THE COCIBOLCA LAKE ROUTE (III).

INTRODUCTION:

The route runs close to the shore of Lake Cocibolca, or Lake Nicaragua, looking to get as close as possible to the edge of the water, enjoying a setting rich in biodiversity with beautiful views of the coastline and Islands. The route (in common with all in the project "Nicaragua by Pedal") tries to avoid traffic in order to enjoy the tranquility of the cycle tour or walk, but since there are some very marshy areas after San Miguelito we are be forced to take just over 32 km of paved highway. However, traffic is not heavy and the environment is very pleasant on this section of road.

The cycle tourist begins the journey in the capital of Morrito Municipality where the Lake COCIBOLCA (II) route ends, such that both routes offer the possibility of continuing the journey, and continuing all the way to the start of the San Juan River, or Desaguadero ("Drain") as the Spanish Conquistadors more descriptively named it, at San Carlos, capital of the Rio San Juan Department.

We will head southeast keeping on our right, or southwest, the shore of Lake Nicaragua, crossing several rivers, streams and wetlands that converge on the Lake, and which enhances the richness of the landscape, and the flora and fauna of these peaceful areas of Nicaragua.

Soon we will find the community the Guapote, an inhabited place with a wonderful view and very hospitable and friendly people... in which the traveller can exchange a few Cordobas for the support and services that the people can provide. At this point we will recommend taking a boat to the point known as Chocoyolandia (some people call it El Guayabal) in the Municipality of San Miguelito. Alternatively we can take a boat just before El Guapote at the Hacienda Guantánamo.

From the boat we can see the mouth of the Tepenaguasapa River and the peninsula or island of El Pedernal. We write "or" because depending on the time of year and the level of the Lake it is one thing or the other.

For many years this area was part of a large farm called La Flor, owned by the Somoza family who headed the military dictatorship that ruled the Republic of Nicaragua from 1934 until 1979,... a time when the country was governed for more than 40 years with an iron hand, in a paternalistic manner as if it were one large private estate... the Somoza family being the great land owner. When you travel through Nicaragua and ask about the history it is rare not to hear "this was owned by Somoza". It seems that all the land, business and any economic activity was controlled by this family. One wonders if greed has no limits for some people..., but our trip will continue along paths and roads of freedom, and respect for the environment and the people.

Once in San Miguelito you can go to the Fundación del Río http://www.fundaciondelrio.org where you can learn from and enjoy their company on guided tours of the wetlands of San Miguelito and other communities. It is worth getting to know so special and beautiful a place.

Pedro Martinez Duarte describes in his book "San Miguelito Una Garza Morena en la Nostalgia", how in 1810 there were three large estates: San Miguel, El Coyol and Miralejos where the municipality is now located. The location of the current town is within the original grounds of Hacienda San Miguel, which was registered in the Property Registry of Juigalpa on the 10th July 1810. Between 1850 and 1855 the town started to form as a simple camp of rubber and raicilla collectors ("huleros and raicilleros") on a small hill to the East of its current location called Las Aldeas. Years later, these settlers moved to live on the shores of the great Lake.
Rubber extraction and collection of the raicilla rootlet, which contains a medicinal alkaloid called Emetine which works against amoebae, declined in the second half of the 20th century due to the use of the synthetic rubber derived from petroleum and the discovery by the pharmaceutical industry of other substances with fewer side effects.

The livestock, timber, transport and communications across the Lake were of vital importance to San Miguelito until roads were opened, and from the first half of the 19th century there was the idea of building a railway (dry canal) to Monkey Point on the Caribbean coast. In fact, some sections were built and railway track ballast stones can still be found along the planned route according to the older people.

We invite you to read more about the history of the municipality and to reserve a few days to get to know, through the local people, all the interesting things about San Miguelito and the neighbouring communities [http://www.manfut.org/juan/miguelito.html](http://www.manfut.org/juan/miguelito.html)

Departing from San Miguelito we will pass the model farm of the Foundación del Río (“The River Foundation”), a project being undertaken in collaboration with DESOS OPCION SOLIDARIA and other institutions.

We invite you to visit the Finca Buenos Aires owned by the Flete family to enjoy some typically warm Nicaraguan hospitality and learn about all the projects that they want to carry out with so much...
enthusiasm, some of which we will mention in the route description. It is interesting talk and listen to the stories of Don Rafael Fletes, don’t forget to ask how there was telegram communications in the first half of the 20th century in this area that was so isolated at the time.

We will pass along the magnificent road that leads to the departmental capital San Carlos and the neighbouring country to the South, Costa Rica. There is not much heavy vehicle traffic and it is an agreeable journey because the roadside environment provides biodiversity, farms and communities with tourist potential, as well as the connection with other routes of "NICARAGUA by Pedal" which are under investigation and lead us to Nueva Guinea and our dear and picturesque San Juan River.

Once in San Carlos you can access all the possibilities of the area, such as visit the San Juan River and the Solentiname Archipelago amongst other wonders.

On this route by the Lakeshore we ride or walk through the Morrito, San Miguelito and San Carlos Municipalities in the Department of Río San Juan.

From Puerto Morrito to San Miguelito it is approximately 73 km by land more than 16 km by water by boat. Once again a true delight for the senses with major river crossings, estuaries, communities of fishing families, and productive and historic sites of interest. The route includes a stretch away from the shore in the hills with some gentle inclines. The wetness of the soil will determine the degree of difficulty posed by mud that can exist on the way and force us to walk some sections. We will need to cross estuaries and streams with support from the local communities, either on foot or by boat. We can say that the degree of difficulty of the route is medium despite passing through these places, to prescribe this calm and prudence, as well as let them advise for best places to stay at different times of the year.

We only need to be equipped with a bottle of water that we can be re-filled on the road at houses, shops and wells, food rich in carbohydrates to power-load, and clothing to protect the body and head from direct sun, although shade of the forests will help in that regard. We recommend that you take some spare clothes and a hammock or inflatable mattress, or if you prefer a tent, and a mosquito net that allows you to view the sky at night, or insect repellent if you want to rest in the open. In addition, you should have an odometer on the bicycle and/or a GPS configured to UTM coordinates, although the route is described so that the GPS is not essential. A camera to remember the trip is recommended. There is mobile/cellular telephone coverage almost all the way.

With a large dose of optimism for the adventure that we have started, we set out along the path of the route Lake Cocibolca (III).

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<tr>
<th>ROUTE</th>
<th>DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY</th>
<th>KM</th>
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<tr>
<td>LAKE COCIBOLCA (III)</td>
<td>Medium difficulty, with streams and rivers to cross</td>
<td>73 plus 16 by boat</td>
<td>Port Morrito</td>
<td>San Carlos</td>
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Location: Municipal seat of Morrito with possibility of variations to shorten or take paved road or public transport to San Miguelito and San Carlos.

Length: 73 km by land and more than 16 km by boat.

Users: Cycle tourists and walkers.
Terrain: Mixed, compacted earth and fine gravel on the hills and paved stretches from San Miguelito. Some stretches become muddy and unsuitable to cycling in the wet season, and other stretches are rocky where the bicycle will have to be pushed.

Natural Environment: fresh water wetlands, volcanos, lake, forest, woodland, flooded paddy fields, sites of historic interest, roads accessing great scenic beauty and biodiversity along the southeast shore of Lake Cocibolca (Nicaragua).

Cultural and natural heritage: the largest of fresh water reserves in Central America and archaeological and historical sites of interest.

Infrastructure: It is recommended to take a torch or bicycle light. Each cycle tourist can choose their own rest areas, there are beautiful places on the various small beaches, in the communities or on some of the farms close to the routes (permission). Drinking water wells can be found in most communities.

How to get to Morrito:

- By bus: from Mayoreo Market, Managua frequent buses leave to Juigalpa with space for bicycles. From Juigalpa take the bus to Morrito

Connections:

- Road from Managua to San Carlos (Rio San Juan) in very good condition.
- Ferry from / to Morrito (Rio San Juan) from Granada and San Carlos pass via San Miguelito. Consult the Empresa Portuaria Nacional (National Port Company).

Cartography: Maps from INETER. Official road map by the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure (“MTI”) map.
LET’S BEGIN THE ADVENTURE.

Once in Morrito, it is worth a stay in any of its various lodgings. In this place you can count gastronomic products, and the sale of goods and services.

To embark on the journey, we have to locate ourselves in the town centre, we will pass the local police headquarters, although it is noted that they are opening a new headquarters at the entrance of Morrito.

😊 Our starting point is a crossroads next to the Municipal law courts. If you are taking the Lake Cocibolca (II) route you also start here, have a good trip. E709215 N1285418

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Km 0.4. We find ourselves at the Police Station, turn left towards the cemetery which we will pass on our right, we are heading to the Mamanto community. E709309 N1285019

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Km 5.4. We have passed the Mamanto community, a small school on our right where you may be able to hear the lessons and the always endearing views of Nicaraguan children. There is a turn-off
to the left which leads to Colorado and Palos Ralos but we should not take it, we continue straight on. E712914 N1282664

Km 9.9. We find ourselves with a gate "de golpe" that we will leave closed, we have left behind the farm of Dámaso Román. E714682 N1279076

Km 10.3. There is a gate on the right which leads for 1.1 km to the shore of the Lake, in the Hacienda Guantánamo, better known as J.J.’s place, a kind person who can offer you a boat to cross to San Miguelito, and you can ask him his real name (nobody knows it). Also, J.J.’s family can provide you a place to rest, food and a chance to share in everyday activities. If you can notify Mireya Alfaro (89897153) that you are coming they will be prepared. E714921 N1278720.
Photo of the entrance to the house of the family of J.J. at the Hacienda Guantanamo. You can see the tanks that were built when the property was owned by the Somoza family, which were filled with molasses and other products for livestock. Barges with merchandise came to this locality, in other times.

But our path continues straight on a little further if you choose to take the boat later...

Km 11.7. We go through the gate “de golpe”, and wire, that we will close after us. We are in front of the house of Juan Abelardo Vegas (75410879) who can offer hospitality, food and an opportunity to share in his agricultural activities. E715892 N1277685

Km 13.3. We find a detour to the right that we take and which leads us to an area near the edge of the Lake. We then turn to our left (south-east) heading for the community of El Guapoté. E716834 N1276605.

If we continue from the point mentioned above, to the left for 900 metres we would find another detour to El Guapoté on the right but it is a slightly more difficult route, especially in wet season. If we go from this second point after less than 2 km we will come across a track or road in the dry season that has been recently opened by the community and the Municipality of Morrito, which leads to Palos Ralos. From there we can connect with the paved Highway that also leads to the diversion of San Carlos and San Miguelito. It is another alternative if you do not want to take a boat. The people of El Guapoté told us that they expect to lay an all-weather surface along the missing 6 km to Palos Ralos in 2016. You will appreciate this possibility if you decide to go by bicycle or on foot along this route.
= 16.3 Km. We are in the community of the Guapote. Here you can go to any of the families who will happily offer hospitality, food and information on how to find a boat to Chocoyolandia (El Guayabal), near San Miguelito. Coordinate with José Daniel Huerta (85279939) or Yadira Tórrez (852799399) can guide you. E717600 N1274463

When you take the boat into El Guapote you can see islets that the fishermen know as "banks" where fish are abundant due to the different species sheltering there. Fishermen know not only what you see.

Km 16.3. Land! and we have already advanced 16 km by water to the point. Views of the coast have been very beautiful from the Lake. They will leave us on a wharf known as Chocoyolandia which is adjacent to El Guayabal E728711 N1262820.
Km 16.8. There is a fork and we will see on our right an electricity substation, we take the right. E673155 N1316410

After 400 meters we reach the paved road and go right to San Miguelito which is 1.2 km from this point.
San Miguelito offers a variety of hotels and places to eat or shop. Be sure to visit the Foundación del Rio (“The River Foundation”) next to the jetty where you can learn about the activities in the area and make a tour by wetlands or other interesting places of the municipality. Details of the website have already been provided above in the introductory paragraphs. Contact details for two of the members are Genoveva Gaitán (86998842) and Franklin Briceño (88455029).

During our trip a highlight may be provided courtesy of Róder Vargas (85133571) who has a typical restaurant to which he wants to add a few cabins and various other options so that visitors can get to know the municipality better.
The route leaves San Miguelito and continues towards Chocoyolandia, but we take the left (opposite direction to San Miguelito following the asphalt road). It is a pleasure to walk through these places, especially if it rained the night before... to feel nature waking up with you...

Km 22.2. We will find on our left a model farm run by the Foundación del Rio (“The River Foundation”) supported by DESOS. You can arrange to visit with the Foundation. E732600 N1264604.

Km 24.1. We get to the Highway leading to San Carlos and Costa Rica. It is still quiet. We go right. E734356 N1265391

Km 26.6. We are at the gate of the Buenos Aires Farm. The farm house is 800 metres after the gate. It is a good opportunity to visit the Fletes family and stay with them and get to know this very active large and united family. They have a place for you to stay to sleep, having built some rooms with bathrooms, or there is a rancho camp where you can sling your hammock. They have hot springs along the River to enjoy the contrast of hot and cold treatment for your tired legs. You can contact Reyna Isabel Fletes (84341876) and Anabel Oporta Fletes (57746417). In addition, there is a bakery in San Miguelito... and every walker or cyclist enjoys this food. E735072 N1263229.
In addition, they have marked out a few trails for visitors, they want to share in this type of tourism that Nicaragua by Pedal also promotes, encouraging friendships and respect for the environment.

Km 38. The Tule community, through which passes the river of the same name which discharges into Lake Nicaragua/Cocibolca. E743878 N1256795.

There is uncertainty in this area in the year 2015 because it is supposedly on the route of the proposed new trans-oceanic canal. From here, in El Tule, NICARAGUA BY PEDAL has identified two routes to develop later.

The ROUTE OF THE DILEMMA: we wanted it name it so because it runs very close to the proposed Inter-Oceanic Canal route on the stretch to Nueva Guinea and then on to the Caribbean Coast. It is a dilemma in the Republic of Nicaragua to weigh the possible environmental and social effects of the project against the positive effect of a socio-economic boost that a project of that magnitude could provide. It may provide a stimulus for the country to improve the standard of living of the inhabitants. Going forward we must aim to manage the project with respect for the environment, take all possible precautions, and adequately compensate families affected by displacement. A canal along this route would have the appeal of travelling along an interesting infrastructure, as occurs in other cycling and walking routes elsewhere in the world. Examples: Danube, Seine and Rhine, above rivers that now are shipping canals.
The BOCA DE SABALOS route: Links from El Tule to this point of the San Juan River, passing through several communities and that would cross the projected interoceanic Canal of Nicaragua.

But they are other paths in development. Now we continue heading to San Carlos on a path that requires attention because it is busy with motor vehicles.

Km 48.4. La Cruz Verde community, after passing through Caño Luis. There is a wide range of commercial places to refuel and rest. E748951 N1248173.

The next stretch of road is generally quiet with colourful and interesting scenery.

Km 56.8. Las Argentinatas roundabout. A left turn leads to Boca de Sabalos 48 km away, there is a bridge over the San Juan River (Santa Fe Bridge) 13 km away, as well as access to other places such as Las Azucenas, Melchora and Las Tablillas. We continue straight on to San Carlos. E751840 N1241770

Km 70.4. We are entering San Carlos and there is an old turn-off on the left which leads to Melchora. We continue straight, now it is feeling like a city. E744135 N1232224

Km 72.7. We are already in the urban centre of San Carlos, near the City Hall building. E742641 N1230704
😊 Km 73.3. End of the route. We are on the river front at San Carlos, it was worth the effort to come and see our beautiful Nicaraguan River. E742581 N1230123

You will see that it is a picturesque and beautiful place. There is a diverse range of hostels, shops and restaurants.
And the path continues... but that is another story and another route. Now relax and remember the emotions of the trip.