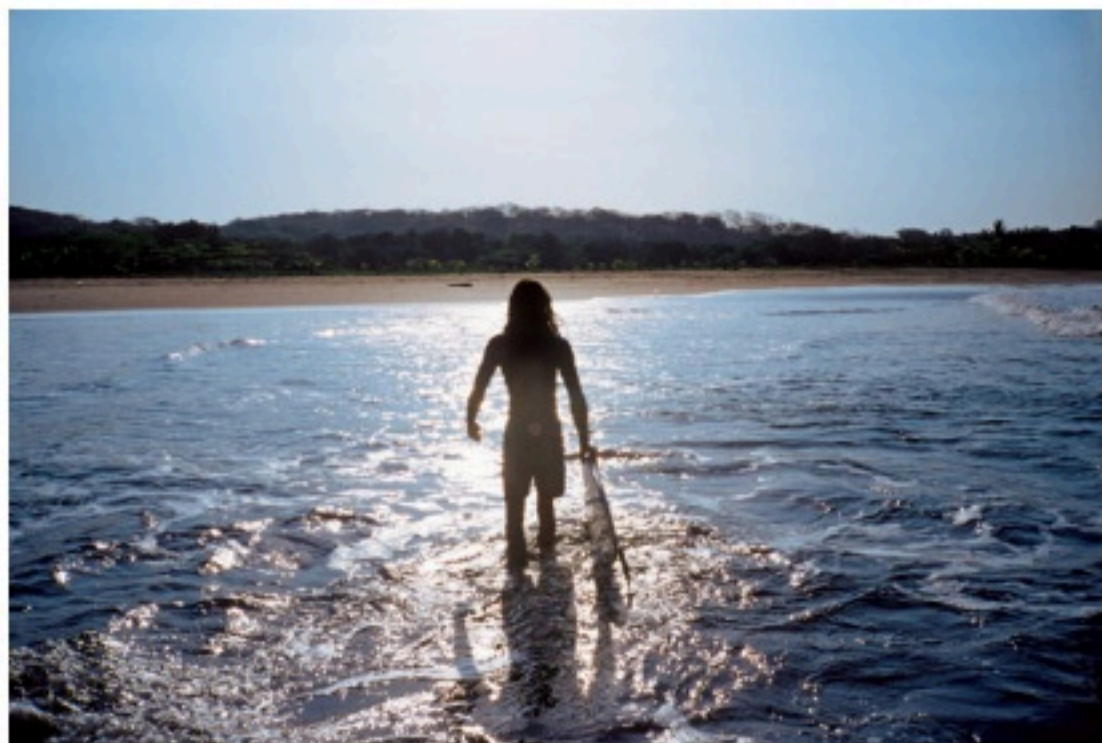




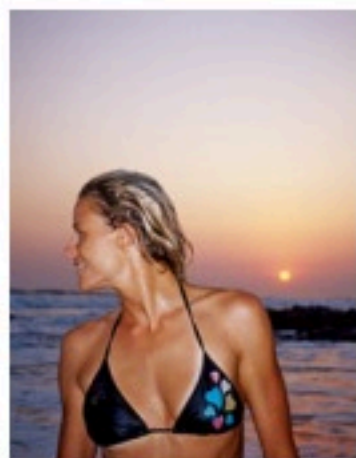
Southern Swell

TRAVEL | By ABBY AGUIRRE | MAY 16, 2011, 3:13 PM | 1 Comment

*Photographs by Marcelo Gomes*

BARREL FEVER — On Nicaragua's northern Pacific coast.

Now that Costa Rica's best breaks have been overrun, Nicaragua is luring wave riders with low-key surf camps and undiscovered beaches. Popoyo, on the southern Pacific coast, has the most consistent barrel, along with hotels like the Popoyo Beach Lodge (popoyobeachlodge.com; doubles from \$55). But two and a half hours north of Managua and just west of the town of Chinandega lies the country's undeveloped northern Pacific coast — and dozens of breaks so new that many don't have names. This is where the pro surfer and model Holly Beck set up her camp, Suave Dulce (surfwithhollybeck.com) after she stopped competing in 2008. Nicaragua, says Beck, a California native, is the ideal place to “help people experience the joy of getting pushed by the ocean.” Many of Beck's students stay at El Coco Loco (011-505-8999-8662; elcocolocoresort.com; doubles from \$100), a rustic resort near the town of Santa Maria del Mar with five palm-thatch cabanas near several surf spots. La Bahia Beach Hodel (011-505-8958-5075; labahiabeachhotel.com; doubles from \$150) is a more luxurious option: four stone-and-teak casitas with outdoor showers, private pathways to one of Nicaragua's most beautiful beaches and three breaks in front of the hotel (with more nearby). Both resorts serve seafood delivered daily by local fishermen, and there's also plenty of the local catch at Al Cielo (011-505-8993-4840), a popular open-air palapa run by two French guys, with 360-degree views.



The pro surfer Holly Beck, who now runs a surf camp in Nicaragua.