



Nicaragua is the largest nation in Central America, but also the least densely populated with a demographic similar in size to its smaller neighbors. It is located about midway between Mexico and Colombia, bordered by Honduras to the north and Costa Rica to the south. Nicaragua ranges from the Atlantic Ocean on the nation's east coast, and the Pacific Ocean bordering the west. Nicaragua also possesses a series of islands and cays located in the Atlantic Ocean.

The country's name is derived from Nicarao, the name of the Nahuatl-speaking tribe which inhabited the shores of Lake Nicaragua before the Spanish conquest of the Americas, and the Spanish word Agua, meaning water, due to the presence of the large Lake Cocibolca (or Lake Nicaragua) and Lake Managua (or Lake Xolotlán), as well as lagoons and rivers in the region.



It is possible that Nicaragua was inhabited by Paleo-Indians as far back as 6000 years. The ancient footprints of Acahualinca suggest this, along with other archaeological evidence. At the end of the 15th century, western Nicaragua was inhabited by several indigenous peoples possibly related by culture and language to Indigenous groups from Mexico. They were primarily farmers who lived in towns, organized into small kingdoms, however, within three decades an estimated Indian population of one million plummeted to a few tens of thousands, as approximately half of the indigenous people in western Nicaragua died of diseases brought by the Spaniards.

The pre-Columbian period of Nicaraguan history came to an end with the arrival of Columbus in 1502. Nicaragua gained independence from Spain in 1821, along with the rest of Central America. In 1934, General Somoza, head of the US-trained National Guard, engineered the assassination of liberal opposition rebel Augusto C. Sandino and, after fraudulent elections, became president in 1937. The rule of his dynasty came to an end in 1979 with the Triumph of the Revolution. The Sandinista period in power was characterised by repeated intervention by the US. In 1990 the sandinistas lost power in the parliamentary and presidential elections. For a more detailed description see: [Wikipedia history](#)