachary Lunin founded Aurora Beachfront Realty and [Vacation Rentals Nicaragua](#) in San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua in 2004. He is considered an expert in [Nicaragua real estate](#).