



often TOUR INFORMATION NOTES FOR HONDURAS

These notes are designed to help you prepare for your tour. Please read carefully.

ENTERING HONDURAS: United Kingdom citizens will need a passport which is valid for six months beyond the intended length of stay. A visa is not required by British citizens. Citizens of other countries should contact their nearest Honduras Embassy or Consulate for entry requirements.

Tourist cards are required and obtained upon entry at the border customs or from your airline.

The most cost-effective airline routing to Honduras is via the USA, with possibly an overnight stop en route in a US airport hotel, followed by a morning flight to Tegucigalpa the following day.

FLYING VIA THE USA: United Kingdom citizens will need a passport which is valid for six months beyond the intended length of stay. All nationalities require a machine-readable passport if travelling to the USA under the visa waiver programme (see below).

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has made changes to the immigration requirements. Travellers seeking to travel under the Visa Waiver Program must pre-apply for authorisation using the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (**ESTA**). **ESTA** must be completed online via their website.

Having an **ESTA** is a mandatory requirement and applications should be made online at least 72 hours before departure via their website <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> as although the majority of responses are immediate, it can take 72 hours for approval in some cases. There is a small fee to pay as a processing charge followed by a small fee when authorisation has been granted.

For further information, or if you don't have access to the internet, please contact the Embassy of the United States in London on 020 3608 6998.

Citizens of other countries should contact their nearest US Embassy for entry requirements.

Once you've applied for your ESTA please remember to print it out and take a copy of that document onto the aircraft with you.

All visitors to the USA's first port-of-entry have their index fingerprints taken by an electronic scanner at Passport Control. You will also have your photograph taken at the same time. Although the process itself only takes a few minutes the queue can be quite long if several flights arrive at the same time!

If your flight itinerary means you do not have to spend the night in the USA en route to Honduras, on arrival at your US gateway airport you will need to reclaim your checked-in luggage, go through security, then hand your luggage back to the airline staff who will be waiting nearby to give assistance. Once your luggage is back with the airline please proceed to the departure gate for your onward flight.

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get a replacement if your original is lost or stolen. Obviously you should keep the photocopy in a separate bag to the originals.

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INTRODUCTORY MEETING: There will be an introductory meeting over dinner at our hotel near the entrance to La Tigra National Park. This informal meeting affords the leader the opportunity to introduce everyone to each other and to let you know generally what to expect on the trip – pace of the tour, daily routine, etc. If everyone arrives before midday, as has happened in the past, we'll have the introductory meeting over lunch and begin birding in La Tigra National Park.

LEAVING HONDURAS: A departure tax is due at the airport in San Pedro Sula although sometimes it is often included in the price of your air ticket. This fee is about USD\$40.00. The tour leader or ground agent who transfers you to the airport will give further details about this.

TIME DIFFERENCE: Honduras is six hours behind Greenwich Mean Time or seven hours behind British Summer Time.

CURRENCY: The Honduran currency is *lempira*; U.S. dollars are widely acceptable, including for your departure tax so there is no real need to use local currency. As the tour price includes all travel, hotel and main meal costs during the tour itself, you need only bring enough money to cover items of a personal nature and meals/accommodation at hotels en route to Honduras.

LANGUAGE: The major language in Honduras is Spanish, though English is widely spoken in the cities and at our lodges. Our local leaders are native Spanish speakers with excellent English skills. One of the managers at Pico Bonito is an American. Understanding even a few basic words of Spanish will add interest to your trip, so you might consider bringing a small English-Spanish dictionary or phrase book.

CLIMATE: Rain showers are always possible, especially near the coast and at Panacam. At La Tigra National Park the lows should be in the 50°s and highs in the 70°s. Elsewhere it will be warmer. A sweater, light jacket, and possibly light gloves will probably add to your comfort at La Tigra.

Weather in the Honduran lowlands (Pico Bonito and other nearby locations) during the tour is likely to be somewhat warm with temperatures ranging from the 60s or low 70's in early morning to the 80°s or even low-90°s in the afternoon. Rain showers are possible at any time and the air is constantly heavy with humidity, so light, quick-drying clothing is recommended. Even in April northern fronts (*nortes*) arrive with cooler temperatures, strong winds and steady rain.

PACE OF THE TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE: This tour is not overly strenuous with the exception of one or two hikes at Pico Bonito, one at La Tigra, and possibly one at Panacam. At Pico Bonito one hike is moderately strenuous and the other, if we do it, involves crossing a stream followed by a steep uphill section. The walk during the full day at La Tigra National Park involves a fairly steep hike of a little more than a mile, but the walk is cool and shaded and we allow all morning for it. Most days will begin with breakfast at about 05.00-05.30, once at 04.00 or slightly earlier (departure) to allow early enough arrival for good birding. All of our walks will be at a slow pace with opportunities to pause for a rest, but you should still be in good physical condition to participate in all activities; there is, however, usually the option of sitting out one or more of the hikes, and afternoons can often be spent relaxing at the lodges. On one morning we will be departing Pico Bonito well before dawn for our trip to the Aguan Valley. We will breakfast along the way in Olanchito. Throughout we will have sit-down midday meals in a hotel or restaurant, followed by more relaxed birding in the afternoon and dinner.

On the strenuous hikes at La Tigra and Pico Bonito, sturdy footwear is essential and a walking stick will be very helpful. These walks require a good degree of fitness.

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HEALTH: It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting. Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure

You should make sure that all routine vaccinations are up to date, including a tetanus booster. Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and Typhoid vaccinations or boosters are also recommended for those who are not already protected against these diseases. Yellow fever is not a disease risk in Honduras, but travellers arriving from a country where yellow fever is present must present proof of vaccination.

At the time of writing we are advised that there is no malaria risk in areas we visit on the tour. However malaria does exist in rural areas below 5000' elevation. This may include areas we visit on day trips from Pico Bonito. You should discuss with your doctor the best preventive measures to take. Using insect repellent and wearing long trousers and sleeves to prevent mosquito bites is also effective as a preventive measure. Useful information on all aspects of malaria, including how to reduce your chances of being bitten can be found at the website <http://www.preventingmalaria.info>.

Biting insects and arachnids are typically scarce in the mountains, although mosquitoes and biting gnats can be locally numerous inside the forest at any elevation. Mosquitoes can be numerous in the lowlands, especially at Lancitilla Botanical Gardens. Long sleeves, long trousers and perhaps a head net will ward off most of them. Careful application of repellent provides good protection. In general, a repellent should contain 30% of the active ingredient diethyltoluamide (DEET). Care must be taken as DEET can be corrosive to optics coatings and older rubber-armoring on binoculars and scopes. Camping supply stores carry some reasonably effective alternatives which contain natural products and aren't corrosive.

Products containing tick- and chigger-repelling chemicals are particularly effective. Camping supply stores sell such a product containing permethrin 0.5%. This non-staining, odourless chemical is non-toxic to humans and protective on clothing through several launderings (it must be applied to your clothing a day or two before the tour starts).

The sun can be surprisingly strong, making a hat a necessity at most sites and sunglasses useful.

You should bring adequate supplies of all prescription and special medications, as they are unlikely to be conveniently available in the areas this tour visits. Some travelers to Honduras experience digestive upsets; consult with your physician about the need to bring with you anything beyond over-the-counter diarrhea medication and drink only bottled water and other beverages during your visit.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

ACCOMMODATION: Our hotel in Pico Bonito is said to be one of the most luxurious in the Neotropics. Each room contains a fan and air conditioning and private bathroom facilities. There is a beautiful pool on the grounds for swimming. The lodge at Panacam has an inviting dining and living room, and comfortable porches for watching the forest below. There are fans in the rooms. The rooms at the hotel near the entrance to La Tigra National Park are standard mid-range hotel rooms.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is available at Pico Bonito and Panacam. There is an extra fee for this service.

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ELECTRICITY: Electrical current and plugs at hotels are the same as in the US: 110 v, 60-cycle, parallel prong. An international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

FOOD: The food in Honduras is of excellent quality; indeed, it is almost of gourmet quality at Pico Bonito. Our hotel breakfasts generally consist of eggs, bread, fruit, yogurt, fried plantain, black beans, fresh juice, coffee or tea (decaffeinated coffee is not widely available). Midday meals and dinners usually feature chicken or beef or fish plus tortillas, black beans or pasta.

Sunbird tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regretfully, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to insure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to bring supplemental food with them.

DRINKS: Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (or wine if appropriate) are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition, we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water may also be provided in some rooms where we stay.

INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS: At Pico Bonito Lodge there is Wi-Fi in the rooms only if you have a laptop; smaller (weaker) devices do not work in rooms but do so in the restaurant area. The lodge at Panacam has Wi-Fi in the restaurant area only. The rooms at the hotel near the entrance to La Tigra National Park also have Wi-Fi.

FIELD CLOTHING: Dress is informal throughout the tour. The best approach to the variable climate is to take several layers of clothing that can be added or removed according to changes in temperature. The following items are basic:

Sun hat	Cotton socks
Long-sleeved shirts	Canvas shoes/sandals
Short-sleeved shirts	Sturdy, lightweight hiking boots or shoes
Cotton trousers	Lightweight sweater
Rain and windproof jacket	

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS: You should bring the following:

Notebook and pencil	Alarm clock
Small rucksack/day pack	Sun screen
Torch and spare batteries	Insect repellent
Sun glasses	Plastic bags (rain protection for optics)
Water bottle/canteen	Ear plugs (if you are a light sleeper)
Collapsible hiking stick (optional)	Personal medication and chapstick.
Travel umbrella (very useful when birding in the rainy tropics)	

Optional: Telescope & tripod, camera & film, spare binoculars (in case of loss or damage), spare spectacles, field guide, swimwear. Keep in mind that there are few waterbirds on the tour for 'scope study

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Note: The most effective insect repellents are those containing at least 35% of the active ingredient diethyltoluamide (DEET). The higher the percentage, the greater the effectiveness. However, care must be taken to avoid getting the repellent on to optical equipment as it dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. A reasonably effective alternative, which isn't corrosive, is Mosi-guard, produced by MASTA, and we recommend this. It is available in most high street chemist (including those at the airport). Please make sure you never to spray insect repellent inside the vehicle or when you are standing close to other participants – it may drift on to their optical equipment.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT: The leader will have a telescope, playback equipment, spotlight, first aid kit, maps and copies of important field guides.

LUGGAGE: Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour.

If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that **no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself**. As a general rule, in addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Scenery and memory shots will be plentiful and simple to obtain. Although there will be occasions when bird photography is possible, a birdwatching tour is not normally the best means of pursuing this aim. Bring all your film or memory cards with you as it may be difficult to find precisely what you need during the tour. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture- and dust-proof bags, as a precaution. "Digiscoping" is perfectly compatible with the tour, though it is recommended you bring your own telescope as the leader's telescope is not available for this activity.

There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

TRANSPORT: Transportation during the tour is by air-conditioned minibus with a professional driver. The leader will arrange a seating rotation. Participants should be able to ride in any seat in tour vehicles.

SMOKING: Smoking is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group if possible.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

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If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: There are many general books on travel in Honduras, and reading one will certainly enhance your enjoyment of the trip. Among the best are *Fodor's Honduras*, *The Rough Guide to Honduras*, and *Moon Handbooks: Honduras*.

There are several field guides covering Central American birds and other natural history:

Dunn, J. L. and J. Alderfer. 2011. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Sixth Edition. National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C. One of the top two field guides for North America, more portable than the Sibley guide. *

Howell, Steve N.G. and Sophie Webb. 1995. *A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America*. Oxford University Press. **Recommended. It covers much of, but not all, Honduras.**

Monroe, Burt. L., Jr. 1968. *A distributional survey of the birds of Honduras*. Ornithological Monographs No. 7, Published by the American Ornithologists' Union. This reference is dated but is still a very good distributional reference to the birds of Honduras. We believe it is still available from the A.O.U.

Van Perlo, Ber. 2006. *Birds of Mexico and Central America: (Princeton Illustrated Checklists)*. Princeton University Press. The illustrations are small and aren't the best, but it includes all of the species we are likely to see.

Sibley, David Allen. 2000. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. Arguably the best field guide showing all of North America's birds. Although comprehensive, its larger size makes it difficult to carry into the field. * Update to new edition and include Eastern Guide, which would be the thing to bring.

Note: These guides cover only the birds of North America north of Mexico but they illustrate many northern migrants and winterers not shown in Howell and Webb.

Butterflies:

Glassberg, J. 2007. *Swift Guide to the Butterflies of Mexico and Central America*. Sunstreak Books. Illustrated with photographs; covers most but not all of the butterflies we may encounter (despite the title).

Mammals:

Emmons, L. H. 1990. *Neotropical Rainforest Mammals*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London.

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OBTAINING BOOKS: Most of the field guides and the major ornithological references in print are available by mail order from booksellers specialising in natural history titles.

Natural History Book Service Ltd
Tel: 01803 865913
www.nhbs.co.uk

Subbuteo Books
Tel: 0870 010 9700
www.wildlifebooks.com

WildSounds
Tel: 01263 741100
www.wildsounds.co.uk

MAPS: Maps of the region may be available from:

The Map Shop
Tel: 01684 593146
www.themapshop.co.uk

Stanfords
Tel: 020 7836 1321
www.stanfords.co.uk

NEOTROPICAL BIRD CLUB: Please support this charity which aims to raise money to support conservation projects, encourages an interest in the conservation of birds, and liaises with and promotes the work of existing societies within the region. You will find their contact details and further information about the Club at www.neotropicalbirdclub.org

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses, etc, and your air tickets will be sent to you about three weeks before the start of the tour. Other news will be communicated as necessary. If you have any questions about any aspect of the tour, please contact us.