



Honduras

Honduras is located 1000 miles southwest of Miami and is the second largest of the Central American countries. It borders the Caribbean Sea between Guatemala and Nicaragua and borders the North Pacific Ocean between El Salvador and Nicaragua. The total area of Honduras is 112,090 square kilometers—just slightly larger than the state of Tennessee.



Evidence of Maya settlement since at least 1000 BC can be found in Copán in western Honduras. Columbus, who landed on the American mainland for the first time at Trujillo in northern Honduras in 1502, named the country after the deep water off the Caribbean coast—the name “Honduras” means depths.



Tegucigalpa, located in a small valley nestled in the mountains of Honduras, is the country's capital and largest city with a population of over 700,000 people. The name "Tegucigalpa" comes from the ancient Nahuatl language, meaning "silver mountain."



90% of the population of Honduras is of mixed European and Indian descent. Spanish is the main language spoken throughout the country, although English—spoken with a Caribbean accent—is the primary language spoken in the Bay Islands of northern Honduras. The indigenous peoples of Honduras have their own distinct languages.



The country's cuisine is based around beans, rice, tortillas, fried bananas, meat, potatoes, cream and cheese. Tortillas are often made by hand, like this woman is doing by grinding corn and shaping it on a flat stone in her kitchen.



The economy of Honduras is based on agriculture, and farming is a way of life for many Honduran families. Coffee and bananas are two of the main crops grown in Honduras and exported to other countries. This way of life takes a great deal of work, and the production of farms can be strongly impacted by the environment. In 1998, the country was devastated by Hurricane Mitch, which killed about 6,000 people and caused nearly \$2 billion in damage. Many farms and banana plantations were destroyed and have taken years to recover.



The high elevations and abundant rainfall of the interior mountains of Honduras provide good conditions for growing coffee, and there are many coffee farms or *fincas* found in these areas.



Many farmers have chosen to grow their coffee in the shade of trees, so that they can grow and sell high-quality coffee beans while also protecting the rainforest. Coffee farms certified by the Rainforest Alliance often have many other types of trees growing throughout the farm as well, such as bananas, plantains and oranges.



This brother and sister are standing by a sign for their parents' farm, called "Finca las Golondrinas." Becoming Rainforest-Alliance Certified has helped them to sell their coffee beans, and has also created a safer environment for the children on the farm because they use little to no chemicals.



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Bananas are another crop in high demand throughout the world. Honduras exports around 35 million, 40-pound boxes of bananas to other countries throughout the world each year. How often do you eat bananas in your home?



Bananas are also sold locally throughout Honduras. Here, you can see the beautiful flowering trees planted on the Rainforest Alliance Certified farms to provide habitat for wildlife as well as to protect families living nearby from chemicals such as fertilizers used on the farm.



Banana farms certified by the Rainforest Alliance meet many standards for environmental health and safety, including protecting wildlife and their habitat, conserving water, managing waste and strictly limiting the use of pesticides used on their farms. Often, you can find birds, butterflies, and lizards on these farms—a sign that the environment there is healthy and sustainable.



Many Honduran men and women work on banana farms. Banana farms certified by the Rainforest Alliance make sure that the workers have a safe, clean environment to work in. This farm even provides music to make the workplace more enjoyable.



Children of farmers in parts of Honduras are doing their part to keep their environment clean by cleaning up garbage around the schoolyard, joining environmental clubs in their schools, and encouraging other kids to do the same. What can you do to keep your environment clean?



While many people and organizations are working to conserve rainforests in Honduras, deforestation in this country is occurring at a rate of 3000 square kilometers (1170 square miles) per year. If deforestation continues at this rate, Honduras will be left treeless within the next 20 years.



Erosion is just one of the many negative impacts that deforestation has on the environment. Without trees and other plant growth to hold the nutrient-rich topsoil in place, heavy rains easily wash away the soil, leaving behind earth that cannot easily regenerate the lost trees and plant-life.



The rainforests of Honduras are home to a wealth of biodiversity. Scarlet macaws, tapirs, butterflies, white-tailed deer, jaguars, toucans, sloths and armadillos are just some of the many animals that depend on the rainforests here for food and shelter.



The white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus yucatanensis*) is the national animal of Honduras, and is considered to be a symbol of all Honduran wildlife.



photo © Joseph Dsilva

Massive trees like this ceiba, or kapok tree, can be found throughout the Honduran rainforests. These trees can grow up to 200 feet and live to be more than 200 years old. A single tree provides a home for countless animal species. Birds feed and nest high in the tree's branches, mammals move through the forest on these branches, and amphibians and insects live among the leaves and other plants growing on the tree.



Fortunately, Honduras also has national parks and reserves, such as the Tawahkas Biosphere Reserve, set aside to protect the more than 700 species of birds, rare mammals and abundant plant-life of the country, and allow people to witness the natural beauty of Honduras. These efforts, coupled with the local farmers' dedication to protecting the forests of Honduras, are helping to ensure that these forests will be around for many future generations.

