



# HONDURAS



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## 1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

**Location:** Central America.

Instituto Hondureño de Turismo

PO Box 3261, Edificio Europa, 5to Piso, Colonia San Carlos, Avenida Ramon Cruz, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

**Tel:** 222 2124 or (1 800) 222 8687 (toll free; within Honduras only). Tel/Fax: 222 6621. E-mail: ihturism@hondutel.hn

**Web site:** <http://www.hondurasinfo.hn>

Embassy of the Republic of Honduras and Consulate

## 2 GENERAL

115 Gloucester Place, London W1U 6JT

**Tel:** (020) 7486 4880. Fax: (020) 7486 4550. E-mail: hondurasuk@lineone.net

**Opening hours:** 1000-1600 Monday to Friday.

British Embassy

Apartado Postal 290, Edificio Banexpo, 3er Piso, Colonia Payaqui, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

**Tel:** 232 0612 or 232 0618. Fax: 232 5480.

**E-mail:** british.embassy@tegucigalpa.mail.fco.gov.uk

Embassy of the Republic of Honduras

3007 Tilden Street, Suite 4M, NW, Washington, DC 20008

**Tel:** (202) 966 7702 or 966 5008 or 966 4596. Fax: (202) 966 9751. E-mail: embhondur@aol.com

**Web site:** <http://www.hondurasemb.org>

Embassy of the United States of America

Avenida La Paz, Apdo 3453, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

**Tel:** 238 5114. Fax: 236 9037. Web site:

<http://www.usembassy.state.gov/posts/h01/wwwhmain.html>

Embassy of the Republic of Honduras

151 Slater Street, Suite 805, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H3

**Tel:** (613) 233 8900. Fax: (613) 232 01393.

**Consulate in:** Montréal.

Canadian Consulate

Apartado Postal 3552, Centro Financero Banexpo, Colonia Payaqui, Boulevard San Juan Bosco, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

**Tel:** 232 4551 ext. 319 (commercial section); ext 323 (consular section). Fax: 232 8767. E-mail: tglpa@dfait-maeci.gc.ca

**Country dialling code:** 504.

General

**Area:** 112,492 sq km (43,433 sq miles).

**Population:** 6,338,000 (1997).

**Population Density:** 56.3 per sq km.

**Capital:** Tegucigalpa. Population: 897,000 (1996).

**Geography:** Honduras shares borders in the southeast with Nicaragua, in the west with Guatemala, and in the southwest with El Salvador. To the north lies the Caribbean and to the south the Pacific Ocean. The interior of the country comprises a central mountain system running from east to west, cut by rivers flowing into both the Caribbean and Pacific. The lowlands in the south form a plain along the Pacific coast. The Gulf of Fonseca in the southwest contains many islands which have volcanic peaks. The large fertile valleys of the northern Caribbean lowlands are cultivated with banana plantations. However, large areas of land in Honduras are unsuitable for cultivation. The majority of the population lives in the western half of the country, while the second-largest concentration of people is in the Cortés area which extends northwards from Lake Yojoa towards the Caribbean.

**Government:** Republic. Head of State and Government: President Carlos Flores Facussé since 1998.

**Language:** The official language is Spanish. English is widely spoken by the West Indian settlers in the north and on the Bay Islands off the Caribbean coast.

**Religion:** Roman Catholic majority.

**Time:** GMT - 6.

**Electricity:** 110/120/220 volts AC, 60Hz.

**Communications:**

**Telephone:** IDD is available. Country code: 504. Outgoing international code: 00.

**Mobile telephone:** Celtel is the main network provider (web site: <http://www.celtel.net>). No GSM network exists at present.

**Fax:** Empresa Hondureña de Telecomunicaciones (HONDUTEL) offers a service.

**Internet/E-mail:** ISPs include Hondudata (web site: <http://www.hondudata.com>) and NetSys (web site: <http://www.netsys.hn>). E-mail can be accessed in cybercafés in major towns.

**Telegram:** Ordinary and letter telegrams (minimum 22 words) may be sent.

**Post:** Airmail to Western Europe takes between four and seven days. Post office hours: 0800-1200 and 1400-1800 Monday to Saturday.

**Press:** Daily newspapers are in Spanish, and include El Herald, La Prensa, La Tribuna and El Tiempo. The weekly Honduras This Week is published in English.

**BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies:** From time to time these change.

**BBC:**

MHz17.8415.226.1955.975

### 3 PASSPORT

|                   | <i>Passport Required?</i> | <i>Visa Required?</i> | <i>Return Ticket Required?</i> |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>British</b>    | Yes                       | No                    | Yes                            |
| <b>Australian</b> | Yes                       | No                    | Yes                            |
| <b>Canadian</b>   | Yes                       | No                    | Yes                            |
| <b>USA</b>        | Yes                       | No                    | Yes                            |
| <b>OtherEU</b>    | Yes                       | No                    | Yes                            |
| <b>Japanese</b>   | Yes                       | No                    | Yes                            |

**PASSPORTS:** Passport valid for 6 months from date of arrival required by all.

**VISAS:** Required by all except the following:

- (a) nationals referred to in the chart above;
- (b) nationals of Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Malta, Monaco, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Poland, San Marino, Switzerland, Uruguay and Vatican City;
- (c) those in transit continuing their journey within 48 hours.

**Note:** (a) Visa exemptions are for a stay of up to 30 days. Prolongation can be obtained in Honduras from the Immigration Authorities for another 60 days. (b) For certain nationalities, authorisation will have to be obtained from Honduras before a visa can be issued.

**Types of visa and cost:** Tourist and Business: £10.

**Validity:** Up to 30 days.

**Application to:** Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy); see address section for details.

**Application requirements:** (a) Valid passport for up to six months from entering Honduras. (b) 1 passport-size photo. (c) Completed application form. (d) Return ticket. (e) In some cases, travellers may be asked to provide bank records, travel schedule and proof of residence. (f) For business visas, company letters giving full details and confirming financial responsibility for the applicant.

**Working days required:** 1-2, unless approval is needed from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Honduras, which can take 3 weeks to 1 month.

**Exit permit:** Required by all visitors staying longer than 90 days.

## 4 MONEY

**Currency:** Lempira (La) = 100 centavos. Notes are in denominations of La500, 100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1. Coins are in denominations of 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 centavos. A real is one-eighth of a Lempira, and is used colloquially, though there is no such coin.

**Currency exchange:** Sterling cannot normally be exchanged, except at branches of Lloyds Bank; visitors should therefore take US Dollars.

**Credit cards:** MasterCard, American Express, Diners Club and Visa are accepted. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

**Travellers cheques:** To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in US Dollars.

Exchange rate indicators

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Lempira against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date May '00 Aug '00 Nov '00 Feb '01 £1.00 21.86 22.10 21.71 22.20 \$1.00 14.73 14.73 15.00 15.20

**Currency restrictions:** There are no restrictions on the import and export of local or foreign currency, but it is advisable to declare US Dollars.

**Banking hours:** 0900-1500 Monday to Friday (some banks open until 1800). Some branches 0900-1200 Saturdays.

## 5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported into Honduras without incurring customs duty: 200 cigarettes or 100 cigars or 450g of tobacco; 2 bottles of alcoholic beverages; a reasonable amount of perfume for personal use; gifts up to a total value of US\$50.

## 6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Apr 12 Maundy Thursday. Apr 13 Good Friday. Apr 14 Day of the Americas. Apr 16 Easter Monday. May 1 Labour Day. Sep 15 National Day. Oct 3 Morazán Day. Oct 12 Columbus Day. Oct 21 Armed Forces Day. Dec 25 Christmas Day. Jan 1 2002 New Year's Day. Apr 14 Day of the Americas. Mar 28 Maundy Thursday. Mar 29 Good Friday. Apr 1 Easter Monday. May 1 Labour Day. Sep 15 National Day. Oct 3 Morazán Day. Oct 12 Columbus Day. Oct 21 Armed Forces Day. Dec 25 Christmas Day.

## 7 HEALTH

*Special Precautions    Certificate Required*

|                          |     |   |
|--------------------------|-----|---|
| <b>Yellow Fever</b>      | Yes | 1 |
| <b>Cholera</b>           | Yes | 2 |
| <b>Typhoid and Polio</b> | Yes | - |
| <b>Malaria</b>           | 3   | - |
| <b>Food and Drink</b>    | 4   | - |

**1:** A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from all travellers arriving from infected areas.

**2:** Following WHO guidelines issued in 1973, a cholera vaccination certificate is no longer a condition of entry into Honduras. However, cases of cholera were reported in 1996 and precautions are essential. Up-to-date advice should be sought before deciding whether these precautions should include vaccination as medical opinion is divided over its effectiveness.

**3:** Malaria risk, in the benign vivax form, exists throughout the year in 80% of the municipalities, especially the rural areas. Transmission risk is low in the remainder, which includes the cities of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula.

**4:** All water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should first be boiled or otherwise sterilised. Milk is unpasteurised in rural areas and should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised, but make sure that it is reconstituted with pure water. Avoid dairy products that are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Pork, salad and mayonnaise may carry increased risk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled. Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information, consult the Health appendix. Visceral leishmaniasis and hepatitis A occur.

**Health care:** Health insurance is recommended. There are hospitals in Tegucigalpa and all the large towns. Mosquito nets are recommended for coastal areas.

Travel - International

**AIR:** American Airlines operates daily flights to Honduras with a one-night stopover in Miami. Other airlines serving Honduras include Continental Airlines, Iberia, Copa Airlines and Taca International Airlines. A sales tax of 10% is payable on international bookings for tickets issued in Honduras.

**Approximate flight times:** From Tegucigalpa to London is 12 hours 30 minutes. (There are no direct flights to London; connections are generally via Miami, Houston or Los Angeles). From Tegucigalpa to New York is 8 hours.

**International airport:** Tegucigalpa (TGU) (Toncontin) is 5km (3 miles) southeast of the city. Taxis and buses are available to the city. Airport facilities include bar, restaurant, duty-free shop, bank, car hire (Avis and Budget), post office and first aid facilities. There are also international airports at San Pedro Sula (SAP) (Dr Ramón Villeda Morales), at La Ceiba (LCE) (Goloson) and at Roatan (RTB) (Dr Juan Manuel Galvez).

**Departure tax:** US\$25 is levied on all passengers aged 12 years and over.

**SEA:** The principal ports on the Caribbean coastline are Puerto Cortés, Tela, La Ceiba and Trujillo. There is a ferry service between Port Isabel in Texas and Puerto Cortés. The principal

ports on the Pacific coastline are Amapala and El Henecan. Ships operated by Harrison Line, Carol Line, Cie Generale Transatlantique, Hapag-Lloyd, The Royal Netherlands Steamship Company and vessels owned or chartered by the United Fruit Company and Standard Fruit Company sometimes have limited passenger accommodation.

**RAIL:** There are no rail services between Honduras and neighbouring countries.

**ROAD:** Road routes run from El Salvador and Nicaragua via the Pan-American Highway, and from Guatemala on the Western Highway. Visas must be obtained before the journey is undertaken. Border crossings can be fraught with long delays. Bus: The Ticabus company runs international services to all Central American capitals, but these comfortable coaches are often booked days in advance.

Travel - Internal

**AIR:** The three local airlines (Isleña Airlines, Sosa Airlines and Rollins Air) operate daily services which link Tegucigalpa and other principal towns. Islena Airlines and Sosa Airlines run services to Utila, the cheapest Bay Island (off the Caribbean coast). Over 30 small airfields handle light aircraft and commercial aviation.

**Departure tax:** There is an airport tax of 2.5% on domestic journeys for tickets issued in Honduras.

**SEA:** Ferries operate between ports on the Pacific and Caribbean coastlines. For details, contact local port authorities. There are sailings from La Ceiba and Puerto Cortés to the Bay Islands several times a week. Arrangements must be made with local boat owners.

**RAIL:** There are only three railways, confined to the northern coastal region and mainly used for transport between banana plantations.

**ROAD:** Traffic drives on the right. There is a total of 14,600km (9052 miles) of roads of which 8364km (5228 miles) are all-weather, and 2543km (1586 miles) are paved. However, internal air transport is much more convenient for business visitors. An all-weather road exists from Tegucigalpa to San Pedro Sula, Puerto Cortés, La Ceiba and towns along the Caribbean coast, as well as to the towns around the Gulf of Fonseca in the south. Bus: Local lines run regular services to most large towns, but the services are well used and booking in advance is essential. On the whole the services are very cheap. Taxi: Not metered, and run on a flat rate within cities. For other journeys, fares should be agreed before commencing journey. Car hire: Self-drive cars are available at the airport. Documentation: Both international and foreign driving licences are accepted.

**JOURNEY TIMES:** The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from Tegucigalpa to other major cities/towns in Honduras.

|      |      |                   |      |      |               |      |      |              |      |       |
|------|------|-------------------|------|------|---------------|------|------|--------------|------|-------|
| Air  | Road | Comayagua         | -    | 1.00 | Siguatepeque  | -    | 2.30 | San Pedro S. |      |       |
| 0.25 | 3.30 | Choluteca         | -    | 2.30 | La Ceiba      | 0.35 | 5.00 | Bay Islands  | 0.40 | 7.00* |
|      |      | Sta Rosa de Copán | 6.00 | -    | Puerto Cortés | -    | 4.00 |              |      |       |

**NOTE\*:** Includes sea crossing of 2 hours.

## 8 ACCOMMODATION

**HOTELS:** Reasonable hotels are available in both Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula (where the rates are lower, but standards equivalent to those in the capital are maintained). Elsewhere both rates and standards of comfort are somewhat lower. The Instituto Hondureño de Turismo (see address section) can supply lists of hotels with accommodation details. Grading: Hotels are split into three categories (upper, middle and lower) according to standard.

## 9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

**Ecotourism:** Ecotourism: Honduras's exciting, unspoilt landscape and the multitude of flora and fauna that can be found there offer much interest to nature lovers. There are wildlife refuges and national parks all over the country. Cloud forests, mountains, dry forests, pine forests and huge rivers are among the natural features to be enjoyed. The coastal wetlands are home to monkeys and manatees, and visitors can take boat rides through the swamps to view these animals. Toucans and orchids are amongst the attractions of the cloud forests. The centre for activities focusing on eco-tourism is La Ceiba and, particularly, the nearby Pico Bonito National Park, which offers excellent opportunities for hiking through the rainforest. For birdwatching, the premier destination is Lake Yojoa in the west of the country. Wildlife enthusiasts can also take boat trips along the winding canals of the Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge, which provides a habitat for numerous animal species (including monkeys, alligators and manatees) and dozens of waterbirds.

**Watersports:** Watersports: There is excellent diving in the clear waters of the Bay Islands, teeming with coral and tropical fish. The gateway to these islands is La Ceiba which has gained an excellent reputation amongst the many diving destinations in the Caribbean. Some hotels include hire of equipment in their price. Safe swimming can be enjoyed on both seaboard, where beautiful sandy beaches are found. There is good fishing on both coasts and Lake Yojoa offers some of the best bass fishing in the world. Whitewater rafting is popular on the Río Cangrejal in Pico Bonito National Park and day trips can be arranged from La Ceiba.

**Golf:** Golf is an increasingly popular sport, with courses available in most major populated areas. Football is the most popular spectator sport.

## 10 SOCIAL PROFILE

**Food & Drink:** There is a wide variety of restaurants and bars in Tegucigalpa and the main cities. Typical dishes include curiles (seafood), tortillas, frijoles, enchiladas, tamales de elote (corn tamales), nacatamales, tapado, yuca con chicharron and mondongo. Typical tropical fruits include mangoes, papayas, pineapples, avocados and bananas.

**Nightlife:** There are cinemas and discotheques in the main cities.

**Shopping:** Local craftsmanship is excellent and inexpensive. Typical items include woodcarvings, cigars, leather goods, straw hats and bags, seed necklaces and baskets. Shopping hours: 0800-1200 and 1330-1800 Monday to Friday, 0800-1700 Saturday.

**Special Events:** A great many religious celebrations and local festivals take place throughout the year in Honduras. For a full list, contact the Embassy of Honduras. The following events are celebrated during 2001:

Jan 15 2001 Santa Lucia Fair, Morazán. Feb 28 Orange Festival, El Paraíso. May 3 Festival of the Holy Cross, Tela and Triunfo de la Cruz. May Grand National Carnival in Honour of St Isidro, La Ceiba. May 29 Mango Festival, El Paraíso. Jun 23-29 June Fair, Cortés. Jul 22-29 Potato Festival, Intibuca. Aug 15 Puerto Cortés Fair. Aug 25 Maize Carnival, El Paraíso.

**Social Conventions:** There are strong Spanish influences, but the majority of the population are mestizo, mainly leading an agricultural way of life with a low standard of living. Many rural communities can still be found living a relatively unchanged, traditional lifestyle. Social courtesies should be observed. It is customary for a guest at dinner or someone's home to send flowers to the hostess, either before or afterwards. Conservative casual wear is widely acceptable with dress tending to be less conservative in coastal areas. Beachwear and shorts should not be worn away from the beach or poolside. Men are required to wear dinner jackets for formal social occasions. Hotels, restaurants and shops include a 12% sales tax on all purchases. Tipping: Service is included in most restaurant bills. In hotels, cafeterias and restaurants 10% of the bill is customary where service is not included. Porters and cab drivers should be tipped when helping with the luggage (La0.50 to La1). Hotels, travel agencies and tour operators charge an extra 4% for tourism services.

## 11 BUSINESS PROFILE

**Economy:** The economy of Honduras, which is one of the poorest nations in the western hemisphere, relies on agriculture and timber. The main agricultural products are bananas, beans, coffee, cotton, maize, rice, sorghum and sugar; there is also some dairy and beef farming, and a trade in shellfish. Apart from wood and wood products, light industries produce a variety of consumer goods. There is a small mining industry which produces lead, zinc and silver for export. The economy draws heavily on various forms of US-sponsored aid - both direct and multilateral (through the IMF, Inter-American Development Bank and others). Export earnings have been badly hit in recent years by low world prices and slack demand within the Central American Common Market, of which Honduras is a member. The USA is the principal market for exports, followed by Germany, Belgium and the UK.

**Business:** It is customary to address a professional person by his or her title, particularly on first meeting or during early acquaintance. Business people are generally expected to dress smartly and some dining rooms require men to wear a jacket. There are very few local interpreter or translation services available. Though many businessmen throughout the country also speak English, correspondence should be in Spanish. Office hours: 0800-1200 and 1400-1700 Monday to Friday; 0800-1100 Saturday. Government offices: 0830-1200 and 1300-1630 Monday to Friday.

**Commercial Information:** The following organisations can offer advice: Cámara de Comercio Hondureño-Americana, Sección Comercial, Hotel Honduras Maya, Apdo1838, Tegucigalpa (tel: 232 7043; fax: 232 2031) or Cámara de Comercio e Industrias de Tegucigalpa, Bulevar de Centroamérica, Apdo 3444, Tegucigalpa (tel: 232 8110; fax: 232 0159; e-mail: camara@ccit.hn).

## 12 CLIMATE

The climate is tropical, with cooler, more temperate weather in the mountains. The north coast is very hot with rain throughout the year, and though the offshore breezes temper the climate, the sun is very strong. The dry season is from November to April and the wet season runs from May to October.

**Required clothing:** Lightweight cottons and linens; warmer clothes are recommended between November and February and in the mountains. Waterproofs are needed for the wet season.

## 13 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

**History:** Christopher Columbus landed on the Honduran coast in 1502. Twenty years later, Spanish troops under the conquistador Cortés occupied the territory. When Spain's Central American empire was dissolved 300 years later, Honduras was grouped into an ill-fated United Provinces of Central America. Subsequent efforts to unify the region eased the way for the gradual domination of the whole isthmus by the USA. Recent Honduran politics have revolved around the land reform issue. The army, which has on the whole supported the major landowners who oppose any redistribution, has controlled the Government for most of the last 40 years. Honduras' defence policy has been closely allied with the USA, especially in relation to the 'Contra' war in Nicaragua, and the Americans have made a considerable military commitment to Honduras during the 1980s (not always to the liking of the Hondurans). In August 1989, Honduras was the key to a successfully concluded peace agreement under which the Nicaraguan Contra forces would be demobilised. With the Contra issue settled, the Honduran government could now concentrate on the economy which was the major problem for the country's President, Rafael Leonardo Callejas of the Partido Nacional (PN), who won the November 1989 presidential elections. At the legislative elections held at the same time, the PN's great rival, the Partido Liberal (PL), won a small majority of seats in the National Assembly. Four years later, the PL won both the presidency and a majority in the legislature. Carlos Roberto Reina Idiaquez became Honduras' new president. The Government was dogged by repeated outbreaks of civil and labour unrest and by persistent pressure from both within and outside the country to address the numerous human rights abuses which still continued despite the return to civilian government. Wary of antagonising the military, the Reina government moved carefully on the latter issue. Of more immediate concern was the mounting public dissatisfaction with Reina's austere economic measures. These culminated in the July 1994 occupation of the National Assembly, as a result of which the Government finally granted a package of rights and social assistance to the indigenous population. These were wholly inadequate and an urban guerrilla campaign began under an organisation calling itself Hambre (Hunger). Civil unrest continued up until the elections of November 1997 at which the PL retained control of both the presidency, through Carlos Roberto Flores Facusse and the National Assembly, in which they won 67 seats. There has since been some improvement in the state of the Honduran economy, but the Government is still faced by widespread opposition from the poorer sections of society. The military, at present, are fairly quiescent having more or less come to terms with their loss of political influence. Honduran foreign policy during much of the 1990s was heavily influenced by economic matters, in particular the conclusion of free trade and other economic agreements with El Salvador and Guatemala. Relations with a post-Sandinista Nicaragua remained very cool, and a result of the continuing dispute over territorial rights in the Gulf of Fonesca.

**Government:** Under the provisions of the 1982 constitution, a civilian executive President is elected by universal suffrage every four years. There are also 4-yearly elections for the

unicameral 130-seat National Assembly. In 1997 the National Assembly passed a constitutional amendment, reducing the legislature from 128 to 80 members; this was ratified in the next National Assembly of November 1997.

## 14 OVERVIEW

**Country Overview:** Honduras shares borders with Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador. To the north lies the Caribbean and to the south the Pacific Ocean. The interior of the country comprises a central mountain system, cut by rivers flowing into both the Caribbean and Pacific. The lowlands in the south form a plain along the Pacific coast. The large fertile valleys of the northern Caribbean lowlands are cultivated with banana plantations.

Tegucigalpa, the capital, was originally founded as a mining camp in 1524. Visitors should visit the city's impressive parks, particularly Concordia, where models of Copan's Mayan architecture are displayed.

La Ceiba is a major banana port, looking to tourism as a future major industry. There are good hotels and beaches, and an international airport, one of the city's major assets.

Trujillo was once a thriving port but today offers old Spanish buildings, a fascinating pirate history and superb tropical beaches.

Local dishes include curiles (seafood), tortillas, frijoles, enchiladas and mondongo.

There are cinemas, nightclubs and some discotheques in the main cities.

More countries : <http://www.umzugs.com>