

## DESTINATIONS

LATIN AMERICA | NICARAGUA

# POSTCARD

## Corn Islands



Nicaragua's Caribbean coast makes the ideal beach add-on to an adventure tour, finds **Katie McGonagle**

Swooping low over clear cyan seas – the rumble of the tiny Cessna turboprop plane churning loudly in our ears – we looked out over the forested mounds of sand-edged islands that were quite a contrast to what we'd seen of mainland Nicaragua.

This Central American country is known for its long chain of volcanoes – some of which you can hike up, sand-board down or peer into as molten lava bubbles and churns below – along with its vast inland lakes and still-shabby colonial cities of León and Granada.

Yet an hour-long small-aircraft flight from capital Managua to Big Corn Island, 40 miles off the English-speaking east coast in the calm Caribbean Sea, revealed yet another side to the nation's natural assets.

Here, you'll find palm tree-fringed beaches that stretch for miles, bars set right at the water's edge serving chilled bottles of local Toña lager that drip with condensation by the time they reach the table, and hear drifts of Creole English from the locals – a leftover from the area's mix of Indigenous, African and British influences, distinct from the rest of the Spanish-speaking mainland.

Flights arrive on Big Corn, but we carried on (via a rather bumpy boat ride) to its more-exclusive neighbour, Little Corn, where there are no cars and few people, and where a barefoot, desert-island vibe is the order of the day.

One of the most luxurious escapes there is Yemaya Island Hideaway, a collection of eco-lodge-style rooms opening onto a glorious stretch of beachfront, where hammocks swing between the palm trees and tiny fishing boats bob in the distance.

It's hard to resist the call of the sea here, and with colourful coral reefs lying just offshore, divers and snorkellers can head out on boat trips to see nurse sharks, eagle rays, groupers, brightly coloured parrotfish and angel fish, and perhaps the occasional lobster or eel slipping between the crevices of the coral.

Yemaya can arrange sailing and snorkelling trips, or you can pick up a kayak from the beachfront watersports station and head out under your own steam; experienced kayakers can even make it around the entire island in about four hours.

Just make sure you get back in plenty of time to nab a table overlooking the beach and enjoy a feast of fresh seafood and a tropical cocktail or two, with the waves lapping gently below. **TW**



### BOOK IT

Cox & Kings offers a seven-night Classic Nicaragua private tour visiting Masaya Volcano, Lake Nicaragua, León and more, from £1,895 including flights. A four-night add-on staying in an Oceanfront Room at Yemaya Island Hideaway starts at £350 per person based on two sharing on a room-only basis. [coxandkings.co.uk](http://coxandkings.co.uk)



TOP: Corn Island ABOVE: The beach adjoining Yemaya Island Hideaway on Little Corn Island

PICTURES: Shutterstock