

The Best of Honduras

Honduras has a little bit of everything: beaches, active adventures, historical sites, indigenous cultures, wildlife, and laidback getaways. I'm often asked, "So, what is the best place to go?" The truth is there is not one destination or activity that is right for everyone. To each his or her own. To help out, over the next few pages I have outlined a list of some of my favorite adventures suitable for everyone from families to hardcore thrill seekers.

1 THE BEST TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

- **Semana Santa** (Comayagua): No festival or celebration in Honduras compares in magnitude and passion to Holy Week in Comayagua. This is a big deal here. Elaborate sawdust carpets called *alfombras*—built during the night and trampled apart the next day—are only a glimpse of what is to come. Expect nothing less than vivacious daily processions and hordes of pilgrims showing their devotion from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. See p. 125.
- **Diving in the Bay Islands** (The Bay Islands): Sharing the world's second largest barrier reef with Belize, the Bay Islands of Honduras provides not only one of the most superb underwater experiences but also one of the cheapest when compared to the certification and rates of the rest of the world. With dive shops on every corner it is hard not to strap on a tank and mask. If you prefer to go sans scuba gear there's always glass-bottom boats, submarines, snorkeling with whale sharks, and a dolphin-training program. See p. 203.
- **Bird-watching:** Trogons, motmots, tanagers, scarlet macaws, boat-billed herons, resplendent quetzals, and toucans are only a small fraction the avian life you will encounter in places such as Lancetilla, Lago de Yojoa, Pico Bonito, Cerro Azul, and Celaque. Some areas of the country have recorded as many as 400 species, a good reason why birders in the know have been flocking to Honduras for years. See p. 48.
- **Traveling in La Mosquitia** (La Mosquitia): Rich with wildlife and home to ethnic groups like the Miskito, Pech, Garífuna, and Tawahkas, Central America's largest tract of rainforest is nothing less than spectacular. Community-based tourism initiatives, run directly in the indigenous villages themselves, assist in your exploration of the swamps, wetlands, grasslands, lagoons, and beaches. If you have a couple of weeks, sign up for a 10- to 14-day rafting expedition on the Río Plátano or Río Patuca. See chapter 11.
- **Seeing the still-smoking Flor de Copán Factory** (Western Honduras): The *Flor de Copán* tobacco factory is world renowned for its production of fine cigars like the Don Melo line. A tour here involves a walkthrough of the factory's heady drying and de-veining rooms and witnessing firsthand the country's most skilled rollers at work. Even if you hate smoking, this is a great chance to mingle with real Hondurans, outside the standard tourist industry. See p. 143.

- **Become a dolphin trainer** (The Bay Islands): Sign up with Anthony's Key Resort on Roatán for full hands-on training to become a bona fide dolphin trainer via their 7-day Dolphin Training 101 course. On Bailey's Key, a private

key near the resort, professional trainers will lead you in a course on bottlenose dolphin behavior, anatomy, and physiology. If you just have a day, a swim, snorkel, or dive with these mischievous mammals can be had. See p. 207.

2 THE BEST CULINARY EXPERIENCES

- **Hacienda San Lucas** (Western Honduras): On a hillside overlooking the Copán valley, this rustic 100-year-old family-owned hacienda dishes out an authentic Maya Chortí five-course candlelight dinner focusing on fresh, local ingredients and revived recipes that are prepared with traditional tools. Their tamales, *ticucos*, corn chowder, and fire-roasted chicken with *Maya adobo* sauce—like mole minus the chocolate—have been celebrated across the international media. If you're really into it the staff will even bring you into the kitchen to make authentic Honduran tamales. See p. 137.
- **Eating a baleada** (The North Coast): The Honduran version of the taco, or *pupusa*, is a corn tortilla with refried black beans and fresh cream. It is the country's iconic snack food and is served in street side stalls and sit-down restaurants almost anywhere you go for less than the price of a local phone call. Spice it up with eggs, chicken, avocado, loroco, or anything else your stomach is growling for. See chapter 9.
- **Lenca recipes at Rinconcito Graciano** (Western Honduras): Lenca recipes passed down through generations not only have been preserved, but also use mostly organic ingredients from local farmers at this small Gracias restaurant in the colonial heart of the city. Many of the dishes, which are served on locally made clay plates, such as *chorocos* (a type of tamale from San Manuel de

Colohete) and *lengua de res* (tongue) are rarely found outside of local homes in the region. The owner is heavily involved with preservation of the colonial history and Lenca culture and is a driving force behind tourism in the region. See p. 150.

- **Garífuna-style dining** (The North Coast): Step into almost any Garífuna village and look for the simple thatched-roof eateries, usually right on the beach, for what will likely be an entire afternoon or evening of food and drinks. Try *tapado*—a seafood stew that combines fish, shrimp, green plantains, achiote, and herbs with coconut milk—or *dulce de coco*—shredded coconut cooked in sugar and formed into bars and sold by the bag. See chapter 9.
- **Lago de Yojoa fish shack strip** (Western Honduras): The dozens of nearly identical shacks right on the highway with almost identical menus and stellar views of the lake and mountains are the unequivocal favorite rest stops for Hondurans traveling between San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa. Each serves fresh fish—often fried whole—caught right from the lake and dished out with a side of plantains. See p. 122.
- **Beer and birds at D&D Brewery** (Western Honduras): Sick of not being able to find a decent pint in Honduras? American Robert Dale decided to brew his own. Now you can drink blueberry soda or a porter at the only microbrewery in the country and chat about the

toucans and motmots you spotted earlier that day. Hungry? Try their real American breakfasts, pancakes, burgers,

burritos, pork chops, and a few Honduran staples. See p. 122.

3

3 THE BEST SMALL TOWNS

- **Miami** (The North Coast): This Miami is about as far away from South Beach as you can imagine. Set on a narrow sandbar between the Caribbean and the Los Micos lagoon in Parque Nacional Jeanette Kawas/Punta Sal, this Garífuna village, just a small collection of thatched huts, has remained unchanged for a couple hundred years. Get there while you can, though, as development around Tela Bay is a serious threat to this and other communities nearby. See p. 166.
- **Raista/Belén** (La Mosquitia): These two side-by-side Miskito communities, set on a small strip of land between the Laguna de Ibas and the Caribbean, have become an unlikely base for exploring the Mosquito Coast. Their very center is a grassy strip of land flanked by houses that serves as a grazing area for horses, a soccer field, and an airstrip. With two good yet surprisingly cheap and unknown ecolodges, deserted beaches, and boat access to explore the monkey- and caiman-rich creeks of Parú, Ilbila, and Banaka, you won't be short on things to do. See p. 250.
- **Santa Lucía and Valle de Ángeles** (Tegucigalpa): These two laidback 16th-century villages, in the mountains near Tegucigalpa, are lined with small handicraft shops, country-style restaurants, outdoor cafes, leafy cobblestone plazas, and colonial churches. Come during the week and you will have the place to yourself. Come on the weekends for a rush of *capitalinos* getting out of the city for some fresh air. See p. 91 and 89.
- **Amapala** (Southern Honduras): With the port that once drove this town on

Isla del Tigre moved to the mainland, a renewed interest in tourism has sprung up in this sleepy fishing village, where you can see as far away as El Salvador and Nicaragua. A homestay program with local families, a few simple hotels, all the seafood you can handle, and the only good Pacific beaches in Honduras are all waiting to be discovered. See p. 101.

- **Gracias** (Western Honduras): While fast food chains and tour buses are blanketing Antigua in nearby Guatemala, Gracias, once the capital of Central America, is still quaint and tranquil, and locals have yet to trade their cowboy hats for North Face jackets. Ongoing restorations are beautifying the city and nearby villages by the day, and expanded hotel options and even a new hot springs facility, the area's second, add to the attractions. Don't forget that Gracias is also the jumping-off point for the colonial churches and traditional culture along the La Ruta Lenca and the cloud forests of Parque Nacional Celacque. See p. 146.
- **East Harbour** (The Bay Islands): Sometimes just called Utila town, the Bay Islands' main population center is an eclectic mishmash of tourist services, dive shops, and typical island architecture. For the backpacker on a budget, this is paradise: cheap accommodations, basement prices for a dive certification, and a nightlife scene that rages well into the night every day of the week. Some stay for weeks, others for months. Some tend bar or become dive masters and never leave. See p. 224.

4 THE BEST HEALTH & SPA RETREATS

- **Hacienda San Lucas** (Western Honduras): Yoga and meditation retreats draw power from the ancient stones of the Mayan ruins not far from Hacienda San Lucas. A new gazebo with sweeping views of the Copán Valley below was built in 2007 specifically to enhance spiritual and health elements at the rustic lodge—and it has worked, though the fine cuisine, cozy accommodations, and abundance of orchids and trees don't exactly hurt the cause. See p. 137.
- **Sante Wellness Center** (The Bay Islands): Not far from Parrot Tree Plantation on Roatán, this is the most complete wellness center in all of Honduras. The Sante Wellness Center has not only daily yoga classes and a certified massage school but also the finest selection of services this side of the reef. Need examples? Try a Chocolate Fondue Massage and Body Wrap, Salt Glow, European Facial, or Noni Wrap. See p. 219.
- **Pampering spa at the Lodge at Pico Bonito** (The North Coast): The perfect way to follow your long hikes in the cloud forests is with a stop in a thatched cabana for a Swedish massage. From here you can hear the song of the birds in the trees and smell the flowers, a setting that most massage tables try to recreate via candles and art. This one is all natural. See p. 187.
- **Thermal baths in Gracias** (Western Honduras): As long as you can appreciate steaming hot water it won't matter whether you visit the public hot springs just outside of town or Posada de Don Juan's nicer, private facilities. It's still a long way from feeling touristy, and you will likely share hot springs in Gracias with only a handful of friendly locals. **Note:** Most rewarding after an intense hike in Celaque National Park. See p. 147.
- **Utopia Village spa or yoga retreats** (The Bay Islands): Isolated on Utila's rather lonely southwestern shore, this funky hotel opened in 2007 and gave the island something that it has long lacked: an element of luxury. Apart from having one of the top diving operations on the island, they opened the first full-scale spa on the island and occasionally organize yoga retreats. See p. 230.
- **Luna Jaguar Hot Springs Resort** (Western Honduras): In the hills outside of Copán, this fantasy-like hot springs and ultimate relaxation park might be a bit too recreated for some, but you cannot deny the pleasure of soaking in dozens of steamy pools all with different temperatures surrounded by tropical green foliage. For added relief, take a massage in their thatched building overlooking a series of misty waterfalls and pools. See p. 135.

5 THE BEST MARKETS & SHOPPING

- **Guamilito Market** (Western Honduras): Products from around the country, as well as El Salvador and Guatemala, fill up literally hundreds of small stalls in the legendary San Pedro shopping stop. You'll find everything from hammocks, T-shirts, and Lenca pottery to cigars, Mayan figurines, jewelry, coffee, Garífuna coconut carvings, and women making tortillas. See p. 110.
- **City Mall** (Western Honduras): The other end of the spectrum from the handicraft market in San Pedro Sula is this luxe Western-style mall with top

international chains and designers. It is one of many malls in San Pedro, though City Mall has the most stores, casual restaurant chains, and even a few souvenir shops. While many have no desire to spend time here on their vacation, others go for the air conditioning and a quick taste of home. See p. 111.

- **Valle de Ángeles** (Tegucigalpa): With dozens of craft shops selling handicrafts from around the country and the region, this idyllic mountain town is your one-stop Honduras shop. When not daydreaming in a sidewalk cafe, gallery hop for everything from leather belts to oversized Honduran hammocks to fine silver jewelry. See p. 88.
- **Yaba Ding Ding** (The Bay Islands): Next to HB Warren in Coxen Hole is one of the best craft shops in all of Honduras. The store stocks one of the most complete collections of Honduran crafts, including Lenca pottery, straw

baskets, weavings from the highlands, Garífuna art, and more. See p. 202.

- **Handicraft markets** (Western Honduras): In Copán Ruínas, the options are plenty for handicraft shopping thanks to numerous small artisan markets and craft co-ops sprinkled all over the cobblestone center. You'll find ceramic masks, stone imitations of Mayan statues, trendy home accessories, jade jewelry, carved wood chests, hammocks, and multicolored woven pants that no one should ever wear. See p. 136.
- **Ceramics on La Ruta Lenca** (Western Honduras): The black-and-white ceramic bowls, plates, pots, and cups of the Lenca are sold throughout the country and are one of the favorite artisan wares to bring back home. The pottery is designed using pre-Columbian techniques that have changed little over the centuries and created by many of the same families who pass down their methods. See p. 152.

6 THE BEST BEACHES

- **West Bay Beach, Roatán** (The Bay Islands): The crystal clear water and powdery white sand on this end of Roatán have led many to call this one of the top beaches in the entire Caribbean—which is not exactly a place without competition. While new hotels are creeping in all the time, they rarely top two levels and there still is not a single 500-room mega-resort to eat away all the tropical charm. Don't forget your snorkel gear; the world's second largest barrier reef is just off shore. See p. 214.
- **Tela Bay** (The North Coast): In town the best of the public beaches are in front of the Telamar and Ensenada beach resorts, but the more desolate ones near Sambo Creek and Punta Sal are hard not to like. Major development plans are in store here that could turn

Tela Bay into the next Cancun, which is hard to say if it will be a good thing or a bad thing. It will be a few years before any noticeable difference can be seen, so for the time being these waters are a bargain. See p. 168.

- **The Mosquito Coast** (La Mosquitia): Hundreds of miles of white sandy beach and not a soul in sight. Can this be real? It is, and, with absolutely no development anytime soon—not even a hint—you can rest assured that for at least the next decade the secret will be safe and sound. See p. 250.
- **Playa Negra, Isla del Tigre** (Southern Honduras): This black sand beach on Isla del Tigre—and all beaches on Isla del Tigre, for that matter—is practically deserted these days, though that doesn't have to be a bad thing. While everyone is flocking to the Caribbean coast, go

- Pacific for an unadulterated taste of the salty air. See p. 101.
- **Cayos Cochinos** (The North Coast): Tiny, cartoonish islands with little more than one palm tree and a spit of sand are surrounded by pristine coral reefs and jaw-dropping clear waters. Just one ecofriendly resort, a small Garífuna village, and a couple of forested hills holding a very rare species of snake are all the civilization you will find. There might not be a beach bar blasting Jimmy Buffett and selling frothy brews in sight, but it's a small tradeoff for paradise. See p. 189.
 - **West End, Guanaja** (The Bay Islands): You have to go to the very corner of the second largest and most undeveloped of

the Bay Islands to find this remarkable beach, though it is well worth the trip, even if you aren't staying in the one small hotel that sits here. Caribbean pine and the occasional sound of a coconut falling into the perfectly blue water will likely be your only company. See p. 239.

- **Chepes Beach, Utila** (The Bay Islands): While it only barely eclipses Bando Beach and some of the others around Utila, this small, shady strip of pearly white not far from town is the best place for a moment of rest after an exhausting series of dives. The big *champa* looming in the background dishing out Thai food will never let you forget you're still in Utila. See p. 228.

7 THE BEST ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES

- **Rafting the Río Plátano** (La Mosquitia): One of the all-time great journeys of Central America. This 10-to 12-day trip starts high in the mountains of Olancho and ends at the Caribbean coast, covering the length of a UNESCO biosphere reserve that few have visited. Class III–IV rapids, scarlet macaws, the occasional tapir, and Pech and Miskito villages are only part of the journey. This is one you will never forget. See p. 253.
- **Hiking in Celaque National Park** (Western Honduras): The elusive resplendent quetzal is not all you might see in one of the most prime pieces of cloud forest in Central America. If you're lucky the occasional monkey or jaguar might make an appearance, but orchids, flowers, and lush green foliage are more dependable and worth the trip alone. Most come for an intense day hike, though those with a sturdy set of legs will not regret a 2-day trip to Cerro Las Minas, the highest point in Honduras. See p. 150.
- **Climbing La Picucha** (Olancho): The highest point of Sierra de Agalta National Park takes 4 to 5 days, making it one of the most difficult hikes in Honduras. Your prize will be a well-marked trail all to yourself, with waterfalls, unspoiled primary forests, and an abundance of rare flora and fauna for you to marvel at. See p. 268.
- **Intense rapids on Río Cangrejal** (The North Coast): These class III–V rapids are the premier whitewater trips in the country and are one of the most accessible routes you can find. Both safety standards and adrenaline are high, and a handful of companies offer the trip daily from their small lodges in and around Pico Bonito National Park. See p. 186.
- **The trails around Las Marías** (La Mosquitia): Hire a Pech guide to lead you on this 3-day hike up the perfect conical mountain of Pico Dama or just on a day trip to see mysterious petroglyphs. High chances of seeing wildlife and interactions with unspoiled Indian villages are a big part of the lure. See p. 254.

8 THE BEST WILDLIFE WATCHING

- **Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve** (La Mosquitia): One of the most remote and inaccessible reserves in Central America has preserved the array of diverse creatures better than most. Whether you take a *pipante* (dugout canoe) to Las Marías or raft here from Olancho, those with good eyes and guides will spot tapirs, jaguars, anteaters, spider monkeys, iguanas, scarlet macaws, the harpy eagle, toucans, and much, much more. See p. 252.
- **Lancetilla Botanical Garden** (The North Coast): Bird-watchers are in paradise at Lancetilla, a onetime banana research facility founded by William Popenoe of United Fruit in 1925 and now one of the world's largest botanical gardens. More than 350 species of birds frolic in the citrus groves, bamboo groves, and primary forests. See p. 166.
- **Lago de Yojoa** (Western Honduras): Two national parks (Santa Bárbara and Cerro Azul Meámbar), with an enormous range of tropical birds, mammals, and plants, sit on both sides of this sparkling lake in the center of the country. The lake itself is rich with wildlife including several types of toucans, woodpeckers, herons, kingfishers, otters, bats, and lizards. See p. 117.
- **Cuero y Salado Reserve** (The North Coast): While not always easy to find, manatees are the main attraction at this mangrove-lined river reserve near La Ceiba. On any given day, though, an early-morning canoe ride will put you in touch with caimans, howler monkeys, kingfishers, and boat-billed herons. See p. 176.
- **Whale sharks off Utila** (The Bay Islands): During select months every year, the waters off Utila become ground zero for whale sharks, not to mention whale shark enthusiasts. The deep waters on the north side of the island make it one of the best places in the world to see these bus-sized creatures, a big reason why two whale shark research facilities are located here. See p. 228.

9 THE MOST INTRIGUING HISTORICAL SITES

- **Copán** (Western Honduras): Often referred to as the Paris of the Mayan world, these majestic ruins will take you through a dramatic journey of the Mayan civilization. The secret to understanding the Copán ruins is a large square block of carved stone known as the Altar Q, which represents the dynastic lineage of 16 kings whose rule spanned nearly 4 centuries. See p. 131.
- **Walpaulban Sirpi** (La Mosquitia): Not far from Las Marías, numerous petroglyphs are carved into stones that date back thousands of years and are believed to be from the Paya culture. Some, including Walpaulban Sirpi, are found right in the Río Plátano. They aren't easy to reach, though. You'll need to traverse 5 hours upstream in a pole-propelled dugout canoe, or *pipante*, to get there—or visit near the end of a long rafting trip. See p. 254.
- **William Walker's Grave** (The North Coast): In the old Trujillo cemetery in the center of town sits the remains of William Walker, the American adventurer who launched several invasions of Central American nations and was shot by firing squad in Trujillo in 1860. Check out his epitaph, which still reads: *Fusilado*. See p. 192.

- **Los Naranjos Eco-Archeological Park** (Western Honduras): What exactly is an eco-archeological park? It is a place with both archeological remains and protected natural land. Los Naranjos is both a small Lenca site with a few mounds that date back to approximately 700 B.C. as well as a great place for bird-watching along the lush green shores of Lago de Yojoa. Facilities on site exist for both types of visitors: an archeological

museum with historical details and artifacts, and a tower where you can relax with your binoculars. See p. 118.

- **El Puente** (Western Honduras): Near the town of La Entrada outside of Copán sits this rarely visited archeological complex. A couple of pyramids and the encroaching jungle make it seem not all that different from Copán; just a bit smaller and without the maddening crowds. See p. 142.

10 THE BEST FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- **Chiminike** (Tegucigalpa): The modish children's museum in the capital isn't shy about making sure kids are entertained: a human body room complete with fart sounds, a crawl through an intestinal tract, and a graffiti-prone VW Beetle. The kids might not realize it, but every quirk is part of the museum's ingenious learning process. See p. 86.
- **Dolphin Summer Scuba Camp** (The Bay Islands): During the summer months at Anthony's Key Resort on Roatán, small groups of children ages 5 to 14 can learn about bottlenose dolphins through various encounters, feeding, and training sessions, while also practicing their snorkel or dive skills. Accompanying parents aren't left out, though; they can go off with their peers on diving or snorkel trips. See p. 207.
- **Take a canopy tour:** In the past few years the number of zipline operators has exploded in Honduras and more than a dozen are in operation now.

From the waterfall at Pulhapanzak to the Garífuna village of Sambo Creek to the Caribbean island of Roatán, you can glide from platform to platform surrounded by dense jungle or breath-taking views. See p. 49.

- **Garífuna or Miskito dance performances** (The Bay Islands, La Mosquitia): Though some performances are aimed at cruise ship passengers, the lively dance tradition for the Garífuna population of Roatán still exists, especially during holiday and festival times. Along the Mosquito Coast, tourist-hungry Miskito villages have been known to occasionally set up nighttime performances. See p. 222.
- **Macaw Mountain** (Western Honduras): A walk through this lushly forested, fun-filled private compound near Copán is just what a child needs to take his or her mind off boring ruins and museums. Photo ops with a few friendly birds on your head and shoulders are a must for families. See p. 135.

11 THE BEST SPLURGE HOTELS

- **Pico Bonito Lodge** (The North Coast; ☎ 888/428-0221; www.picobonito.com): While you can see wildly biodiverse Parque Nacional Pico Bonito near

La Ceiba a number of ways, few would argue against a stay at luxurious Pico Bonito Lodge, which has a butterfly farm, its own set of trails, a resort-style

pool, spa facilities, and a gourmet restaurant. Guided hikes bring you through former cacao fields, across several levels of tropical forest, and to much-needed soaks in swimming holes and at waterfalls. See p. 187.

- **Hotel Telamar** (The North Coast; ☎ 504/269-4414; www.hoteltelamar.com): This neighborhood of pastel-colored stilted villas was once owned by Tela Railroad Company executives on one of Tela's best beaches. With the addition of a few posh buildings of hotel-style rooms, a few restaurants, and a 90m-long (300-ft.) pool complete with waterfalls and slides, it was transformed into Tela's first resort. Even the old villas have been remodeled and are rented out by the day or week. The combination of history and luxury has never been better. See p. 168.
- **Infinity Bay** (The Bay Islands; ☎ 504/445-5016; www.infinitybay.com): If the hotel's massive infinity pool doesn't put a twinkle in your eye, the intoxicatingly turquoise water on the best stretch of beach in the country surely will. This condo-resort is the most upscale that West Bay Beach, or anywhere on Roatán for that matter, has seen. When Phase II is completed in 2009, they'll add a full-service spa and double the number of rooms. See p. 215.
- **Palmetto Bay Plantation** (The Bay Islands; ☎ 504/9991-0811; www.palmettobayplantation.com): Isolated on a stretch of Roatán's loneliest shore, this hotel gave the island one of its first tastes of the worldly exotic, with the Balinese-style ecofriendly beach houses. This notion was pushed further with the filming of *Temptation Island International*. See p. 219.
- **Portal del Angel** (Tegucigalpa; ☎ 504/239-6538; www.portaldelangel.com): This place has buckets of style, maybe more than anywhere else in the country. Right in the Zona Viva, near the best restaurants in the capital, the opulent boutique digs are adorned with marble pillars, wrought-iron balconies, and parquet floors, and appointed with hand-made furniture. It is much more than just a nice change from the business leisure hotels that dominate Tegus. See p. 78.
- **Crowne Plaza** (San Pedro Sula; ☎ 504/550-8080; www.crowneplaza.com/sanpedrosula): A Holiday Inn remodeled has quickly become a landmark luxury hotel that gives the nearby Hilton and Intercontinental a run for their money. They have a decent location right on one of the city's main thoroughfares, and with a sushi bar, new Peruvian chef, sleek bar area, lounges for executive travelers, casino, and an outdoor pool, you'll have little reason to leave. See p. 111.

12 THE BEST HOTELS THAT WON'T EMPTY YOUR WALLET

- **Casa del Arbol** (Western Honduras; ☎ 504/504-1616; www.hotelcasadelarbol.com): At least one place in San Pedro Sula exists that doesn't feel so cookie cutter. Trees are literally coming out of the buildings of this hotel, whose name means Tree House, right in the heart of downtown. And since it isn't one of the many international chain hotels in the city, it doesn't come with their price. See p. 112.
- **Hotel Gran Central** (The North Coast; ☎ 504/448-1099; www.hotelgrancentral.com): A blend of tropical and colonial chic sets this restored colonial building in Tela apart from its rivals. Black-and-white checkerboard tiles paired with hand-painted designs on

the walls give a welcome air of class and style for a price that's hard to beat. See p. 170.

- **Casa Alemania** (The North Coast; ☎ 504/434-4466; www.trujillohonduras.com): German food and beer are on hand from owners Gunter and Paula at this intimate hotel right on the Trujillo beach front. The 10 rooms are beyond comfortable and have all the amenities that you'll find at the Hilton. They even have dorm-style beds and camping space for those on a tight budget. See p. 193.
- **Posada de Don Juan** (Western Honduras; ☎ 504/656-1020; www.posadade donjuanhotel.com): With recent renovations this boutique colonial inn has left no questions about which is the top hotel in Gracias. In 2008 they doubled in size, added a pool and Jacuzzi in a colonial courtyard, and built their own hot springs facility outside of the city. See p. 149.
- **West Bay B&B** (The Bay Islands; ☎ 504/445-5080; www.westbaybed andbreakfast.com): For the price of the rooms here, which are new and surprisingly upscale, you wouldn't be able to buy dinner at one of the nearby resorts. If you don't mind a 5-minute walk to the top beach in the country, you will be rewarded with spacious, comfortable rooms. See p. 215.
- **Yamari Savannah Cabañas** (La Mosquitia; ☎ 504/443-8009; www.laruta moskitia.com): A stay in this true solar-powered ecolodge in the wilderness, about an hour from Brus Laguna, costs just \$10 a night. It's set in one of La Mosquitia's bizarre savannahs, where you will bird-watch by kayak, inner tube, or traditional Cayucos canoe. Drop these same stilted cabins into Brazil and you are looking to pay 10 times the price. See p. 259.