



[HOT PROSPECT]

COLONIAL REVIVAL

*Founded by conquistadors
in 1524, Granada is
one of the oldest cities in
Nicaragua—and in all of the New
World. For centuries, its
strategic lakeside setting tempted
pirates and even foreign occupiers.
Today, a new generation
of adventurers, including Style
Director **MARK CONNOLLY**,
are putting a fashionable spin
on this historic Central
American destination*

Photographs by
JULIEN CAPMEIL

A woman with long dark hair is sitting on a grand, ornate staircase. She is wearing a light pink, sleeveless dress with ruffles and lace-up details, and light-colored high-heeled shoes. The staircase has a dark wood handrail and a decorative metal railing with intricate scrollwork. The background shows a bright, arched opening with columns, suggesting a grand interior space.

Dramatic Entrance
Completed in 1926 for Nicaragua's wealthiest family, Granada's Casa de la Familia Pellas now hosts the Italian consulate and is used for receptions and tours. Dress by Jean Paul Gaultier; necklaces by Borgioni, Gara Danielle Fine Jewelry, Marie Chavez, and Me&Ro; shoes by Stuart Weitzman.

Carriage Trade
Granada's fort once fended off marauders paddling in from the Caribbean on Lake Nicaragua. Today, it is the point of departure for horse-and-buggy rides. His suit by Dolce & Gabbana; sunglasses by David Yurman; watch by Jaeger LeCoultre; sandals by Hermès.



Her dress by John Galiano; bangles, by David Yurman, Eurocatene for Gold Expressions, Me&Ro, Monique Péan, Pamela Froman, and Robindira Unsworth; earrings by Roberto Coin; bag by Alberta Ferretti; sunglasses by D&G; shoes by Pierre Hardy.



Music Men Mariachis and other performers play in front of the bishop's residence and in the adjacent Plaza de los Leones. Her outfit by YSL; bangles by David Yurman; earrings by Me&Ro; bag by Jerome Dreyfuss; shoes by Manolo Blahnik. His clothing by Burberry; shoes by YSL.

*The most notorious American to descend on Granada was **WILLIAM WALKER**, who in the 1850s **CAPTURED THE CITY** and declared himself Nicaragua's president*



Out of the Past
The Hotel Dario occupies a nineteenth-century mansion. Her suit and shoes by Bottega Veneta; tank by Splendid; bag by Hermès; necklaces by Aurora Lopez Mejia and H. Stern. His cardigan and pants by Versace; scarf by Giorgio Armani; bag by Tod's; watch by Longines; shoes by DKNY.

PLACES & PRICES

Getting to Know Granada

For where to stay and eat in this well-preserved Nicaraguan city, and what to do in town and beyond, see page 200.

Granada emerged from the 1980s **REVOLUTION** intact; many of its pristine houses have been turned into hotels or have **BUZZING CAFÉS** in their courtyards



Above It All The bell tower of La Merced Church has views of Mombacho Volcano. His outfit by YSL; hat by Burberry; watch by Montblanc. Her outfit by Lanvin; earrings by Pamela Froman; necklaces by Gara Danielle Fine Jewelry, Me&Ro, and Zoë Chicco. Hair and make-up throughout by Christina Reyna at raybrownpro.com using Phyto and Smashbox.

Holy Sight Built in 1534, the baroque La Merced is the oldest of Granada's six churches. His outfit by Louis Vuitton; scarf by Paul Smith. Her dress by Calvin Klein Collection; hat by Kokin; bangles by David Yurman; necklaces by Borgioni, H. Stern, and Me&Ro; shoes by Manolo Blahnik.



WHY NOW

Nicaragua's historic enclave is having a moment. "Granada is on the cusp of becoming the next uncovered gem," says Style Director Mark Connolly. "It's in the air. Go now before it changes forever."

Nicaragua may seem romantically remote, but it is not so far from home (Managua, the capital, is a two-and-a-half-hour flight from Miami). Like all of Central America, the country is also a great value for travelers from the United States. The dollar goes far, and even though Granada is one of Nicaragua's priciest cities, rooms in the top hotels can be had for less than \$100 a night.

Architecture is only one of **GRANADA'S CHARMS**. Thrill seekers love the town's proximity to Pacific **SURF BREAKS** and rain forest zip-lines

Photo Op Outside the landmark Casa de la Familia Pellas. Her hat and top by Hermès; earrings by H. Stern; rings by C. Greene and Vicente Agor. His shirt by Etro; vest by Louis Vuitton; pants by D&G; hat by Paul Smith; necklace by Aurora Lopez Mejia; belt by Diesel Black Gold. For stores, see "Where to Buy It," page 218.



Granada

[FOR THE FEATURE, SEE PAGE 138]



Nicaragua's most beautiful city, Granada is also one of its most fascinating, with a centuries-long history of foreign invasions and domestic political intrigue in addition to well-preserved colonial buildings that survived the civil war of 30 years ago. After you spend a couple of days exploring Granada itself—don't miss the towers at La Merced Church, with their expansive views, and the pre-Columbian statues at the San Francisco Convent—use the city as a base for excursions into the surrounding countryside and to the islands of Lake Nicaragua. Opportunities for kayaking, hiking, bird-watching, and fishing—as well as prime locations such as the Mombacho Volcano Nature Reserve and the handicrafts market in Masaya—are close enough for day-trips.

Although the number of visitors to Nicaragua in general and to Granada in particular is on the upswing, services and amenities can still be spotty, and connections easy to miss. Avoid the guesswork by booking your trip through an outfitter such as **Nicaragua Adventures** (883-7161; nica-adventures.com; eight-day family adventure, \$625–\$849 per person).

The country code for Nicaragua is 505. Prices quoted are for May 2009.



Map by Joyce Pendola

Lodging

Granada is increasing in popularity, but hotel rooms are still surprisingly inexpensive. The latest arrival, **Plaza Colón**, has an enviable location facing the Parque Central, the main square (552-8489; doubles, \$89–\$109), while **La Gran Francia** has nicely renovated rooms in a landmark colonial building (552-6000; doubles, \$90–\$110). Although the rooms are small at **Patio del Malinche**, the grounds are lovely and the Spanish owners very friendly (552-2235; doubles, \$73).

Surfers and beach lovers should leave Granada and spend a few days around **San Juan del Sur**, on the Pacific coast, where a series of breaks create a choice surfing destination. The charming **La Posada Azul** is a new eight-room hotel near the beach (568-2524; doubles, \$100); the **Piedras y Olas** is nestled into the hills behind town and has panoramic ocean views (568-2110; doubles, \$160–\$180). More upscale, **Morgan's Rock Hacienda & Ecolodge**, about 20 minutes from town, has villas and a jungle-meets-beach setting, but the service and food can be uneven (670-7676; doubles, \$438–\$516, all-inclusive).

Dining

Many of Granada's courtyards have been turned into restaurants and cafés. Located behind the cathedral, **El Zaguán** is one of the coziest, and is rightfully known for its fire-grilled meats and locally caught fish (552-2522; entrées, \$13–\$19). At **El Tercer Ojo**, in front of the convent, order the seviche and the *churrasco* steak with chimichurri sauce (Calle el Arsenal; 552-6451; entrées, \$7–\$8), or snag a table at the **Gardén Café** and sample the tasty sandwiches and homemade hummus (Calle la Libertad; 552-8582; sandwiches, \$4–\$8). For nightlife, **Café Nuit** is the most happening place in town (Calle la Libertad; 552-7376).

Reading

The Moon Handbook Nicaragua gives a good overview of the country (\$18), while Salman Rushdie's **Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey** provides a fascinating