

# Directory

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## ACCOMMODATIONS

Honduras has all levels and sorts of hotels, from luxury resorts to colonial guesthouses to super-cheapies. There are bed-and-breakfasts and hostels, though both are still pretty rare. No matter where you stay, it's almost always a good idea to see a few rooms since the hotel receptionist may have a different opinion about which is the most desirable room in the place. Hotels of all levels sometimes suffer from what could be called Stinky Bathroom Syndrome, which is caused by bad plumbing; covering the shower drain usually helps significantly.

At the low-budget end, hotels tend to have cold-water bathrooms and ceiling fans. Rooms with shared bathrooms are less and less common, though the state of some bathrooms being what they are, you may wish you didn't have to sleep next to it. Cable TV is increasingly standard, even in cheap rooms.

In this book, the budget range goes as high as US\$30 per night. Travelers who generally think of themselves as midrangers may be perfectly happy in one of the nicer budget listings. In those, you are likely to have hot water, and can often choose between fans and air-conditioning. Rooms are still modest, but beds are usually newer, the paint fresher and the bathrooms cleaner.

Midrange hotels – US\$30 to US\$60 – will certainly have hot water and air-conditioning, and may include parking, breakfast or a pool. They tend to be in more secure neighborhoods, which often translates to 'away from downtown'. You may need to take cabs to and from the sights in the center.

Top end hotels are typically high-rise chain hotels, plus a handful of deluxe private resorts on Roatán and outside La Ceiba. These cost over US\$60 per night. They have all the amenities you'd expect at a Real InterContinental in any country, including marble bathrooms, air-conditioning, quality beds, bellhop and taxi service, room service, in-room telephones, safety deposit boxes, parking, etc. Wireless Internet access is increasingly available; in some cases executive rooms have in-room access, while guests in standard rooms can get online in the lobby.

## B&Bs

True bed-and-breakfast hotels are few and far between in Honduras; you'll see plenty of places with 'Bed & Breakfast' in their name, though just 'Bed' would be more accurate. Ask if morning eats are included before you plunk down your cash. Actual B&Bs are found in places with large expatriate populations, like Roatán, Copán Ruínas and Tegucigalpa.

**PRACTICALITIES**

- *Honduras Tips* is an essential English/Spanish language tourist magazine with up-to-date information. *Honduras This Week* is Honduras' only English-language weekly newspaper. *El Heraldo*, *La Tribuna*, *La Prensa*, *El Tiempo*, and *El Nuevo Día* are the country's daily newspapers. Occasionally, day-old *New York Times* and *Miami Herald* are sold at top end hotels and English-language bookshops.
- Honduran TV consists largely of programming imported from Mexico and the United States – some English-language programs are dubbed, some subtitled straight from American providers. FM radio plays a mix of ballads, Mexican ranchero music and American rock.
- DVD and VHS systems (NTSC) are commonplace.
- The standard current is 110 volt AC (like the USA and Canada); threeprong outlets, however, are uncommon.
- The metric system is used for everything except gasoline, which is measured in gallons, and laundry, which is weighed in pounds.
- Most cities and large towns have full service laundromats that charge US\$2.50 to US\$4 per 10lbs. Many hotels also provide laundry service, but often charge per item of clothing, which adds up pretty fast

**Camping**

Camping is not pursued by many Hondurans and as a result, campsites such as those in the USA or Europe are scarce. Camping is allowed, however, in several national parks, including Parque Nacional Montaña de Celaque, Parque Nacional Cerro Azul Meámbar, Parque Nacional Santa Bárbara and Parque Nacional Sierra de Agalta. Running water and latrines are sometimes available, and occasionally even a kitchen.

Camping on the fly – on beaches, in the countryside, in the forest – is typically hassle-free. Just be sure to ask permission at the *alcaldía* (city hall) or at the nearest home – you never know if you're camping on someone's property.

Plan on bringing your own gear; visitor centers rarely have tents or sleeping bags (with the notable exception of the one at Cerro Azul Meámbar). Travelers, however, can occasionally rent gear from guides or establishments that cater to foreign travelers – they can at least help track some down.

Finally, as you would at home, leave any campsite as you found it (or better). Carry out your trash, throw dirt or sand on any leftover ashes, and tidy up the site for the next camper.

**Homestays**

Staying in a home with a local family – sharing their space and meals – gives travelers

a rare insight into everyday Honduran life; depending on the length of stay, and the family, of course, it often becomes a highlight of any trip here.

Homestays typically cost US\$9 per person and include a private room, private bathroom and at least one meal. The quality of rooms varies from home to home, but in general, they are modern and clean. In fact, most homestay rooms (and families) must be 'approved' by the local tourism board, city hall or Spanish-language school before they are added to a roster of recommended places.

Places with established homestays include Copán Ruínas, which can be arranged through the Spanish-language schools (p140), Santa Rosa de Copán (p156), La Esperanza (p171), Ojojona (p95) and Isla del Tigre (p105).

**Hostels**

There are a handful of hostels in Honduras, which are great for saving a few lemps and meeting other travelers. All have dorms, shared bathroom, and at least one common area to relax. There are also hostels with extras and amenities including kitchens, lockers and Internet access. You'll find hostels in Copán Ruínas, San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa, La Ceiba, Trujillo and Roatán. Utila doesn't have any true hostels, but has plenty of cheap dorm-style lodging, used

especially by backpackers taking open-water diving courses.

### Hotels

Most travelers will stay most nights in a hotel. Note that a 'motel' is not the same thing, and is usually used for prostitution and people having affairs (hence the high walls, lack of windows and individual garages).

### ACTIVITIES

Honduras has a host of outdoor activities for travelers – from flying high through the forest to dropping to the ocean's floor, from bird-watching in national parks to rafting down a raging Class V river. Whatever it is that interests you, you may be surprised by how much Honduras has to offer.

### Canopy Tours

Canopy tours involve donning a special harness and sliding along fixed cables high in the treetops. Honduras' first such tour is along the Río Cangrejal near La Ceiba (p214). It has since been copied by other outfits, one east of La Ceiba and two in Roatán.

### Diving & Snorkeling

Honduras' Bay Islands – Roatán, Utila and Guanaja, plus Cayos Cochinos off the North Coast – are famous for their diving, with clear warm water and a magnificent coral reef. You can learn to dive here for less money than just about anywhere in the world, without sacrificing an iota of quality. Dozens of dive shops, especially on Roatán and Utila, offer all levels of courses, from beginner to instructor. Snorkeling gear can be rented or bought, or you can bring your own, for snorkeling right off the shore or on inexpensive tours.

### Fishing

Anglers can go trolling, deep-sea fishing or flat fishing on the Bay Islands, especially Roatán where local outfits have experienced guides. La Moskitia is also an excellent place for fishing, especially Brus Laguna, where behemoth 75kg tarpon have been landed.

### Hiking & Trekking

Honduras has excellent hiking, especially in the national parks. Most of the best

hikes involve climbing one of Honduras' many peaks, so hikers should be well prepared for moderate to challenging outings. Some parks have well-maintained trails and permanent visitors centers, others have little or no infrastructure at all. In the latter case, it is highly recommended that you hire a guide, as it's very easy to get lost (and much harder to be found). Some favorite hiking areas include Parque Nacional Montaña de Celaque (p163), Parque Nacional La Tigra (p91), Parque Nacional Cerro Azul Meámbar (p179), Parque Nacional Sierra de Agalta (p117), and Parque Nacional Montaña de Santa Bárbara (p180) as well as around Copán Ruínas (p141) and the Reserva de la Biósfera del Río Plátano (p290).

### Horseback Riding

Horseback riding is a popular activity at Copán Ruínas (p141), though travelers should steer clear of the rides offered by local kids on the street, which are notoriously bad. It's much better to go with one of the listed tour operators instead. Horseback riding is also available in La Ceiba (p215).

### Mountain Biking

At least two tour operators in La Ceiba (p214) offer half- and all-day mountain biking trips. It is rare to see independent travelers exploring Honduras by bike, though not for shortage of good dirt roads or places to go. A few highways in Olancho are known for roadside robberies, however, and are best avoided.

### River Running & Kayaking

White-water rafting is popular on the Río Cangrejal near La Ceiba; several companies in La Ceiba offer rafting tours on this river. For even more adventure, try one of the week-plus expeditions down the Río Plátano or Río Patuca, starting in Olancho and ending in La Moskitia (p120).

Small-boat tours are a good way to visit a number of national parks and wildlife refuges along the north coast, including Parque Nacional Jeannette Kawas (Punta Sal), Refugio de Vida Silvestre Punta Izopo, Refugio de Vida Silvestre Cuero y Salado and Refugio De Vida Silvestre Laguna De Guaimoreto. A number of the trips in

La Moskitia are also conducted by small boat.

### Bird-Watching

Birding is becoming a popular activity in Honduras, where you can spot hundreds of species, including quetzals, toucans, scarlet macaws (Honduras' national bird) as well as brilliant green and green-and-yellow parrots. Many of the national park and wildlife reserves are excellent birding locations, including Parque Nacional Cusuco (p130), Parque Nacional Montaña de Celaque (p163) and Parque Nacional La Tigra (p91).

Lago de Yojoa (p175) is another excellent place for birding – 375 species have been counted there so far.

Migratory birds are present along the North Coast during the northern winter months from November to February. They are easiest to spot in the lagoons and coastal reserves, like Parque Nacional Punta Izopo and Jardín Botánico de Lancetilla, both near Tela. The Lodge at Pico Bonito (p225) outside of La Ceiba has 300 hectares of private forest, with viewing platforms and available guided tours.

### BUSINESS HOURS

Businesses are open during the following hours. Any exceptions to these hours are noted in specific listings.

**Banks** 8:30am to 4:30pm Monday to Friday and 8:30 to 11:30am Saturday

**Restaurants** 7am to 9pm daily

**Shops** 9am to 6pm Monday to Saturday and 9am to 1pm or 5pm Sunday

### CHILDREN

Like most of Latin America, Honduras is very open and welcoming of children. There's no taboo about bringing children to restaurants or performances, and pregnant women are ushered to the front of the line in banks, government offices, and many private businesses.

### Practicalities

Travelers will be hard-pressed to find child-specific amenities like car seats, high chairs and bassinets, except perhaps in top end hotels and resorts. Hondurans simply do not have the quantity and variety of kid-specific paraphernalia that Americans, at least, are accustomed to. Disposable diapers,

wipes, formula and other basics, however, are available in most large supermarkets.

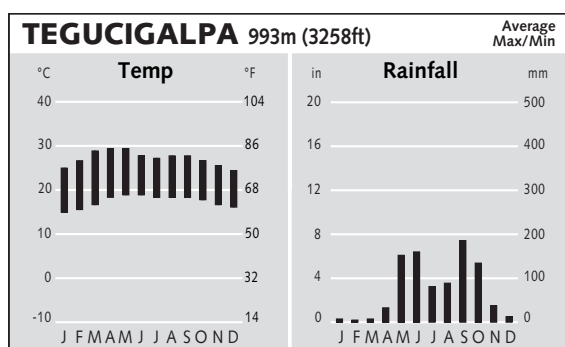
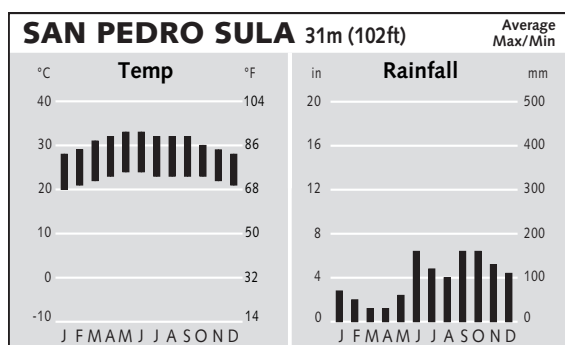
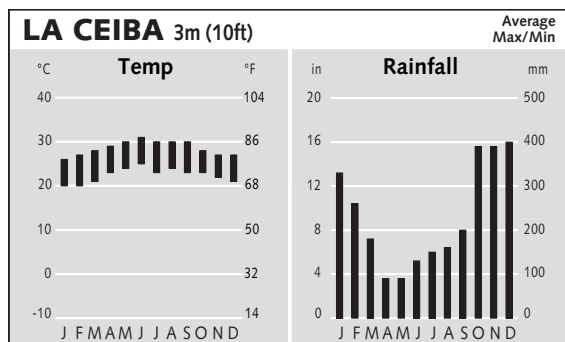
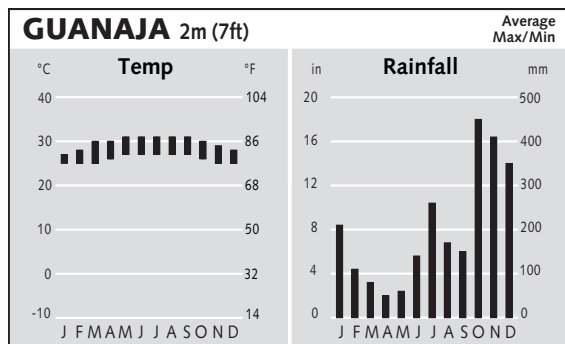
### Sights & Activities

The North Coast, Western Honduras and the Bay Islands are the best areas for those traveling with children. Assuming the little ones are up for some outdoor excursions, Tela and La Ceiba have a number of good options, including canopy tours, mangrove tours, short hikes, a butterfly and insect museum in La Ceiba and (as a last resort) the beach in Tela. The north also has a number of forts, including in Omoa and Trujillo, which kids might enjoy too. In the west, the area around Copán Ruínas has a number of activities suitable for children, including a butterfly enclosure, bird park and of course the ruins. And the Bay Islands have a number of kid-friendly resorts, notably Anthony's Key (p257), which has dolphin encounter programs.

### CLIMATE CHARTS

The temperature in Honduras does not change dramatically by the season, perhaps 5°C throughout the year. Instead, the temperature is entirely dependant on the elevation. For instance, the mountainous interior ranges from 16°C to 20°C, and is a little warmer in the dry season. Tegucigalpa, at 975m, has a temperate climate, with temperatures between 24°C and 29°C during the day in the dry season (they're a bit cooler in the rainy season). The coastal lowlands on the Pacific and Caribbean sides are warmer and more humid year-round. Their temperatures range from 28°C to 32°C in the dry season; they're about 3°C cooler (and more comfortable) in the rainy season.

In general, the rainy season in Honduras runs from May to November in the interior and from September to January along the north coast and Bay Islands (with a chance of severe storms any time of the year). Heavy rains can cause flooding in the lowlands and mudslides in the mountains, and both can cause serious damage and impede travel. Hurricane season is from August to November; direct hits are uncommon, but are devastating when they do. Travelers should take evacuation orders very seriously.



## COURSES

Scuba diving courses bring thousands of travelers to Honduras every year because of the world-class dive sites and the bargain basement prices. Besides open-water and advanced open-water certifications, dive shops offer upper-level courses and specialties, including nitrox, divemaster and instructor. While the vast majority of dive shops are on the Bay Islands, there are

also fully equipped shops servicing Cayos Cochinos and Omoa.

Spanish courses are becoming increasingly popular. Travelers have the option of studying in Copán Ruínas (p140), Tegucigalpa (p78), La Ceiba (p215) and the Bay Islands (p268).

## CUSTOMS

Customs officers are pretty lax; while police and customs officers are entitled to search you at any time, especially in border areas, they rarely do. Even searches at the airport tend to be perfunctory. The exception is if something in your appearance or demeanor suggests to the officer you may be carrying drugs. Beyond drugs, travelers are not allowed to remove any ancient artifact or endangered animal or plant, whether live or a product made from one. It's smart to keep receipts for any item you buy, and especially for one that may be confused for being a restricted product, like an especially good Maya replica. If you're traveling with a pet, you may be asked to provide proof of vaccination and a medical certificate from home.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

### Hiking Hazards

The greatest hazard while hiking is getting lost – at least two travelers have died in Parque Nacional Montaña de Celaque, evidently after getting off the trail and being unable to find it again. Even in a well-traveled park like Celaque, the trails can be overgrown in places, and secondary paths used by animals and hunters can easily lead hikers astray. Guides are readily available at most hiking areas, and it is strongly recommended you use them.

Although mostly found on the north coast and in La Moskitia, you should be alert for poisonous snakes throughout Honduras; coral snakes, rattlesnakes and barba amarilla (fer-de-lance; otherwise known as the lancehead) are among the most common types seen. Wear long pants and boots and be careful where you step.

### Thefts & Muggings

Honduras has a very high crime and violence rate, though the vast majority of travelers experience no problems. Pickpocketing and petty theft are most common, and assault is possible. Take ordinary precautions, like

not wearing flashy jewelry, walking around with your camera out or pulling out a wad of cash. Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula are the worst places for street crime; the downtown areas of both are fine during the day, but less-so after dark. Consider taking a cab when it gets late. If you are mugged, do not resist.

In general, small towns are much safer than the big cities. Watch yourself on the north coast, especially on the beach: avoid leaving items unattended and do not walk on the beach at night. It seems to be a favorite tactic of thieves to wait in the trees along a deserted stretch of beach, especially after dark, and wait for someone to happen by.

## DISABLED TRAVELERS

Disabled travelers will find few facilities designed for their convenience, other than in more expensive hotels and resorts. Wheelchair-bound visitors will find it difficult to get around major cities like Tegucigalpa or San Pedro Sula, because of street congestion and generally poor road or sidewalk surfaces. Even smaller villages are difficult to negotiate, since the road surfaces are either unpaved or made of cobblestones. Toilets for the disabled are virtually nonexistent, other than in four- or five-star hotels.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

### Honduran Embassies & Consulates

#### TEGUCIGALPA

**Belgium** (☎ 232 3954; fax 231 1974; Edif Plaza Bancatlán, 3rd fl, Blvd Miraflores; ☎ 8:30am-2pm Mon-Fri)

**Belize** (Map p81; ☎ 238 4616; fax 238 4617; Centro Comercial Hotel Honduras Maya, Av República de Chile; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri)

**Canada** (☎ 232 4551; fax 239 7767; Edif Financiero Banexpo, Local 3, Blvd San Juan Bosco; ☎ 8am-4:30pm Mon-Thu, 8am-1:30pm Fri)

**Costa Rica** (☎ 232 1054; Residencial El Triángulo, 1a Calle 3451; ☎ 8:30am-3:30pm Mon-Fri)

**Denmark** (☎ 236 6482; fax 236 8443; Edif La Paz, Av de los Próceres 206; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri)

**El Salvador** (☎ 239 7017; 239 7909; Diagonal Aguán 2952; ☎ 8am-3:30pm Mon-Fri)

**Finland** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 236 7322; fax 236 6740; Edif Comercial, Av de los Próceres; ☎ 8am-5:45pm Mon-Fri)

**France** (Map p81; ☎ 236 6800; fax 236 8051; 3a Calle at Av Juan Lindo; ☎ 8am-12:30pm Mon-Fri)

**Germany** (Map p81; ☎ 232 3161; fax 232 9018; Edif Paysen 3rd fl, Blvd Morazán; ☎ 9am-noon Mon-Fri)

**Guatemala** (☎ 231 1543; fax 232 1580; Calle Alfonso 13; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri)

**Israel** (Map p81; ☎ 232 0776; fax 231 1874; inside CONVERSA Language School; Paseo República de Argentina 257; ☎ 8am-5:30pm)

**Italy** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 236 6391; fax 236 5659; ambitalia@sigmanet.hn; Av Enrique Tierno Calvan; ☎ 9-11:30am Mon-Thu)

**Japan** (Map p81; ☎ 236 6828; fax 236 6100; Calzada República de Paraguay btwn 4a & 5a Calles; ☎ 8:30am-noon Mon-Fri)

**México** (☎ 232 1670; fax 232 4719; Calle Eucalipto; ☎ 9am-12:30pm Mon-Fri)

**Netherlands** (☎ 239 0525; fax 239 0526; 3a Av 2315; ☎ 9am-noon Mon-Fri)

**Nicaragua** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 232 4290; fax 231 1412; Bloque M-1, Col Lomas de Tepeyac; ☎ 8am-noon Mon-Fri)

**Norway** (☎ 236 5665; fax 236 8904; Av Los Próceres; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

**Panamá** (Map p81; ☎ 239 5508; ephon@hondudata.com; Edif Palmira, 3rd fl, behind Hotel Honduras Maya; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri)

**Spain** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 236 6589; fax 236 8682; embesphn@hondutel.hn; Calle Santander 801; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri)

**Sweden** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 232 4935; ambassaden .tegucigalpa@sida.se; Centro Comercial El Dorado, 6th fl; Blvd Morazán; ☎ 8am-noon, 1-5pm Mon-Fri)

**Switzerland** (☎ 236 8052; 6a Av 702, Col Lara; ☎ by appointment)

**Taiwan** (☎ 239 5837; fax 235 5662; Calle Eucalipto 3750; ☎ 8:30am-4:30pm Mon-Fri)

**USA** (Map p81; ☎ 236 9320; www.usmission.hn; Av La Paz near 3a Av; ☎ walk-ins 8-11:30am Mon-Fri, telephone service 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

#### SAN PEDRO SULA

**Belize** (☎ 551 6247; fax 551 6460; Edif Industrias Global, highway to Puerto Cortés; ☎ 7-11am Mon)

**El Salvador** (Map p126; ☎ 557 5591; fax 557 2718; Edif Park Plaza, 11a Av NO btwn Calles 5a & 6a NO; ☎ 8:30am-noon & 1:30-4pm Mon-Fri)

**Finland** (☎ 553 1642; fax 552 6426; Megaplaza Mall; highway to La Lima; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

**France** (Map p126; ☎ /fax 553 1178; Alliance Française, 23a Av btwn 4a & 5a Calles SO; ☎ by appointment only)

**Germany** (Map p128; ☎ 553 1244; fax 553 1868; Edif Banco Sogerin, 1a Calle O btwn 8a & 9a Avs SO; ☎ 9-11am Mon-Fri)

**Guatemala** (Map p126; ☎ 556 9550; fax 556 9551; 12a Av SO near 24a Calle SO; ☎ 9am-12:30pm & 2-4pm Mon-Fri)

**Italy** (Map p128; ☎ 552 3672; fax 552 3932; Edif La Constancia, 3rd fl, 5a Av NO near 1a Calle O; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri)

**México** (Map p126; ☎ 553 2604; fax 552 3293; 2a Calle at 20a Av SO; 🕒 8-10am Mon-Fri)

**Netherlands** (Map p126; ☎ 557 1815; fax 552 9724; Plaza Venecia, 15a Av btwn 7a & 8a Calles; 🕒 by appointment)

**Nicaragua** (Map p128; ☎ 550 0813; fax 550 8377; Hillanderas de Sula; 5a Av SO btwn 4a & 5a Calles; 🕒 10am-3pm Mon-Fri)

**Norway** (☎ /fax 557 0856; Finca Guaymura, Highway to El Carmen; 🕒 8am-4pm Mon-Fri)

**Panama** (Map p126; ☎ 557 4499, ext 3504; fax 557 3838; Edif Banco Ficohsa, Av Circunvalación at 4a Calle NO; 🕒 9-11am & 1-4pm Mon-Fri)

**Spain** (Map p128; ☎ 553 2480; fax 557 1680; Edif Agencias Panamericanas, 2 Av NO btwn 3a & 4a Calles NE; 🕒 1:30-3:30pm Mon-Fri)

**Taiwan** (Map p126; ☎ 556 8490; fax 556 5802; 24a Av btwn 11a & 12a Av SO; 🕒 8:30am-5:30pm Mon-Fri)

**UK** (Map p126; ☎ 550 2337; fax 550 6146; 2a Calle btwn 18a & 19a Avs NO; 🕒 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat)

**USA** (Map p128; ☎ 558 1580; www.usmission.hn; Edif Bancatlán, 11th fl, Parque Central; 🕒 1-4:30pm Mon, Wed & Fri)

### Honduran Embassies & Consulates

**Belgium** (☎ 2/734 0000; fax 2/735 2626; 106-101.2432@compuserve.com; Ave des Gaulois 8, Brussels B-1040)

**Belize** (☎ 245 889; fax 230 562; No 91 North Front Street, Belize City)

**Canada** (☎ 613/233 8900; fax 613/232 0193; www.embassyhonduras.ca; 151 Slater St, Suite 805, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H3)

**Costa Rica** (☎ 234 9502; fax 253 2209; emhondcr@sol.racsa.co.cr; Del ITAN, 300 Este, 200 Norte y 100 Este Yoses Sur, San José)

**El Salvador** (☎ 264 7841; embhond@es.com.sv; 89 Av Nte No 561, Col Escalón, San Salvador)

**France** (☎ 1/4755 8645; fax 1/4755 8648; 8 Rue Crevaux, 75116 Paris)

**Germany** (☎ 30/3974 9710; www.embahonduras.de; Cuxhavener Str 14, Berlin, D-10555)

**Guatemala** (☎ 335 3281; fax 335 2851; embhond@concyt.gob.gt; 12 Calle, 1-25 Zona 10, Edif Geminis 10, Oficina 1211, Guatemala City)

**Holland** (☎ 70/364 1684; fax 70/364 9134; eholan@honduras.demon.nl; Nassauplein 17, Den Haag, 2585 EB)

**Israel** (☎ 9957 7686; Calle Zohar Tal No 1, Herzlyia Pituach, CP 46741, Tel Aviv)

**Italy** (☎ 6/320 7236; ambhond@tin.it; Via Gian Battista de Vico 40, Interno 8, Rome)

**Japan** (☎ 3/3409 1150; honduras@interlink.or.jp; 38 Kowa Bldg 8F No 802, 12-24 Nishi Azabu 4 Chome, Minato Ku, Tokyo 106)

**México** (☎ 55/5211 5747; emhon mex@mail.Internet.com.mx; Alfonso Reyes No 220, Colonia Condesa, CP 06140, México DF)

**Nicaragua** (☎ 278 3043; embhonduras@ideay.net.ni; Del Gimnasio Hércules 1 cuadra al Sur y 1/2 cuadra arriba, Reparto San Juan 312, Managua)

**Panama** (☎ 225 8200; hondupma@sinfo.net; Calle 31 at Av Justo Arosemena, Panama City)

**Spain** (☎ 91/579 0251; fax 91/345 0665; www.emba.honduras.es; Paseo de la Castellana N° 164, 2° Derecha, Madrid 28046)

**Sweden** (☎ 8/731 5084; embahon@telia.com; Stjärnvägen 2, 7 fl, 181, 34 Lindingo, Stockholm)

**Taiwan** (☎ 2/8775 5507; fax 2/2875 5726; honduras@ms9.hinet.net; 9F, 9, Lane 62, Tien-Mou West Rd, Taipei)

**UK** (☎ 020/7486 4880; hondurasuk@lineone.net; 115 Gloucester Place, London W1H 3PJ)

**USA** (☎ 202 966 7702; fax 202 966 9751; www.hondurasemb.org; 3007 Tilden Street NW, Suite 4M, Washington DC 20008)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Just about every city, town and village in Honduras has a patron saint around which an annual festival or fair is celebrated. There are some big events, however, that attract crowds from far and wide

### February

The FERIA de la Virgen de Suyapa (p78) is a festival held in honor of the tiny patron saint of Honduras, a 6cm wood statue who is believed to have performed thousands of miracles. Held in the town of Suyapa, on the outskirts of Tegucigalpa, the event kicks off on All-Saints Day (February 3) and continues for a week. Pilgrims from all over Honduras and Central America come to honor the Saint during this period.

### March

Comayagua's Semana Santa (p187) is packed with impressive religious processions the week before Easter. The height of the celebration is on Friday morning, when the *Via Crucis* procession walks over *alfombras*, intricate 'carpets' made of colored sawdust, on the city streets throughout the historical center.

### April

April 12 marks the arrival of the Garífunas in Honduras in 1797. Although it is celebrated in many Garífunas communities,

Punta Gorda's festival is among the best attended. It lasts four days and includes a re-enactment of the Garífuna arrival on Roatán, the naming of a Queen, and plenty of music and dancing (p262).

### May

La Ceiba's patron-saint festival, La Feria de San Isidro (p216), has morphed into one of the country's largest festivals. Also known as the Gran Carnival Nacional (Great National Carnival), the party culminates on the third Saturday in May, but crowds start arriving mid-week and 'mini-celebrations' in neighborhoods around town start even earlier. Over a quarter of a million people come for parades, street performances, floats and – after night falls – raucous partying at La Ceiba's nightclubs.

### June

The Feria Juniana (p130) is San Pedro Sula's patron-saint festival and a party of national proportions. Held the last week of June, the celebration includes live music, street performances, and plenty of food and drink. The height of the party is on June 29, when a huge parade makes its way down Avenida Circunvalación.

### July

The Garífuna Festival (p195), the largest of its kind, is held July 9 to 24 (usually) in the town of Baja Mar, east of Puerto Cortes. The party's peak is typically July 16, with an all-night dance competition.

### August

Utila's Sun Jam (p272) is held on an uninhabited cay near the western end of the main island. DJs spin music all day and all night for some 1500 people, who cram the islet for an all-day/all-night party. There's lots of food and drink, but buy your tickets in advance to be sure you get a spot.

## FOOD

Honduras does not have an especially rich national cuisine, as any long-time traveler here can attest. Seafood figures prominently along the north coast, of course. And while chicken is the mainstay inland, pork and beef, especially *pinchos*, or kabob, are also popular. See the Food & Drink chapter (p62) for more information.

## GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

Honduras is very much 'in the closet,' and open displays of affection between gay or lesbian couples are definitely frowned upon. Discreet homosexual behavior was more tolerated before the advent of HIV/AIDS in Honduras around 1985. Since then anti-gay incidents have increased, along with stricter legislation, and gay and lesbians must take extra care anywhere they are uncertain of prevailing attitudes. However, the AIDS crisis has also increased gay advocacy; organizations serving the gay, lesbian and transsexual/transgender communities, include **Grupo Prisma** (☎ 232 8342; prisma@sdnhon.org.hn), **Colectiva Violeta** (☎ 237 6398; alfredo@optinet.hn), and **Comunidad Gay San Pedrana** (☎ 550 6868).

## HOLIDAYS

**New Year's Day** January 1

**Day of the Americas** April 14

**Semana Santa (Holy Week)** Thursday, Friday and Saturday before Easter Sunday

**Labor Day** May 1

**Independence Day** September 15

**Francisco Morazán Day** October 3

**Día de la Raza (Columbus Day)** October 12

**Army Day** October 21

**Christmas Day** December 25

## INSURANCE

Travel insurance is always something worth considering, though relatively few tourists actually use it. Policies vary widely, but can include compensation for lost, damaged or stolen luggage, for cancelled or delayed trips (a concern mostly for cruise-ship passengers), and even for bad weather. Some include coverage for medical treatment or evacuation, or for car rental. Travel insurance makes the most sense for those spending a significant amount of money in one place, a week at a dive resort for example. Independent travelers may be interested in theft or damage insurance, and a plan with medical care and evacuation may be a good idea if you'll be doing any adventure activities.

## INTERNET ACCESS

Virtually every city, town and village travelers are likely to go to has at least one Internet café. Connections tend to be relatively fast, and cost US\$0.50 to US\$1.10 per hour.



Access on the Bay Islands has improved immensely thanks to satellite connection, but is still the country's most expensive, around US\$8 per hour.

## LEGAL MATTERS

Police officers in Honduras tend to be friendly, but are not above squeezing tourists for a little extra cash now and then. This usually happens at road stops, where police will often tell you the plain truth: they need money to put gas in the patrol truck. You can politely say that you can't help, or you can hand over a couple of bucks and be on your way. A number of cities have tourist police, who are part of the same police force but are trained to deal with tourists (and wear simple khaki uniforms rather than camo); do not hesitate to contact them (or a regular police officer if that's easier) if you experience or witness a crime.

## MAPS

Good maps are hard to find in Honduras. Tourist offices and visitors centers are the best places to get a decent one of Honduras or the region, department or city you happen to be in. Bookstores occasionally carry maps but don't count on it; they're often the same ones that the tourist office gives out for free (and in a bookshop, you're likely to drop US\$5 on it).

The Instituto Geográfico Nacional in Tegucigalpa (ITM; p71) publishes high-quality maps of the various departments (states), both political and topographic. They sell a few city and municipal maps as well, though oddly enough, the Tegucigalpa one is unwieldy and expensive.

## MONEY

The local currency is the lempira and it's considered to be relatively stable. For exchange rates see the inside front cover of this book. Also, consider checking out [www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com), a website that generates handy currency conversion cheat-sheets, which you can print out and keep in your wallet for easy conversions. For information on prices and the cost of traveling within Honduras, see p21.

## ATMs

Cash machines are prevalent throughout the country. ATMs operated by BAC/

Credomatic, Banco Atlántida, and Unibanc are the most reliable, and most likely to accept out-of-country debit cards. Always be alert to your surroundings when withdrawing cash; whenever possible, take out money during the day, and at a machine that's in a lockable cabin (to get in, you typically have to swipe your ATM card at the door) or inside the bank itself. ATMs typically spit out 500-lempira bills, which can be a hassle to break – get in the habit of using big bills at hotels and larger restaurants, and saving the small bills for taxis, small eateries, street stands, etc.

## Cash

Banks in larger cities usually exchange US dollars, and occasionally euros; bring your passport and go in the morning. Your hotel may let you pay in US dollars, or exchange them for you.

## Credit Cards

Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted, including at major supermarkets, retail stores, hotels and car rental agencies. Expect a 6% to 12% surcharge.

Cash advances on Visa cards are available at most banks, including BAC/Credomatic, Banco Atlántida and Banco de Occidente. BAC/Credomatic can usually process advances on MasterCard too. There's typically no transaction charge on the Honduran end for Visa or MasterCard cash advances, but of course the interest rates tend to be astronomical.

## Moneychangers

Freelance moneychangers can be found – in fact, they'll find you – in the airports and in parque central in San Pedro Sula. It's not recommended you use them unless the banks are closed or the line is out the door (which is often the case). There are moneychangers at all border crossings, too; they are equally suspect, but using them is the best way to get rid of Guatemalan *quetzales* or Nicaraguan *córdobas* if you know you won't need them anymore (El Salvador uses the US dollar).

## Tipping

A 10% tip is customary for tour guides and restaurant waiters, but not taxi drivers. At hotels, it is nice to tip someone for carrying

your bags to your room, and the house-cleaning staff – US\$1 to US\$2 per day is fair; you should pay more at higher-end hotels or for especially good service.

### Traveler's Checks

American Express traveler's checks can be changed in all major towns; Banco Atlántida and BAC/Credomatic are the best banks to use. They will need your passport, and may charge a commission. Some banks only change traveler's checks and foreign cash in the morning.

### Taxes & Surcharges

There is a hotel tax of 12% to 16% that is added at most larger hotels but often not charged at smaller hotels. In many cases, the tax is charged if you use a credit card, but not if you pay in cash.

## PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

The main concern for travelers when it comes to photography and video is downloading pictures from your camera once your memory card is full. Most Internet cafés can download your pictures and burn them onto a CD for a couple of bucks. Definitely bring the USB cable specific to your camera, as most cafés won't have them. If you need an accessory or replacement part, try electronics stores in Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula or La Ceiba, especially in the malls.

## POST

Post offices in most Honduran towns typically are open Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm (often with a couple of hours off for lunch between noon and 2pm) and on Saturday from 8am to noon. Postcards/letters cost US\$0.80/US\$1.30 to the US, US\$1.30/US\$1.80 to Europe and US\$1.80/US\$2.15 to Australia. Delivery takes 10 to 14 days, longer for Australia. Despite the apparent long delivery times for postal items, Hondurcor, the Honduran postal service, is considered relatively reliable. In fact, travelers from Nicaragua or Guatemala often hang on to their postcards and mail them from Honduras.

You can theoretically receive mail by general delivery, known in Latin America as *lista de correos*, at any post office; have it directed to you at:

(Name),  
Lista de Correos (town and department),  
República de Honduras,  
Central America.

For more secure delivery, try FedEx, DHL, Express Mail Service (EMS), or Urgent Express; all have offices in Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula and other major cities.

## SHOPPING

Honduras doesn't have the myriad and varied folk art found in, say, Guatemala or Mexico, but a number of items are worth looking for. Around Copán Ruínas, replicas of Maya marks and glyphs, made of clay or stone, are great souvenirs; Lenca 'negative' pottery – recognizable for its black and white designs – is beautiful and affordable; and baskets from the Santa Bárbara region as well as tree-bark art (*tunu*) from La Moskitia make colorful, lightweight gifts. For a more modern selection, the malls in Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula and La Ceiba have stores of all sorts, including designer shoes and clothes. As always, avoid buying items made from black coral or sea turtle shells. They do make for beautiful jewelry, but are protected species and buying such items only supports their destruction. The same goes for animal pelts, and jewelry or artesanía made from exotic bird feathers, like macaws or quetzales (though such items are rare in Honduras).

## Bargaining

Bargaining is expected in Honduras, though not to the degree or intensity that is common in Guatemala. Most merchants list their wares with reasonable prices, and have little room to go down and still make a profit. Avoid low-balling merchants too much, or haggling over every penny.

## SOLO TRAVELERS

Honduras is a perfectly fine place to travel alone, assuming you take common-sense precautions for safety and security. Solo women should expect to get more stares and comments than they would if they were with a man or even another woman. In cities, solo men (and even twosomes) may get approached more frequently by prostitutes than if they were traveling with a woman.

Honduran hotels are divided in the way rooms are priced – some charge according to the number of beds, others by the number of people; the listings in this book indicate which rate each hotel uses. There are also a few hostels, mostly in popular destinations.

It's relatively easy to meet other travelers in Honduras, especially in destinations like Copán Ruínas and the Bay Islands where bars, hostels, guided excursions and, of course, dive classes serve as mixers. There is also a substantial foreign and expatriate community in many Honduran cities.

## SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

Sustainable travel can be practiced in large gestures and small ones, from choosing to never fly again (because of the huge fuel usage it represents) to picking up a discarded Doritos bag on a forest trail. Most travelers are quite conscientious about minimizing their physical impact: not littering, not disturbing flora and fauna (above water or below it), not buying food or gifts that are made from protected species. In Honduras, especially on the Bay Islands, limit your water use – take short showers! – and try reusing bottles and plastic bags to cut down on trash.

Controlling your 'cultural impact' is a but more tricky. Taking photos is such an integral part of traveling – if you didn't get a photo, were you really there? – but it's vital that travelers exercise restraint in taking pictures, especially of local people, and doubly so if those people happen to be indigenous. Travelers may not realize how intrusive other habits are, like talking loudly or dressing sloppily, especially in a church or government office.

One last tip: even if you don't speak much Spanish, do learn how to use 'Usted' and the formal tense. It goes a long way in showing respect in everyday situations.

## TELEPHONE & FAX

Many Internet cafés offer clear, inexpensive phone service using high-speed Internet connections. Calls to the US typically cost US\$0.10 per minute, occasionally with rates as low as US\$0.05. Expect to pay a bit more to call Europe, per minute US\$0.25 to US\$0.50.

Hondutel has call centers at its offices throughout the country. Rates to the US

are competitive at just US\$0.10 per minute. Calls to the rest of the world are higher. Call centers are usually open 7am until around 9pm every day.

Some Hondutel offices and Internet cafés with phone service have fax service. Prices vary widely, but are usually per page, as opposed to per minute. You can receive faxes as well, with a minimal per-page fee. Fax service typically has more limited hours, usually 8am to 4pm Monday to Friday.

## Cell Phones

Honduran carriers Aló and Telefónica use GSM 850 and 1900 protocols, which are used by North American carriers Cingular, T-Mobile, Fido and others, but will be incompatible with GSM 900/1800 phones common in Europe, Australia, New Zealand and many Asian countries.

## Phone Codes

Honduras' country code is ☎ 504. There are no area codes beyond the country code; when dialing Honduras from abroad simply dial the international access code plus the Honduran country code plus the local number. For domestic long distance calls within Honduras, there is no need to dial the area code.

To reach a domestic long distance operator, dial ☎ 191; for local directory assistance, dial ☎ 192; for directory assistance for government telephone numbers, dial ☎ 193; for an international operator, dial ☎ 197. A direct connection to an operator in the USA is available by dialing ☎ 800 0121 for Sprint, ☎ 800 0122 for MCI WorldCom and ☎ 800 0123 for AT&T.

## Phonecards

Hondutel sells 'Telecards' which have a code on the back and can be bought at most Hondutel offices. From any pay phone, simply follow the instructions on the back to make a call.

## TIME

Honduras is in one time zone, six hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (Mountain Standard Time in the USA). Honduras adopted daylight savings time in 2006, but many small towns around the country refused to implement it; when getting the time, always ask if it's '*hora nueva*' (new

time) or *'hora vieja'* (old time). This is especially important for bus schedules.

## TOILETS

Public toilets are few and far between in Honduras, so you should take 'rest breaks' at your hotel or at convenient restaurants. Western-style flush toilets are the norm in most places although toilet paper goes in the wastepaper basket, not down the hatch. The exception to the rule is La Moskitia, where running water is rare and latrines are typical.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

The national tourist office is the **Instituto Hondureño de Turismo** (IHT; ☎ 220 1600, 800-222 8687; www.letsghonduras.com) in Tegucigalpa. IHT also maintains a **US office** (☎ 800-460 9608; PO Box 140458, Coral Gables, FL 33114). Around the country, tourist information offices are run by the municipal government and public agencies; these offices are listed in the Information section of each destination.

## VISAS

Citizens of the United States, Canada, most European countries, Australia, Canada, Japan and New Zealand normally receive 90-day tourist cards when entering the country. A yellow slip of paper will be stapled or folded into your passport – don't lose it, as you'll have to turn it in when you leave, or get it stamped if you extend your stay.

You can extend your stay once for another 90 days. After that, you'll be required to leave the country for at least three days. To extend your stay, take your passport to any immigration office and ask for a *prórroga* (visa extension); you'll have to fill out a form and pay US\$20. Practically every city and town in Honduras has an immigration office (*migración*) where you can do this.

## VOLUNTEERING

A number of organizations offer volunteer opportunities in Honduras, on projects in many parts of the country and ranging from building homes to teaching English to involving school children in environmental programs. The website [www.travel-to-honduras.com](http://www.travel-to-honduras.com) has a long list of groups that run volunteer programs in Honduras, from large operations like Casa Alianza and i-to-i, to smaller ones like the Cofradía Bilingual School and the Utila Iguana Conservation Project.

## WOMEN TRAVELERS

Honduras is basically a good country for women travelers. As elsewhere, you'll probably attract less attention if you dress modestly. On the Bay Islands, where lots of beach-going foreigners tend to congregate, standards of modesty in dress are much more relaxed, though topless bathing is most definitely frowned upon.

Cases of rape of foreign tourists have been reported in a few places along the north coast. As peaceful and idyllic as the coast looks – and usually is – be wary of going to isolated stretches of beach alone, and don't walk on the beach at night.

## WORK

Most independent travelers who stay in (or come to) Honduras to work do so on the Bay Islands; dive instructors are almost exclusively foreigners, and many people completing divemaster training raise a little extra cash working as waiters or bartenders in West End, West Bay or Utila. Most do not have work permits and either leave every three to six months to get a new tourist visa or, more likely, pay the islands' head immigration officer a bribe to extend their tourist visas every three months.

# Transportation

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### THINGS CHANGE

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Entering Honduras, whether by air or land, is a relatively painless process. Arriving by air, you'll be given immigration and customs forms on the plane. After disembarking, you'll pass through immigration first; there's a line for residents and one for foreigners (*extranjeros*). There is no fee to enter, and tourists are typically issued 90-day tourist cards. You will be given a thin slip of paper – don't lose it, you'll need it when you exit the country. After passing through immigration, collect your bags and pass through customs.

As in many Latin American countries, customs inspections are conducted at random. All passengers queue up to press a mechanical button; if the red light comes on you get inspected, if it's green you go through. Of course, customs officers may choose to inspect your bags anyway, so it's worth acting and dressing a bit sharp.

Most people entering by land do so at El Florido, Guatemala near Copán Ruínas. Other busy crossings are Corinto, Guatemala, and El Amatillo or El Poy, El Salvador. A smaller number cross from Nicaragua. The drill is the same at all the crossings: go through the exit procedures for the country you're leaving, then present your passport at the Honduran office or window. There is no fee to enter the country, but some officers charge US\$3 simply because they can.

You can extend your tourist visa once for another 90 days for US\$20 at almost any immigration office. In fact, the smaller offices tend to be faster and friendlier than the ones in Tegucigalpa or San Pedro Sula.

### Passport

All foreign visitors must have a valid passport to enter Honduras. Be sure you have room for both an entry and exit stamp, and that your passport is valid for at least six months beyond your planned travel dates. For special visa requirements, see opposite.

### AIR

Frequent direct flights connect Honduras with all the Central American capitals and many destinations in North America, the Caribbean, South America and Europe. Most international flights arrive and depart from the airports at Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula; there are also direct flights between the USA and Roatán, coming from Houston, Miami and Atlanta. A charter flight from Milan, Italy also arrives in Roatán once a week.

### Airports & Airlines

Honduras has three international airports: San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa and Roatán.

## HONDURAS TRANSPORTATION



Of the three, San Pedro Sula is the busiest. In addition, La Ceiba has a small domestic airport and there are airstrips in Utila, Guanaja, and throughout La Moskitia.

**Aeropuerto Golosón** (LCE; ☎ 443 3925) La Ceiba's airport, just west of town.

**Aeropuerto Internacional Ramón Villeda Morales** (SAP; ☎ 668 8880) San Pedro Sula's airport, located 15km east of town.

**Aeropuerto Internacional Tocontín** (TGU; ☎ 234 2702) Tegucigalpa's airport, located within the city limits.

**Aeropuerto Juan Ramón Galvez** (RTB) Roatán's airport, located just east of Coxen Hole.

Domestic and international carriers servicing Honduras include:

**Aerolíneas Sosa** (NSO; Map p81; ☎ in San Pedro Sula 550 6545, in Tegucigalpa 233 5107, in La Ceiba 443 1894, in Roatán 445 1658; www.laceibaonline.net/aerososa/sosaingl.htm)

**Air France** (AF; Map pp72-3; ☎ in Tegucigalpa 236 0029; www.airfrance.com)

**Atlantic Airlines** (ZF; Map pp72-3; ☎ in San Pedro Sula 557 8088, in Tegucigalpa 237 8597, in La Ceiba 440 2343, in Roatán 445 1179; www.atlanticairlines.com.ni)

**American Airlines** (AA; ☎ in Honduras 800 220 1414, in San Pedro Sula 553 3508, in Tegucigalpa 220 7585; www.aa.com)

**Continental Airlines** (CO; Map p81; ☎ in San Pedro Sula 557 4141, in Tegucigalpa 220 0999, in Roatán 445 0224; www.continental.com)

**Copa Airlines** (CM; ☎ in Tegucigalpa 235 5610; www.copaair.com)

**Delta Air Lines** (DL; ☎ 550 1616; www.delta.com)

**TACA/Isleña** (TA; Map p81; ☎ 516 1061 in San Pedro Sula, in Tegucigalpa 236 8222, in La Ceiba 441 3191, in Roatán 445 1088; www.taca.com)

**SAMI** (☎ in La Ceiba 442 2565, ☎ in Brus Laguna 433 8031)

### Tickets

It goes without saying that, for independent travelers, the Internet has most of the best travel deals. Flying Monday to Thursday is generally cheaper.

### Canada

**Expedia** (☎ in US & Canada 888 397 3342; www.expedia.ca)

**Travel Cuts** (☎ 800-667-2887; www.travelcuts.com) Student travel specialist.

**Travelocity** (☎ 877 282 2925, in Ottawa 613 780 1431; www.travelocity.ca)

## France

**Anyway** (☎ 0892 893 892; www.anyway.fr)

**Lastminute** (☎ 0892 705 000; www.lastminute.fr)

**Nouvelles Frontières** (☎ 0825 000 747; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr)

**OTU Voyages** (www.otu.fr) Student and youth travel specialist.

**Voyageurs du Monde** (☎ 01 40 15 11 15; www.vdm.com)

## Germany

**Just Travel** (☎ 089 747 3330; www.justtravel.de)

**Lastminute** (☎ 01805 284 366; www.lastminute.de)

**STA Travel** (☎ 01805 456 422; www.statravel.de)

Specializes in travelers under 26.

**www.travelocity.de** (089 27276 555)

## Italy

**CTS Viaggi** (☎ 06 462 0431; www.cts.it) Student and youth travel specialist.

## Netherlands

**AirFair** (☎ 020 620 5121; www.airfair.nl)

## Scandinavia

**Kilroy Travels** (☎ in Norway 815 59 633; www.kilroytravels.com)

## Spain

**Barceló Viajes** (☎ 902 116 226; www.barceloviajes.com)

**Viajes Zeppelin** (☎ 902 384 253; www.v-zeppelin.es)

## United Kingdom

Discount air travel is big business in London. Advertisements for many travel agencies appear in the travel pages of the weekend broadsheet newspapers as well as *Time Out*, *Evening Standard*, and the free online magazine **TNT** (www.tntmagazine.com).

**Bridge the World** (☎ 0870 444 7474; www.b-t-w.co.uk)

**Flight Centre** (☎ 0870 890 8099; flightcentre.co.uk)

### DEPARTURE TAX

Honduras levies a departure tax of US\$30 for people flying out of the country, which includes US\$5 in immigration and airport fees; it is payable in cash – US dollars or lempiras – after you've checked in but before you pass through security. For departures by land or sea, there is no departure tax.

**Flightbookers** (☎ 0870 814 4001; www.ebookers.com)

**Journey Latin America** (☎ 020 8747 3108; www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk)

**North-South Travel** (☎ 01245 608 291; www.northsouthtravel.co.uk) Part of the profits are donated to projects in the developing world.

**Quest Travel** (☎ 0870 442 3542; www.questtravel.com)

**STA Travel** (☎ 0870 160 0599; www.statravel.co.uk)

Specializing in travelers under 26.

**Trailfinders** (☎ 020 7937 1234; www.trailfinders.co.uk)

**Travel Bag** (☎ 0870 890 1456; www.travelbag.co.uk)

## United States

Discount travel agents in the USA are known as consolidators. San Francisco is the ticket-consolidator capital of the country, although some good deals can be found in Los Angeles, New York and other big cities.

**Amex Travel** (www.itn.net)

**Cheap Tickets** (☎ 888 922 8849; www.cheaptickets.com)

**Expedia** (☎ 800 397 3342; www.expedia.com)

**Lowest Fare** (☎ 800 678 0998; www.lowestfare.com)

**Orbitz** (☎ 888 656 4546; www.orbitz.com)

**Smarter Travel** (☎ 617 886 5555; www.smarterliving.com)

**STA Travel** (☎ 800 781 4040; www.sta.com)

Specializing in travelers under 26.

**Travelocity** (☎ 888 709 5983; www.travelocity.com)

## LAND

### Bus

Ordinary buses do not cross the border, which means you have to cross on foot and pick up another bus on the other side. However, several bus lines offer international service, including **Tica Bus** (www.ticabus.com), **King Quality** (www.kingqualityca.com), **Hedman Alas** (www.hedmanalas.com) and **El Rey Express** (www.reyexpress.net). Between them, they offer service from Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula to San Salvador, Guatemala City, Antigua (Guatemala), Tapachula (México), Managua (Nicaragua), San José (Costa Rica) and Panama City.

### Car & Motorcycle

Most rental car agencies (p318) do not allow you to drive out of Honduras. Avis is the exception, though be sure that this is clear in your contract and that the vehicle remains covered by insurance.

### El Salvador

The main crossings into El Salvador are at El Poy (see p157) and El Amatillo (see p102);

**BORDER CROSSINGS**

International borders in Central America tend to be busy, dirty and a bit dodgy. You're sure to be harangued by money changers when you arrive; if you need to change money, have it ready in a separate pocket and calculate ahead of time roughly what you expect to receive. Changers make a fair profit simply on mathematical trickery, believe it or not. You probably won't get a great rate, but don't be afraid to negotiate. Watch your bags at all times.

Border officials are notoriously corrupt, though they tend not to bother travelers, preferring bigger fish like truck drivers, importers etc. Crossing the border is supposed to be free, but you may be charged a fee to leave or enter Honduras; assuming it's a small amount – around US\$3 – it's best to just pay and move on. If it's a large amount, ask to see the regulation in writing, and say you want a receipt, either of which may discourage the agent from pursuing it.

Always be respectful and dress your best at the border; searches are very rare, but are most likely to occur if you have a disheveled appearance, which might encourage guards to stop and search.

there is a third crossing south of Marcala, but because of a longstanding border dispute, there is no Salvadoran immigration post there. There's no one to stop you, either, but entering here is technically illegal and you can be fined if your status is discovered. Some travelers have crossed into El Salvador as far as Perquín, Morazán, and returned to Honduras by the same crossing with no problem. Nevertheless, if you plan to go further or stay longer than a few days, it is best to use one of the official crossings. However, a final agreement between the two countries seemed very much in the works at the time of publication – ask around for the latest.

**BUS**

From Tegucigalpa, Tica (US\$15, 6½ hours) and King Quality (US\$28 to US\$41, six to seven hours) offer direct service to San Salvador. King Quality has service from San Pedro Sula as well (US\$28 to US\$41, 6 hours).

**Guatemala**

To Guatemala, the main crossings are at El Florido (see p145), Agua Caliente (see p145) and Corinto.

**BUS**

From Tegucigalpa, King Quality has the most convenient service to Guatemala City, with just a two-hour layover in San Salvador (US\$53 to US\$74 one way, 14 hours). Tica Bus has cheaper service (US\$26 one way) but includes an overnight in San Salvador. From San Pedro Sula, you can take **El Rey Express** (www.reyexpress.net) for US\$26 (8½

hours), or the much nicer **Hedman Alas** (www.hedmanalas.com) for US\$45 to US\$59 (eight hours), which has continuing service to Antigua. You can also catch the Hedman Alas bus in La Ceiba, Copán Ruínas or San Pedro Sula's airport.

**Nicaragua**

There are three Nicaraguan borders crossings in southern Honduras, at Las Manos, La Fraternidad/El Espino and Guasaule (see p102), and a fourth in La Moskitia, at Leimus (see p298).

**BUS**

All international buses to Managua pass through Tegucigalpa and use the Las Manos crossing via Danlí. Service is offered by Tica (US\$20, eight hours) and King Quality (US\$25 to US\$37, seven to eight hours). In La Moskitia, there are daily buses from Puerto Lempira to Leimus.

**SEA**

If you arrive or depart from Honduras by sea, be sure to clear your paperwork (visa, entry and exit stamps) immediately with the nearest immigration office.

**Belize****FERRY**

The only regularly scheduled passenger boat service between Honduras and another country is a small boat operated by **Gulf Cruz** (☎ 984 9544, 982 6985). It runs twice weekly from Puerto Cortés to Dangriga (US\$35, two hours) and Belize City (US\$55, 3½ hours). See p194 for details.



## El Salvador

### MOTOR BOAT

There is no regular boat service to El Salvador but it is possible to hire a fisherman in Amapala to take you across the Golfo de Fonseca to La Unión, El Salvador.

## GETTING AROUND

### AIR

Domestic flights are surprisingly affordable, and flying can be a good way to save some time if your schedule is tight. Of the airlines listed in the previous section, Sosa, Atlantic, Isleña and SAMI offer domestic services.

There are three or more daily flights to Roatán, fewer to Utila and Guanaja; most originate in San Pedro with a stop in La Ceiba.

You can also fly to La Moskitia, and within the region once you get there. All flights go through La Ceiba; when we passed through, Sosa had daily flights to Puerto Lempira (p299) and three flights weekly to Brus Laguna. Atlantic also has daily departures to Puerto Lempira, but is less reliable.

SAMI is a private operation with just one pilot and a couple of tiny planes. Service is semiregular at best – don't plan any tight schedules around SAMI flights. Still, it is a convenient and affordable way to get around the vast Moskitia region; stops include Palacios, Brus Laguna, Ahuas, Wampusirpi and Puerto Lempira.

### BICYCLE

Mountain biking around Honduras is not common, which is not to say it wouldn't be a great adventure, although there are plenty of lightly trafficked dirt roads through beautiful terrain. Some of the highways in Olancho are known for roadside robberies – thieves may not know what to think of a cyclist, but better to play it safe and avoid

#### DEPARTURE TAX

There is a US\$3 departure tax to fly within Honduras. It is payable in cash after you've checked in but before you pass the security checkpoint.

those areas. Try Ruta Lenca and parts of the north coast, instead.

### Rental

Bike rental is still uncommon in Honduras. There are rental outfits in Tela (p204), and mountain-biking tours and rentals in La Ceiba (p214). A few hotels also offer bicycles for guest use. Expect to pay US\$10 to US\$20 per day.

### BOAT Ferry

Two comfortable air-conditioned passenger ferries, the MV *Galaxy II* and the *Utila Princess*, serve Roatán (US\$16, one hour; see p243) and Utila (US\$22, one hour; see p272) respectively. There is no service between the two islands – you have to go via La Ceiba. There is no scheduled service to or from Guanaja.

### Motorboat

In La Moskitia, almost all transportation is along the waterways, including the long ride up to Las Marías (p292) where a number of popular outings begin. You will also take motorized canoes from town to town in La Moskitia, and across one or more of the region's huge lagoons.

### BUS

Buses are an easy and cheap way to get around in Honduras. Service usually starts very early in the morning – at 3am or 4am on some routes – but may end by early evening, or even late afternoon. Buses between Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula run later. *Microbuses* or *rapiditos* are smaller minivan-type buses that cover some routes, and tend to go faster and leave more frequently than regular buses.

### Classes

On major bus routes, you'll often have a choice between taking a *directo* (direct) or *ordinario* (ordinary), also known as *parando* or *servicio a escala*. The *directo* is almost always worth the extra money, even on short trips. *Directos* can be twice as fast as regular buses, which stop frequently to let passengers on and off.

Deluxe buses offer even faster service between Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, Copán Ruínas, La Ceiba and Trujillo, and

use modern air-conditioned buses (with service including movies and soft drinks). Fares on *ejecutivo* (executive) or *servicio de lujo* (luxury service) buses are often double those on *directos*, and sometimes more, but can be a worthwhile splurge for long trips.

King Quality and Hedman Alas even have 'super-deluxe' seats on international buses, with almost fully reclining seats and additional food and drink service, all in a special area below the main cabin.

Contrary to common wisdom, chicken buses are targeted for robbery more often than the direct or deluxe lines, mainly because there are more opportunities for ne'er-do-wells to board. You don't have to avoid chicken buses altogether – they're often your only option – but do try using direct and deluxe buses whenever possible.

### Costs

Buses are very affordable. *Directo* fares include: US \$6 for Tegucigalpa–San Pedro Sula (4½ hours); US\$4.80 to US\$5.50 for San Pedro Sula–Copán Ruínas (three hours), US\$2.50 for La Ceiba–Tela (1½ hours).

### Reservations

Reservations aren't usually necessary and are rarely taken, even on *ejecutivo* buses. For travel during Semana Santa (the week preceding Easter), however, you should buy your ticket a day or two in advance, which assures you a spot and saves you the time and hassle of waiting in line in a jam-packed bus terminal.

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

### Bring Your Own Vehicle

Bringing your own car into Honduras can be a headache, mostly due to all the fees and paperwork. Arriving at the border you'll be swarmed by *tramitadores*, young men who help you through the morass and are worth the expense. Travelers report widely different experiences and costs – from US\$20 to US\$150 and from an hour to all day – depending mostly on the number and amount of bribe money it takes. Get to the border early and bring plenty of cash (though try not to pull out a huge wad, of course). As frustrating as the process can be, be patient and never insult a customs officer.

### Driver's License

In general, foreign drivers can drive a car using their home driver's license for up to 30 days. Be sure your license is valid and won't expire while you're on the road. As with all important documents, make a copy of your license and stash it in a safe place.

### Fuel & Spare Parts

Gas is expensive in Honduras, at least compared to the US. It costs around US\$3.50 to US\$4 per gallon (about 4L), and is sold in diesel, 'plus' and the higher grade 'premium'. Annoyingly, many gas stations don't offer plus so you're forced to pay extra for premium. Luckily, there are many gas stations in both urban and rural areas.

Finding spare parts is not usually a problem, unless you're driving a very uncommon vehicle. Toyotas are extremely common in Honduras, so you'll have an easier time repairing them than any other brand.

### Rental

Rental cars are available in all the major cities and on Roatán. Prices start at around US\$30 per day for an economy car and US\$50 for midsize cars or larger ones. Remember that renting at the airport typically costs 10% to 15% more than in town simply because of airport taxes. Rental agencies include the following.

**Advance Rent A Car** (☎ in La Ceiba 441 1105, in San Pedro Sula 552 2295, in Tegucigalpa 235 9531; www.advancerentacar.com)

**Arena Rent a Car** (☎ in Roatán 445 1882; arenacarrental@yahoo.com)

**Avis** (☎ in Roatán 445 0122, in San Pedro Sula 553 0888, in Tegucigalpa 239 5712; www.avis.com)

**Budget** (☎ in Tegucigalpa 235 9528; www.budget.com)

**Caribbean Rent a Car** (☎ in Roatán 455 6950; www.caribbeanroatan.com)

**Econo Rent-a-Car** (☎ in Tegucigalpa 235 8582; www.econorentacar.net)

**Hertz** (☎ in San Pedro Sula 668 3156, in Tegucigalpa 238 3772; www.hertz.com)

**Molinari Rent A Car** (☎ in La Ceiba 443 0055, in San Pedro Sula 553 2639, in Tegucigalpa 237 5335; molinarirentacar@yahoo.com)

**National/Alamo** (☎ in Tegucigalpa 220 5000 ext 7814; national.hond@multivisionhn.net)

### Insurance

Insurance is required on vehicles in Honduras; if you're renting, it will be included

in the rate. A few companies – like **Advance Rent a Car** (www.advancerentacar.com), with offices in all the large cities – will allow you to waive the collision damage insurance if you have coverage through your Visa or MasterCard. This can save you US\$10 per day or more. If you think you might rent a car in Honduras, take the time before you arrive to familiarize yourself with the terms of your credit card coverage. Be sure to ask if the insurance covers dirt roads and pickup trucks.

### Road Conditions

Honduras' main highways are paved and well maintained, and seem to improve every month. (The busy CA-5, which connects San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa is being widened and straightened, which makes a big difference.) Away from the highways, road conditions range from excellent to disastrous. The rainy season can make traveling on dirt roads tough, since many develop deep, hungry mudholes. Always ask about road conditions before setting out, especially if you're using a secondary road.

### Road Rules

Basic road rules here don't differ much from the US or most European countries. A few things to remember: it is illegal to turn right at a red stoplight, and seat belts are required for the driver and front-seat passenger at all times. Many towns and cities have a confusing system of one-way streets though, which are often unmarked.

There are a number of police checkpoints on the highways, which may look like military stops because Honduran police wear camouflage. If you're not waved down, keep rolling through. If you're stopped, you'll be asked for your driver's license and the vehicle registration card. Be polite and respectful at all times. Very rarely, you'll be asked for money; you are not obligated to give any, and you can usually get away with politely saying you can't. You can also give the officer 50/100 lempira – US\$3 to US\$5 – and be on your way. Mostly the money is used for gas for the police truck.

### HITCHHIKING

Hitchhiking – *tomando un jalón*, or 'taking a hitch' – is never entirely safe in any country in the world, and we don't recommend

it. However, it is very common in much of Honduras, especially in rural areas like the Ruta Lenca and along the North Coast. Peace Corps volunteers, for example, do it frequently. Generally you just stand on the side of the road and wave down a pickup truck. You should offer the driver money, though many drivers will not accept it. Usually there are locations where people go to get *un jalón* – ask at your hotel.

### LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

#### Boat

In La Moskitia, boats are the local transport of choice, as there are few roads and fewer bridges. On Roatán, water taxis are the best way to get from West End to West Bay, and around the town of Oakridge. *Lanchas* (motorboats) are also used to ferry passengers to and from Isla El Tigre, in southern Honduras.

#### Bus

It is highly recommended that travelers do not use city buses, especially in San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa. Not only is pickpocketing and petty theft common, but public buses are occasionally targeted by area gangs for what amounts to a 'toll' for passing through certain neighborhoods. With taxi fares so low (and *colectivo* taxi fares even lower) buses just aren't worth the risk.

#### Moto-taxi

Small Thai-style three-wheeled moto-taxis have burst onto the Central American scene, going from unknown to ubiquitous in just a few years. Loud and slightly obnoxious, they are cheaper and more plentiful than taxis, making them a good option when you're lugging bags to or from the bus terminal on a hot day.

#### Taxi

Taxis don't have meters in Honduras, but in most towns there is a fixed one-ride fare, usually from US\$0.50 to US\$1 per person. You can expect longer journeys in a major city to cost around US\$4. In many cities, *colectivos* (shared taxis) ply a number of prescribed routes, costing around US\$0.50 per passenger. In all cases, confirm the price of the ride before you get into the cab. If it seems exorbitant, negotiate or simply wait for another cab.

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