

Destination Information Guide

Honduras



Big Five Tours & Expeditions, USA
1551 SE Palm Court, Stuart, FL 34994
Tel: 772-287-7995 / Fax: 772-287-5990
800 BIG FIVE (800-244-3483)
www.bigfive.com & www.galapagos.com
Email: info@bigfive.com

Big Five Tours & Expeditions Ltd. Canada
80 Corporate Drive Unit 311
Scarborough, Ontario M1H 3G5 Canada
Tel: +416-640-7802 / Fax: 1-647-463-8181
Toll Free: 888- 244-3483
www.bigfivetours.ca Email: info@bigfivetours.ca

Welcome to the World of Big Five!

The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Elevation: 3260 feet Latitude: 14 03N Longitude: 087 13W

Average Temperature

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	72	69	70	73	75	76	74	73	74	74	72	70	69

Average High Temperature

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	81	77	80	84	85	85	82	81	82	82	80	78	76

Average Low Temperature

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	63	59	60	62	65	66	66	65	65	65	64	62	61

La Ceiba, Honduras

Elevation: 10 feet Latitude: 15 44N Longitude: 086 52W

Average Temperature

Years on Record: 17

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	79	74	75	77	80	82	83	81	82	81	79	77	76

Average High Temperature

Years on Record: 17

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	84	80	81	83	85	87	88	87	87	86	84	82	81

Average Low Temperature

	YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	73	69	69	71	74	76	77	75	76	75	74	72	70

WEATHER

The climate of Honduras is tropical but is tempered by the higher elevations of the interior. The low-lying coastal regions are warmer, and the humidity is oppressive. The dry season prevails from November to May; the average annual rainfall ranges from 1,000 mm (40 in) in some mountain valleys to 2,500 mm (100 in) along the northern coast. On the Caribbean coast it rains practically all the time and floods can occur on the north coast, impeding travel. April is the month of real heat, especially outside the mountainous area of the capital.

TIME ZONE & FLIGHTS

Honduras is GMT - 6 hours.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passports: For international travel, a passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing at least 3 blank pages are necessary.

Visas: Many countries require travelers to obtain visas prior to arrival. Big Five Tours & Expeditions has appointed Trivisa to process required visas for our passengers. You can find the necessary forms from Trivisa's website at: www.trivisa.com. Please use account code JP1551, and follow the directions.

Important: Even if you do not need a visa prior to departure, please check your passport well in advance of departure to insure:

- 1) It is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa/entry stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Upon arrival, proceed through immigration and baggage claims and customs. Once you are outside customs, Big Five personnel or their representatives will assist you with your baggage and escort you to your hotel. They will also help with hotel check-in. **International Departure tax:** US\$34 per person for all passengers. Exempt are transit passengers leaving within 12 hours.

CUSTOMS INTO HONDURAS

The following goods may be imported into Honduras by US residents without incurring customs duty: 200 cigarettes, 100 cigars or a pound of tobacco, 1 liter of alcohol (33.8 fl. oz.), 1 bottle of perfume and personal gifts.

U.S. CUSTOMS

Your personal exemption is \$800. There are also limits on the amount of alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products you may include in your duty-free personal exemption. Regulations frequently change. For current information and list of restricted / banned items, please contact your nearest Customs office, write the U.S. Customs Service at Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044., or visit the Customs & Border Protection website at www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/home.xml.

HEALTH

International travelers should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. No required immunizations are currently required for entering Honduras. Be prepared to take precautions against sunburn with sunscreen and lip balm.

Yellow Fever: Yellow fever inoculation is required if one of the following applies:

- If you are coming from any area other than the United States, Europe, or Canada.
- If you plan on visiting more than one country. A yellow fever vaccination certificate, however, is required from travelers over one year of age coming from countries with infected areas.

Malaria risk is a variable risk throughout the year in 80% of the municipalities, especially in the rural areas such as Roatán and the other Bay Islands. Mosquito nets are recommended for coastal areas

Other Risks: Dengue fever and American trypanosomiasis (Chagas disease) may occur. Hepatitis B is present. HIV/AIDS is a growing problem.

If you wear prescription glasses or contact lenses, it is advisable to bring an extra pair and cleaning fluid. In places of altitudes above 8,000 feet, you may suffer digestive problems, light dizziness or headache. We recommend that you only eat light foods the first day or two, and avoid alcohol. Sudden dietary changes, especially on the first day or two, may result in digestive problems, often leading to headache, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Please be careful.

Note: If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Also, ask your doctor for a note detailing the drugs you are taking. For inspections done at Customs, keep all medications in their original containers.

Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel. *Please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. To receive these documents, call 404-332-4565 and follow the prompts. You can also get information on the CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/travel.

CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.*

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

LUGGAGE

*For general baggage information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials.*

In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations. Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 100 pounds divided into two bags, plus one carry-on personal item which should weighed no more than 22 pounds. Further

restrictions may apply for charter flights. This will vary according to destination. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final documents.

MONEY

Currency: Lempira (HNL; symbol Lps) = 100 centavos (cents). Notes are in denominations of Lps 500, 100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1. Coins are in denominations of 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cent. Currency rate is Lps. 19.03 x \$ 1.00.

Currency Exchange: Pounds Sterling cannot normally be exchanged; visitors should therefore take US dollars, which are easily exchanged in banks, major hotels, airports and bureau de change. The bureau de change usually offer a quicker service and better rate than banks.

Credit/Debit Cards and ATMs All major credit cards (MasterCard, Visa) are accepted in the larger tourist areas and at most restaurants, hotels and stores. In smaller stores, credit cards are less accepted and usually charge a fee of 2.5%. We therefore recommend taking US dollars in cash and/or traveler's checks. Traveler's checks can be exchanged at most banks; American Express are the most accepted. Some banks also allow cash advances. ATMs usually require a Visa-card or Cirrus network cards. For other types of debit cards try the ATM of the bank BAC/Credomatic.

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. Amerindian dialects are also spoken.

ELECTRICITY & MEASUREMENTS

110 volts, 60 MHz is found throughout the country. Don't forget your adapter if you use 220 volts electric devices.

FOOD & DRINK

All water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Do not drink tap water.

Stick with bottled water and other beverages. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth, cleaning contacts or making ice should first be boiled or otherwise sterilized. Milk is NOT pasteurized 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 milk that was not boiled. 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.

Local Dishes: 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*. In the coastal region, dishes such as salad are prepared with a variety of tropical fruits including mangos, papayas, pineapples, avocados and bananas.

TIPPING

Tipping should be done at your discretion and as a reward for good or exceptional service.

For general tipping guidelines please refer to:
www.cntraveler.com/travel-tips/travel-etiquette/2008/12/Etiquette-101-Tipping-Guide

SHOPPING

Honduras produces a number of typical handicrafts, including woodcarving and wooden musical instruments, woven junco basketry, seed necklaces, embroidery and textile arts, leather goods and ceramics. Colorful woven baskets and hats are the specialty at Santa Barbara. Brightly painted ceramics (especially depicting roosters) are for sale along the road from El Amatillo to Nacaome. Pottery is also a specialty of the Lenca people of western Honduras. Paintings of typical mountain villages, with cobblestone lanes winding among houses with white adobe walls and red tile roofs can be found in many places, including Tegucigalpa, Valle de Angeles and San Pedro Sula. Tobacco is grown in Honduras, and Honduran cigars are said to be some of the finest. Danli has several cigar factories where you can buy good hand-rolled cigars. In Santa Rosa de Copan, the

“La Flor de Copan” cigar factory also makes excellent hand-rolled cigars. Ask for a free tour to see the cigars being made.

Honduras is gaining a reputation for its mahogany and cedar wood carvings (the small chests are especially beautiful) and for its primitive paintings of mountain villages. In the gift shop at the Copan ruins, you'll find small stone replicas of stela. You can also purchase jade jewelry, statues and other carvings that local artists have faithfully reproduced from artifacts recovered by archaeologists.

Shopping hours: Mon-Fri 0800-1200 and 1330-1800, Sat 0800-1700.

A 12 percent value added tax (“ISV”) is added to all retail items except medicine.

GEOGRAPHY

Honduras is the knee of Central America, bordered to the south by Nicaragua and El Salvador and to the west by Guatemala. It has a 644km (399mi) long Caribbean coast and a 124km (77mi) pipsqueak of a Pacific coast. The Caribbean Bay Islands and, further northeast, the distant Swan Islands are both part of Honduran territory. Three-quarters of the country is composed of rugged hills and mountains, ranging from 300 to nearly 2850m (984 to 9348ft) in height. Lowlands are found only along the coasts and in major river valleys. Deforestation is occurring at a rate of 3000 sq km (1170 sq mi) a year, which, if continued, will turn the country into a treeless desert within the next 20 years. However, there are still largely untouched areas, especially in the Mosquitia region. Fauna includes jaguars, armadillos, wild pigs, monkeys and alligators and abundant bird life such as toucans, herons and kingfishers.

Tegucigalpa: The capital of Honduras is a busy, noisy city nestled into a bowl-shaped valley nearly 3280 feet above sea level. It has a fresh and pleasant climate, and the surrounding ring of mountains is covered in pine trees. The name Tegucigalpa means 'silver hill' or 'silver mountain' in the local dialect, and it was bestowed when the Spanish founded the city as a mining center in 1578. Fortunately, the locals call the city Tegus for short, saving foreigners the embarrassment of mispronouncing the full name. Tegucigalpa became the capital in 1880. Most of the good restaurants are on the Tegucigalpa side of the river.

HISTORY

There is evidence of Maya settlement since at least 1000 BC at Copán in western Honduras, but like other Maya city-states this was abandoned mysteriously around 900 AD. Columbus set foot on the American mainland for the first time at Trujillo in northern Honduras in 1502 and named the country after the deep water off the Caribbean coast ('Honduras' means depths). The Spanish settled in Trujillo in 1525, but soon became interested in colonizing the cooler highlands. They established a capital at Comayagua in central Honduras in 1537, and this remained the political and religious center of the country for 350 years, until Tegucigalpa became the capital in 1880. The Indians resisted Spanish colonialism, and, by some accounts, almost managed to drive the colonizers from the mainland. The chief of the Lenca tribe, Lempira, led 30,000 Indians against the Spanish, but was treacherously murdered at peace talks in 1538, and by the following year resistance was crushed. Gold and silver were discovered near Tegucigalpa in 1570, attracting British and Dutch pirates to the Trujillo area. Around 1600, the Spanish estimated that Roatán was home to 5000 British buccaneers. Trujillo was sacked in 1643 by Dutch pirates and was not resettled by the Spanish until 1787.

While Spain concentrated its energies on the interior, the British were attracted to the Caribbean coast by stands of mahogany and brought black settlers from Jamaica and other West Indian islands to harvest the timber. Following an appeal by chiefs of the Miskito Indians, a British protectorate was declared over the entire coastal region extending from Honduras into Nicaragua. This lasted until 1859, when the area was relinquished to Honduras. Independence from Spain was granted in 1821. Honduras briefly became part of independent Mexico, but then joined the Central American Federation. Conflicts between conservatives and liberals led to a break from the union, and Honduras declared independence as a separate nation in 1838. Since then, power has alternated between two political factions and a succession of military regimes. There have been hundreds of coups, rebellions, electoral 'irregularities' and Machiavellian manipulations since independence. The most infamous was the incursion by North American filibuster William Walker in 1860, whose ill-fated attempt to take over Central America ended with defeat in Trujillo.

Where William Walker failed to gain control of Honduras for the USA, US fruit companies succeeded. Around the end of the 19th century, land on Honduras' fertile north coast was purchased by US companies on generous terms, in order to ship bananas to the southern USA. Three US companies (Standard Fruit, Cuyamel Fruit and United Fruit) eventually owned 75% of all Honduran banana groves. Bananas accounted for 66% of all Honduran exports in 1913, making the companies extremely powerful players in Honduran politics. Each company allied themselves with domestic political factions, and the rivalries between the three US fruit companies shaped Honduran politics in the first half of the 20th century.

During the 1980s, Honduras was surrounded by the turmoil in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala and became a haven for Somoza's National Guardsmen (known as Contras) when Sandinistas overthrew the Nicaraguan dictator. Strong US influence, aid and military assistance maintained stability in Honduras throughout this period, as the country became the focus of US policy and strategic operations in the region. Huge sums of money and thousands of US troops were funneled into the country as the US conducted provocative operations to destabilize Nicaragua, using Nicaraguan refugee camps in Honduras as bases for their covert war. The US was also training the Salvadoran military at Salvadoran refugee camps inside Honduras. Public outcry, political instability, the exposé of the Iran-Contra scandal and the knowledge that 12,000 Contras were operating from Honduras, resulted in anti-American demonstrations that drew crowds of 60,000 people in Tegucigalpa. The government finally reexamined its role as a US military base, refused to sign a new military agreement with the US and told the Contras to leave Honduras. With the election of Chamorra as president of Nicaragua in 1990, the Contra War ended and the Contras left Honduras.

Since then, Honduras' problems have been largely economic, with falling exports, a growing foreign debt and a shrinking GNP per capita. Aid from the US has shrunk since Honduras is no longer the linchpin of US Central American policy. Trade with Europe is now twice that of trade with the US, but Honduras is still vulnerable to volatile price

fluctuations of banana and coffee prices. The center-right Liberal Party is headed by President Carlos Flores Facussé who was elected in November 1997. Flores has strong ties to the US and is co-owner of the newspaper *La Tribuna*.

In November 1998, international aid and relief workers poured into Central America to help with the recovery from the devastation left by Hurricane Mitch. Honduras was the hardest hit by Mitch's

rampage. The three days of rain that followed Mitch caused landslides and floods that buried towns and destroyed over 100 bridges throughout the country. When the Río Choluteca flooded, it devastated Tegucigalpa, the capital, sweeping things downriver and leaving behind an ocean of mud. By 2000, much of Mitch's mess was cleaned up, but the environmental practices that exacerbated the flooding, such as farming and rapid urban expansion, continue.

SUGGESTED READING LIST

Many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Insight, the Rough Guide, etc., many books relating this destination. Here are a few selections we thought might interest you. Longitude books at <http://www.longitudebooks.com> has an extensive collection of books, searchable by country.

THE MOSQUITO COAST

by Paul Theroux, David Frampton (Illustrator)

In a breathtaking adventure story, the paranoid and brilliant inventor Allie Fox takes his family to live in the Honduran jungle, determined to build a civilization better than the one they've left. Fleeing from an America he sees as mired in materialism and conformity, he hopes to rediscover a purer life. But his utopian experiment takes a dark turn when his obsessions lead the family toward unimaginable danger.

COPAN: THE RISE AND FALL OF A CLASSIC MAYA KINGDOM

by David L. Webster, Nancy Gonlin, Ann Corinne Freter

Webster's case study reconstructs and evaluates the sociopolitical system and culture history of a world-famous Classic Maya Center in the highlands of Western Honduras, whose great temples, palaces, and carved monuments have been investigated since the 1830's. Using material from a series of archaeological excavations begun in 1975 that focused on reconstructing the entire Copan Kingdom, this book presents for the first time an interpretation of the political, demographic, and agricultural history of the entire region. Providing an extensive review of the methods used to reconstruct Copan's history, the book helps students develop a basic understanding of how archaeologists reconstruct ancient social systems.

SEVEN NAMES FOR THE BELLBIRD: CONSERVATION GEOGRAPHY IN HONDURAS / EDITION 1

by Mark Bonta

"Seven Names for the Bellbird showcases the deep-rooted local traditions of bird appreciation and holds them up as a model for sound management of the environment. Through his recounting of local lore, author Mark Bonta makes the interaction between culture and avifauna in Latin America a key to better understanding the practice of biodiversity protection. He offers a significant contribution to the scarce anthropological and geographical literature on human-environment relationships in Central America and also provides wonderful stories of native birds and their human observers." "Bonta uses the concept of 'conservation geography' - the study of human beings and their landscapes, with natural resource conservation in the forefront - to advance his argument. He describes many cases in which local individuals and their traditional knowledge of birds contribute to a de facto variety of bird conservation that precedes or parallels 'official' bird protection efforts." This book is not offered as 'proof' that all birds have happy futures in the Neotropics. Bonta recognizes the ravages of both human pressures and natural disasters on the birds and forests. But he shows that in many instances, birds are safe and even thrive in the presence of local people, who 'celebrate them just as often as they persecute them.'"

DIVING HONDURAS AND BELIZE

by Roberto Rinaldi, Roberto Rinaldi
(Photographer)

Both experienced divers and beginners will delight in this colorful guide to the underwater paradise of Honduras and Belize, one of the few books to offer in-depth coverage of this remarkable corner of the Caribbean Sea. With over 400 nautical miles of sea and 800 miles of coastline, the neighboring countries of Honduras and Belize are linked by the second largest coral reef in the world. The reef has reached an extraordinary level of development, and the thousands of cays supply divers with sensational encounters and lively sea floors. This guide, complete with practical information, spectacular images, and full color three-dimensional maps, supplies divers with all they need to make the most of their trip.

Whether a diver likes exploring sunken shipwrecks or colorful thick coral masses, swimming with dolphins or sharks, or admiring unusual fish and plants, this guidebook has tours for all tastes, and covers 32 of the most exciting dive sites. Easy-to-follow maps and descriptions of each site guide the diver in discovering its treasures, while information on what to see at certain times of the day or night helps with the overall planning of tours. Beautifully illustrated cognitive species cards of 106 fish and plants round out this thoroughly engaging guidebook.

SEVEN NAMES FOR THE BELLBIRD: CONSERVATION GEOGRAPHY IN HONDURAS

by Mark Bonta

Seven Names for the Bellbird showcases the deep-rooted local traditions of bird appreciation and holds them up as a model for sound management of the environment. Through his recounting of local lore, author Mark Bonta makes the interaction between culture and avifauna in Latin America a key to better understanding the practice of biodiversity protection. He offers a significant contribution to the scarce anthropological and geographical literature on human-environment relationships in Central America and also provides wonderful stories of native birds and their human observers." "Bonta uses the concept of 'conservation geography' - the study of human beings and their landscapes, with natural resource conservation in the forefront - to advance his argument. He describes many cases in which local individuals and their traditional knowledge of birds contribute to a de facto variety of bird conservation that precedes or parallels 'official' bird protection efforts." This book is not offered as 'proof' that all birds have happy futures in the Neotropics. Bonta recognizes the ravages of both human pressures and natural disasters on the birds and forests. But he shows that in many instances, birds are safe and even thrive in the presence of local people, who 'celebrate them just as often as they persecute them.'