

# Nicaragua national day

## Integrating Spanish art with local to create new Latin American style

Every Sept. 15, the Republic of Nicaragua and its people celebrate the anniversary of the country's independence from Spain, which it achieved in 1821.

With its territory of around 130,000 sq. km, Nicaragua is the largest country in the Central American isthmus. Nicaragua shares a border to the north with Honduras and to the south with Costa Rica. The Pacific Ocean lies to the west, and the Caribbean Sea to the east. The country is situated between 11 and

14 degrees north of the equator in the Northern Hemisphere, which places it entirely within the tropics.

After the capital Managua, León in northern Nicaragua is the second largest city in the country and home to both of the nation's two UNESCO World Heritage sites. One is León Viejo, the ruins of the ancient city of León, situated 30 km from the modern city. The ancient city was founded by Francisco Hernández de Córdoba in 1524

and buried by eruptions of the volcano Momotombo, most of them occurring in 1610. It was designated as a World Heritage site in 2000.

The other World Heritage site is León Cathedral, which was enshrined on the list in 2011. The following about the cathedral is an edited excerpt from UNESCO's official website:

### Brief synthesis

Constructed between 1747 and the early 19th century, León

Cathedral merges a basilica rectangular layout of Spanish derivation with regional architectural proportions and features. Stylistically, the monument shows the transition from late baroque to neoclassic with sober decoration.

León Cathedral exceptionally illustrates the Antigua Guatemala baroque architectural style and, in its combination of Spanish art and regional features, shaped by the geographical environment and the groups that supported its erection, is a material expression of the formation of the Latin American society.

The application of the typical quadrangular layout of Spanish origin is outstandingly integrated with architectural features coming from both European baroque and neoclassical styles and Antigua Guatemalan interpretation. Among the Antigua features are the mainly horizontal proportions and the low and thick towers as a response to earthquakes, and the internal and external decoration.

**Criterion (ii):** León Cathedral is an outstanding example of an exchange of human values demonstrated by the different architectural influences from Spanish art that merge in the monument, shaped by the local workmanship and the geographical and social environment. León Cathedral materially encapsulates the social, religious and artistic syncretism of the new Latin American society appearing during the 18th century.

**Criterion (iv):** León Cathedral constitutes an outstanding example of a regional Central American interpretation of a typology of religious building merging several architectural and stylistic sources in an en-

semble featured by its unity and architectural and social significance.

### Integrity

León Cathedral has been properly conserved, it is intact and, although subject to repair and maintenance, has not had extensive alteration.

### Authenticity

Authenticity is maintained by the permanence of the original plan,

materials, functions, social significance and relationships with the urban setting.

### Protection

The property is adequately protected by national and municipal legislation and regulations, but the protection of the buffer zone awaits the approval of the Development Municipal Plan and corresponding enforcing legal instruments. The management of the nominated property

is the responsibility of a number of public and private institutions: namely, the León's Diocese, which is also the owner, the National Institute for Culture (INC), responsible for conservation and promotion of national culture, the Department of the Historic Centre of León Municipality, responsible for the protection and preservation of the historic centre and its main buildings. A management plan for León Cathedral was prepared and approved by the National Institute for Culture (INC 2009) but it awaits official approval from the diocese and the mu-

nicipality and integration with a risk preparedness plan. The Development Municipal Plan, the approval of which is under finalization, is the comprehensive instrument envisaged by the state party for the development, revitalization and management of the city. The plan integrates all other existing plans, including the Cathedral Management Plan and the Plan for the Historic Centre of León.

For more information, visit <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1236>.



National pride: People gather in front of the León Cathedral during a celebration of its inclusion on the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites, in León, Nicaragua, on July 24, 2011. The cathedral houses the tomb of modernist poet Rubén Darío and was one of four sites inscribed in 2011. AP

<http://www.kufs.ac.jp>



# The pathway starts here.

## Congratulations to the People of Nicaragua on the 191st Anniversary of Their Independence

*Yoshikazu Morita*

Yoshikazu Morita

Kyoto University of Foreign Studies  
An Educational Foundation:  
President of the Board and Chancellor  
Honorary Consul-General of Nicaragua

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**Kyoto University of Foreign Studies: An Educational Foundation**  
6 Saiin Kasame-cho, Ukyo-ku, Kyoto 615-8558 Japan Phone: 81-75-322-6001