

Sustainable Tourism Supports the Next Generation in Nicaragua

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Sustainable tourism, often equated with ecotourism, is known for providing environmental benefits such as preserving ecosystems and recycling wastes. However, truly sustainable tourism businesses, in addition to protecting the environment, make a commitment to supporting the socially and economically vulnerable people in their local community.

ORO Travel, a Rainforest Alliance Verified™ tour operator and member of the **Tour Operators Promoting Sustainability (TOPS)** program, announced a partnership this month with the Carita Feliz Center, a Nicaraguan nonprofit organization that provides food, academic support, employment opportunities, and health services to low-income families in the city of Granada. Booking with sustainable tour operators like ORO Travel is a great way for travelers to give back to the communities they visit and know their money is going to responsible initiatives.

More than ten years ago, **Carita Feliz** founder Peder Kolind saw children begging for food in a local park and bought food for them from street vendors. As word spread and the number of children increased each day, Kolind recruited a local woman to help him cook rice and beans. Shortly thereafter, the Carita Feliz Center was born ("carita feliz" means "happy little face" in Spanish), and it has since expanded to become a robust nonprofit organization. The Center currently employs more than 30 local Nicaraguans and supports more than 1,500 children and teens by offering free meals, classes, recreational activities, dental services, and more. As many children in the city cannot afford the public school fee (\$2 per month) or the required school uniform, Carita Feliz has given hundreds of scholarships since 2004 so that these children aren't excluded from an education for financial reasons.



The Center serves eight meals a day, including "big dinners" four nights a week that are accompanied by performances by the children. Tourists are welcome to attend the performances and help serve meals to the children and their families.

Though it focuses on the younger generation, Carita Feliz also supports local adults in several capacities. Two days a week, they serve free lunches for senior citizens. The Center has sewing machines which local people can use to produce school uniforms and other goods to sell. The Center also sells the food made in their cooking and baking classes and gives the proceeds to the students.

For more information on trips and activities offered by ORO Travel, visit their [SustainableTrip profile](#).

To see more photos of the event announcing the partnership between ORO Travel and Carita Feliz, view their [Facebook album](#).