

The Magical Allure of Honduras

One of Central America's most biologically diverse countries, Honduras is also one of its least commercially developed. The outstanding natural beauty of this place—its towering mountain ranges, misty cloud forests, lagoons, tropical rivers and pristine beaches—combine to make Honduras an ideal haven for adventurous travelers seeking something other than the confines of established tourist destinations.

A treasure house of flora, fauna, and geologic wonders to be sure, Honduras also boasts impressive and ancient architectural wonders. Copán, one of the great cities of the Classic Maya, lay hidden in the rainforest for nearly a thousand years. Today, you can visit its carefully restored ruins, explore the surrounding natural habitats, and at day's end return to rejuvenate and relax at some of the most pleasing and unique small properties in Central America.

For travelers seeking adventure, nature, and comfort, The Lodge at Pico Bonito provides all that and then some. Set in the lush rainforest of Pico Bonito National Park, just 30 minutes from La Ceiba International Airport, Pico Bonito is an architectural gem built of native wood and stone. Discerning guests will be thrilled with the excellent service, delicious cuisine, and warm hospitality offered here. The luxuriously appointed guest cabins are tucked amid coffee and cacao trees. A short stroll takes you to the property's forests and a butterfly farm. If you're feeling a bit more energetic, the activities desk can arrange tours of nearby ruins, excellent birding trips, horseback riding, whitewater rafting, sea kayaking, and snorkeling amidst the coral reefs of the Bay Islands.

Hacienda San Lucas, nestled in the hills above the Copán Valle, is a 100-year-old, family-owned hacienda offering guests candle-lit rooms that are nothing short of enchanting. Here, owner Flavia Cueva has created a

truly special and spiritual retreat. And this wonderful place offers more than just food for the soul. The hacienda's chef, Carlos Rivera, prepares inspired regional cuisine before your eyes in their rustic, open kitchen. With the Hacienda as your base, you can ride on horseback to the town of Copán, along the river, or up into the hills to visit local villages. Nature trails reward hikers with spectacular views of the Copán Valley. This magical place even boasts its own on-site



Mayan ruins, Los Sapos. This mysterious ceremonial site's true purpose still confounds archaeologists. After a day of exploring, as you swing and sway in your hammock, you'll likely find yourself contemplating your good fortune in discovering this place.

Located in western Honduras, a five-minute drive from the town of Copán

Ruinas, is the award-winning Macaw Mountain Bird Park & Nature Reserve. Set in one of the area's last old-growth forests, the reserve is replete with mahogany, gumbo limbo, chico zapote, Spanish cedar and fig trees. Many of the birds here were rescued by American conservationist Mandy Wagner. She began rescuing parrots and toucans out of devotion to these intelligent, social creatures, which she housed at her home on the Honduran bay island of Roatán. By the 1990s, her collection had grown to include more than 15 bird species.

Lloyd Davidson, a biologist and long-time Roatán resident, inherited the birds in 1994. By 2000, the collection had grown to more than 100 birds comprising more than 20 species, and Davidson purchased a beautiful tract of land for them. After several years of detailed designing and building, he and his business partner, Pat Merritt, moved the birds by charter airplane in July 2003 and opened Macaw Mountain several months later. Many of the birds have been donated or rescued and they are housed, fed and cared for here. Seeing so many varieties of these tropical birds in one place is a rare and unforgettable experience.

For more information on these destinations, visit:

The Lodge at Pico Bonito: www.picobonito.com
 Hacienda San Lucas: www.haciendasanlucas.com
 Macaw Mountain Bird Park
 & Nature Reserve: www.macawmountain.com

To learn more about Honduras, contact:

The Honduras Institute of Tourism
 Toll free: 1-800-410-9608; Tel. 305-461-0601/02; or
 visit on the web at: <http://www.letsghonduras.com>

