Casa Congo
Community based Conservation in Nicaragua

WHAT IS CASA CONGO?

Casa Congo is a conservation movement with the mission to empower communities with skills and tools for sustainable development. We built a school in Nicaragua to share knowledge with the local community and international students around conservation practices that can preserve the natural environment whilst regenerating the economy. Our practice is founded on four pillars: agroecology, conservation, built environments and community.

EXPERIENCE OVERVIEW

Our programs offer the unique opportunity for a cultural exchange where participants can learn conservation skills whilst creating an impact and giving back to the community. Join our team to have fun, live a healthy and wild experience, and learn about the unique ecosystems that define Nicaragua. Funds from international volunteers and travelers are reinvested into local community projects, boost the local economy, and protect the environment.

HIGHLIGHTS

AGROECOLOGY: education in sustainable agricultural practices and ecosystem restoration.
CONSERVATION: scientific research, field trips, beach cleanups, surf lessons, turtle conservation and projects with the local fisheries.
BUILT ENVIRONMENTS: learn solutions for regenerative development through the use of natural materials.
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: a combination of learning modules, research projects, events and creative activities.
CONTRIBUTION

We are an international team with a local mindset, where everyone brings different skills to the table. Casa Congo is proud to operate conservation programs in Nicaragua, providing 24-hour guidance for visitors and offering ongoing support to the local community. Thanks to the financial contribution of volunteers we will be able to support the costs of our operations, and more importantly our environmental and social impact.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Accommodation with a comfy bamboo bunk bed
- Wi-Fi
- Personal storage
- Personal Towel and toiletries
- Drinking water
- Surfboard for your entire stay
- Surf lessons
- Conservation activities
- Tropical forest nature reserve free access and guided tours
- Night sea turtle patrols
- Release of hatching sea turtles
- Volunteering activities
- Facility cleaning and 24/7 security
- Use of the car for conservation, volunteering and team building activities
- Use of communal kitchen
- Social impact certificate

NOT INCLUDED

- Flights
- Transport from and to Airport (we will arrange this for you with a trusted local driver)
- Medical insurance (we will assist you with local medical attention)
- Food (please check FAQ, page 7)
- Alcohol and additional entertainment expenses
PRICES PER PERSON (USD)

- One day at Casa Congo = 25$
- One week at Casa Congo = 170$
- Two weeks at Casa Congo = 320$
- Three weeks at Casa Congo = 460$
- One month at Casa Congo = 600$
- Longer stays for Research and Thesis projects = 300$ per month

FACILITATED BUT NOT INCLUDED IN THE CASA CONGO CONTRIBUTION (USD)

- Travel to Nicaragua
- Transfer to and from Airport (70$ / per trip)
- Food and beverages - 3 meals / day (around 10$ per person per day)

We will assist you to arrange the transfer to Casa Congo, and food & beverage will be locally sourced and purchased in El Astillero, in partnership with local businesses working with us for a sustainable development of their community. For any longer stays, special requests, and other enquiries please email directly tommaso@casacongo.org.
A GLIMPSE INTO CASA CONGO’S TYPICAL CALENDAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning</strong></td>
<td>Team weekly meeting</td>
<td>Surfing &amp; Beach Cleanup</td>
<td>Agroecology Session</td>
<td>Elective Impact Session</td>
<td>Chacocente Wildlife Tour</td>
<td>Surfing &amp; Beach Cleanup</td>
<td>Chilling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Midday</strong></td>
<td>Ecology Class</td>
<td>Community support at Las Tejedoras</td>
<td>Chilling</td>
<td>Sustainable Design Class</td>
<td>Ecology Class</td>
<td>Theory of seeds and water management</td>
<td>Chilling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evening</strong></td>
<td>Sunset surf</td>
<td>Newborn sea turtles release</td>
<td>Chacocente Wildlife Tour</td>
<td>Agroecology Session</td>
<td>Sunset surf</td>
<td>Chilling</td>
<td>Chilling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Night</strong></td>
<td>Turtle Patrol</td>
<td>Music at Casa Congo</td>
<td>Live music party at nearby hotel</td>
<td>Chilling</td>
<td>Dinner at nearby touristic community</td>
<td>Music at Casa Congo</td>
<td>Film at Casa Congo</td>
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</tbody>
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Beach clean up

Hatched baby sea turtles ready to be freed in the sea
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What will my volunteering schedule look like?
Two weeks prior to your arrival in Nicaragua, a Casa Congo member will reach out to provide you with a calendar of activities. These will range from bamboo construction to turtle patrols and will be tailored to your passions and skills, as well as the primary needs of the El Astillero community. Our programs are flexible and guarantee maximum exposure to a holistic and engaging conservation experience. You will also be able to develop and implement your own project if in lines with Casa Congo’s values and principles.

Do I need a passport or visa?
Citizens of Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand, and the European Union require a passport valid 6 months (minimum) from the anticipated return date and a Tourist Card valid for 90 days to be obtained upon entering Nicaragua. It is very important to enter the country with an exit ticket before the visa expiry date (flight / bus). The cost is USD $10 per person. If you are a citizen of another country, please contact the Nicaraguan Consulate or Embassy closest to your native country to determine specific requirements.

Do I need any vaccinations?
There are no mandatory vaccinations required to travel to Central America and particularly Nicaragua. It is highly recommended that travelers visit their health care provider or local travel health clinic to assess individual needs at least two months before departure.

What is the weather like in El Astillero?
Nicaragua has a tropical climate for most of the country and is warm all year around with temperatures ranging from (22C to 36C) on the Pacific Coast. There is very little rain during the dry season (December to May). In the rainy season (June to November) it often rains for short periods of time and these are often spectacular, tropical downpours.

How do I reach Casa Congo?

Option 1: by Managua

The first option is to land at Managua International Airport. Prior to your arrival send us your flight details so we can arrange your transport to Casa Congo with a trusted local driver. When landing in Nicaragua you will need to pay USD 10$ for the tourist visa.

Option 2: by Costa Rica

The second option is to land at San Jose international Airport. From San Jose you can take a small propeller plane to Nicaragua (only for real adventurers). The plane departs in the morning from the Domestic branch of San Jose Airport and lands in Costa Esmeralda. You can check availability and pricing here at Sansa Airlines. Once landed at Costa Esmeralda Airport, a team member from the Casa Congo crew will come pick you up; it is only half an hour drive from El Astillero. Alternatively, from San Jose you can take a bus to Rivas in Nicaragua and the Casa Congo crew will come pick you up there. To leave Costa Rica you are required to pay a fee of USD 29$ at San Jose Airport, and when arriving in Nicaragua you will need to pay USD 10$ for the tourist visa.
How do I get from Managua Airport to Casa Congo?
Once you proceed through immigration, luggage claim and customs, you will be met by one of our drivers holding a sign that reads “Casa Congo”. The approximate driving time from the airport to the Astillero is 3 hours and a half.

What is the local currency and what payment options do I have?
The local currency in Nicaragua is the Cordoba, however, US dollars are accepted in most places, including gas stations and grocery stores. You can get Cordoba when you land in Managua or any other Nicaraguan city. We recommend bringing US dollars in small bills (10, 20). There are ATMs at half an hour driving from El Astillero or more, but we use them rarely.

Is there Internet access?
Although we encourage digital detox during your stay in El Astillero, you will have access to WiFi at Casa Congo to tell your family you are safe and sound. Please check with your mobile service provider the possibility to have a travel package for the region for additional purchase. A local SIM card with data costs around $10 USD/week, however we strongly advise to unplug and stay away from your smartphone during the trip.

Where I will sleep in the Casa Congo Bamboo structure?
Located on the Pacific Ocean in the fishing village of Astillero, Casa Congo is a rustic yet comfortable bamboo house with shared bunk beds and external bathrooms. The surrounding garden functions as our agroecology and education space, with direct access to the beach and to the Astillero coastal road.

What are the must-haves in my luggage?
Passport, credit card, US$ cash, water-flask, flashlight, prescription and over the counter medication, bug spray, sunscreen, beach towel, headlamp and, of course, your energy and enthusiasm! It’s best to pack lightweight, cottons and/or linens. We recommend long pants and long sleeves for forest excursions and dirty activities, shorts, t-shirts, bathing suits, walking/running shoes, and flip flops. Gifts for the students are always appreciated.
What do the meals consist of?
We believe in the importance of shared family-like time at the dinner table, therefore, all breakfasts and dinners are sourced for and prepared together by volunteers and the Casa Congo team in our outdoor communal kitchen; for lunches we normally go out to the nearby restaurants in order to support the local small businesses (expect typical Nicaraguan dishes cooked with fresh, locally sourced ingredients). Please note that we have set eating times for the team. If you have dietary restrictions, please notify us at the time of reservation – we will do our best to accommodate your needs. On average, you will spend around USD $12 per day on this meal plan. You can choose to opt out of the community meal plan and buy your personal F&B at the local groceries’ shops and/or restaurants.

Is Nicaragua safe?
Nicaragua is considered one of the safest countries in Central America but that does not mean you do not need to take precautions. For 24-hour assistance, Casa Congo has a team member or a local guard on the property. Since the start of Casa Congo’s operations, we have never had cases of personal theft or assault. It’s as safe as New York City on a Saturday night.

Do you accept donations?
Our programs cannot exist without your support and any contribution makes a difference. Click here to make a monetary donation. Casa Congo welcomes donations-in-kind as well. Things like water sports equipment, apparel for kids, outdoor clothing and equipment for conservation expeditions, power tools for carpentry, stationery and school supplies will be much appreciated. Donated items should be clean and not in need of repair. Give new life to your old items by helping families in need!

What is Casa Congo’s legal structure and how we allocate funds?
Casa Congo is structured in two distinct legal entities: a school and a foundation.

● The school of conservation is a Nicaraguan community cooperative based on the beach of El Astillero and is responsible for running our local programs. It harnesses funds by hosting volunteers, running workshops and other ecotourism activities and invests 100% of its profit back into the business and the local programs.

● Our foundation, Casa Congo Conservation Society, is an NGO with a mission to economically empower communities through sustainable development. This entity raises funds through grants and donations and invests directly into long term environmental and social impact projects that benefit Nicaragua.