

Honduras Country Guide

Central American Relief Efforts



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Central American Relief Efforts

About Central American Relief Efforts



Central American Relief Efforts is a Pennsylvania-based non-profit organization that provides humanitarian aid to southern Honduras through service trips and projects. We work with US-based volunteer groups and non-profit organizations to bring various forms of aid to our work zone in Honduras. Our volunteers include university groups (alternative break clubs, pre-med groups, etc.), professional groups (dental hygienists, medical doctors, dentists, eye doctors, those with specific trade skills, etc.), and service-based groups. We run week-long trips that generally include 3-4 work

days, a day to tour a local public hospital or have a cultural exchange with a local community, and a free day during which most groups opt to visit a beach. We focus on self-sustaining projects and take pride on working closely with our Honduran Advisory Board and alongside local community leaders in every project we undertake to ensure that we collaborate with and serve the best interests of the Honduran community.

Contact Information

All required forms and trip payments should be directed to our US office in Lancaster, Pennsylvania:

Central American Relief Efforts
301 Saint Thomas Road
Lancaster, PA 17601

US Office Contacts:

Kristi Wass, Director of Operations (English/Spanish)

Office: 717-567-3241

Cell: 515-290-0600

Honduras Phone: +011 504-3380-0150

Email: Kristi.philips@gmail.com

ORGANIZATION EMAIL:

Email: carelief07@gmail.com

Honduran Staff/Partners

Marel Caberjal, Honduran Projects Coordinator

Beatriz Espinal and Marvin Hernandez, CARE Advisory Board Members and support staff

Other CARE Advisory Board members include: Gladys Ledezma, Patty Guardiola, and Aldren Borjas

CARE works with contracted drivers, security, translators, and other support staff. We also have established relationships with local doctors, nurses, dentists, ophthalmologists, etc. and work with these staff as needed.

About Honduras

Country Description



Honduras is a democracy with a developing economy bordered by the Caribbean Sea to the north and the Pacific Ocean to the south. The national language is Spanish, although English is often spoken in the Bay Islands. The climate is generally temperate, with dry and wet seasons. During the dry season from February into May, widespread forest fires and agricultural burning can severely degrade air quality throughout the country, at times leaving residents with respiratory complications. The terrain includes mountainous areas, coastal beaches, and jungle lowlands. Facilities that would normally be used by tourists, including hotels and restaurants, are generally adequate in the capital city of Tegucigalpa, in San Pedro Sula, Tela, La Ceiba, the Bay Islands, and near the Copan ruins. Large sections of the country, however, lack basic public services or a governmental presence.

Fast Facts

- Formal Name: Republic of Honduras.
- Short Form: Honduras.
- Term for Citizens: Honduran(s).
- Date of Independence: September 15, 1821, from Spain (celebrated as National Holiday); November 15, 1838, from United Provinces of Central America.
- Population: 8.3 Million
- Capital: Tegucigalpa; 1,007,000 (largest city)
- Area: 112,492 square kilometers (43,433 square miles), or about the size of Tennessee
- Language: Spanish, Amerindian dialects
- Dominant Religion: 97% Roman Catholic, 3% Protestant
- Currency: Lempira (exchange rate hovers around 20 HNL to 1 USD)
- Life Expectancy: 71
- GDP per Capita: US \$2500
- Literacy Rate (Percent): 76
- Flag: The Honduran flag depicts five stars, representing members of the former Federal Republic of Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua)

Economic Survey

Honduras is one of the poorest countries in the western hemisphere, with approximately 65 percent of the population living in poverty. The poverty rate of Honduras was greatly exacerbated by Hurricane Mitch in 1998 which left behind over two billion USD in damage and claimed 5600 lives.

Nearly one million Hondurans have migrated to the United States, and remittance inflows from Hondurans living abroad are a major source of support for many. Within Honduras, 34 percent of the labor force works in agriculture, 21 percent in industry, and 45 percent in services.

Quick Facts:

- Industry: Sugar, coffee, textiles, clothing
- Agriculture: Bananas, coffee, citrus; beef; timber; shrimp
- Exports: Coffee, bananas, shrimp, lobster, meat
- Natural Resources: Timber, gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, iron ore, antimony, coal, fish, hydropower.
- 2009 Exports: \$5.25 Billion
- 2009 Imports: \$7.5 Billion
- Major Trade Partners: United States, Costa Rica, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala

Healthcare in Honduras

Medical care in Honduras varies greatly in quality and availability. Outside of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, medical care is inadequate to address complex situations. Support staff facilities and necessary equipment and supplies are not up to U.S. standards anywhere in Honduras. Facilities for advanced surgical procedures are not available. Wide areas of the country do not have a general surgery hospital. Ambulance services are limited in major cities and almost non-existent elsewhere.

Quick Facts:

- 2009 Health Expenditures: 7.3% of GDP
- Physician Availability: 0.57 per 1000 population
- Hospital Bed Availability: 0.80 per 1000 population

Common Health Concerns in Honduras

The most common health concerns in Honduras diabetes, hypertension, and sexually transmitted infections. Levels of malnutrition are high, so many children suffer from diet-related issues, like anemia or stunting.

Severe air pollution, which can aggravate or lead to respiratory problems, is common throughout the country during the dry season due in large part to widespread forest fires and agricultural burning. Acute respiratory infections are also widespread; more than 100,000 cases are reported annually. Air quality also leads to vision problems for many, including cataracts.

The Department of Choluteca

Honduras is divided into 18 departments (the equivalent of states). We primarily work in the department of Choluteca in the southern Zone of Honduras.

Quick Facts:

- Population: 420,350
- Area: 1625 square meters
- 47.9% of families live with food insecurity
- 17% haven't finished primary school
- 13.6% of school age children (grades 1-9) do not attend class
- 24% don't have electricity
- 14.5% lack a potable water source
- 21.6% live with a dirt floor

Important Travel Information

What to Bring

1. CARE has scrubs available for volunteers to wear for medical clinic days. If not wearing scrubs, volunteers should dress modestly for clinics and other group outings. We may have paint projects or light construction projects to complete during the week, so please be prepared for such activities. Evenings are spent at the hotel, so you are welcome to bring any other clothing to lounge, go to dinner, or play soccer in.
2. Bug spray is recommended for the evenings.
3. Bathing suit and sunscreen for beach day.
4. Donations (clothing, shoes, toys, stickers, toothbrushes, etc.) to distribute at medical clinics or at orphanage visit. ***Volunteers are strongly encouraged to bring vitamins and ibuprofen to be distributed out of the pharmacy at our medical clinics. CARE will provide a letter of donation that you must carry with you through customs when traveling with these donations.***

Passport/Visa Requirements

US citizens must present a valid passport with at least six months remaining validity. A visa is not required for U.S. citizens, but tourists should be prepared to provide evidence of return or onward travel (i.e. round-trip plane ticket). Upon arrival in Honduras, CARE will collect all original passports and keep them in a secure location for the duration of the trip.

Participants must submit a copy of the main page of their passport to CARE before travel. Volunteers are also encouraged to carry a photocopy of their passports with them to Honduras as proof of identity and citizenship.

To exit Honduras, travelers must clear Honduran Immigration. If you are departing via air, you will be charged an airport exit tax of \$38.71. The tax can be paid in dollars, lempiras, or by major credit card. Checks are not accepted.

For more information, you may contact the Honduran Consulate or Honduran Embassy in the US:

Honduran Consulate
1014 M Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
Phone (202) 6825948.

Honduran Embassy
3007 Tilden Street NW
Washington, DC 20008
Phone (202) 966-7702

Personal Health

Before traveling to Honduras, participants must visit a travel clinic to determine inoculations, medications, or other vaccines that are required or recommended for the area. You may do this consult with your family physician, at a university's student health center, or at a local travel clinic. Please visit www.cdc.gov for up-to-date, country-specific information.

Please be advised that some medications must be started several weeks in advance of your departure.

Honduras lacks a substantial infrastructure for maintaining water purity. Travelers are strongly encouraged to avoid drinking tap water. Bottles and bags of purified water are widely available and participants will have access to safe drinking water throughout the day.

Safety and Security

CARE has developed a credible representation in the areas it serves. Southern Honduras is generally rural, with towns and small cities, and criminal incidents are much lower than in larger cities like Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. CARE has never had any safety incidents but always takes the utmost precautions to ensure the highest level of protection for volunteers.

While in Honduras, CARE provides 24-hour professional security staff to work with your group. Groups always stay in secure hotels. Travel arrangements are coordinated with reliable vehicles, licensed drivers, and security personnel. Group members are not to leave the hotel or clinic sites unaccompanied for any reason. When we travel to clinic sites, we always bring along at least one uniformed police officer. For more information on security measures taken in-country, please contact our US office staff.

US Embassy Information

U.S. Embassy Tegucigalpa:
Avenida La Paz in Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Telephone: 011-504-2236-9320 or
011-504-2238-5114
Emergency after-hours telephone:
11-504-2236-8497
American Citizens Services Unit Fax:
011-504-2238-4357
American Citizens Services Unit Office hours:
Monday through Friday from 8 am to 11:30 am

The Honduran immigration office nearest to the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa is as follows:
Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería
Colonia Las Torres
Calle Principal
Edificio #1404
Comayagüela, DC
Tel.: (504) 2234-1996/19

Additional Resources

Spanish Phrase Guide

Hola – Hello

Adiós -- Goodbye

Buenos Días -- Good morning

Buenas Tardes —Good afternoon

Buenas Noches —Goodnight

Me llamo.... – My name is

¿Cómo se llama?/¿Cual es su nombre? – What is your name?

¿Cuántos años tiene? – How old are you?

Soy de los Estados Unidos – I’m from the US

Por Favor – Please

Gracias – Thank you

¿Dónde está?— Where is/Where are you?

Necesito ayuda—I need help

Quisiera un(a)...--- I would like a...

¿Qué hora es? – What time is it?

Tengo hambre – I’m hungry

Deme una bolsa/botella de agua por favor – give me a bag/bottle of water, please

Perdón—Excuse me

Lo siento— I’m sorry.

Estoy perdido— I am lost.

Estoy buscando a... -- I am looking for...

Voy a tomar su presión - I’m going to take your blood pressure

No tomamos la presión para los menores de edad – We don’t need to take blood pressure for minors.

Pongase su brazo en la mesa – Place your arm on the table.

Deme su papel – Hand me your paper

Relájese – Relax

Brazo – Arm

La farmacia esta por alla – The pharmacy is there

Medico/Doctor – Doctor

Enfermera – Nurse

Dentista – Dentist

Sacar un diente – Pull a tooth

Cepillo – Toothbrush

Pasta de dientes – Toothpaste

Una muela - Molar

¿Le duele....? – Does it hurt?

FAQs

Do I need to be a medical professional to participate in a medical mission trip?

All volunteers are welcome, regardless of having a background in medical care or interest in studying to become a medical professional. While medical professionals can sometimes use their background to provide more specialized care, and public health/pre-med/nursing students may get a more in-depth experience by sitting in on consults with Honduran medical staff at clinics, there is plenty of volunteer work that non-medical professionals can do to contribute to our mission. Our only requirement is that you have an interest in helping people in need!

Do I need to speak Spanish to join CARE in Honduras?

Spanish language is not required. We always have multiple translators with our groups, so while Spanish-speakers will be able to put their language skills to use, those without a background in Spanish need not worry!

What happens upon arrival? Where do we stay? How can I exchange money?

A care staff member will meet your group at the airport in Tegucigalpa who will transport you to Hotel Palmeras in Pespire. CARE will assist with exchanging U.S. currency to Honduran currency (Note: The easiest way to exchanging money is by cash, as ATM machines are rather infrequent in our work zones). The hotel does have a wireless network available for guest use.

Where will we be working?

We work primarily in the southern Zone of Honduras. We are based out of a town about two hours south of Tegucigalpa called Pespire, and we travel to other communities in the southern region of the country, primarily in the departments of Choluteca and Valle. The majority of our medical clinics are held in schools, community centers, and health centers in communities in the area.

Where will we eat? Can I drink the water?

While we are in the Pespire area, all meals are prepared by La Cascada, a restaurant managed by CARE Board Member, Beatriz Espinal. La Cascada maintains very high sanitation standards. There is always filtered water available at the restaurant. We bring lunch and plenty of water/other drinks along when we travel for clinics. Water and other drinks are available at Hotel Palmeras for purchase. Occasionally, we travel to and work in San Marcos de Colon. When there, our meals are prepared at Hotel Barcelona, where we stay. Any travelers with special dietary needs or food allergies should advise CARE Trip Coordinator, Kristi Wass, at least one week prior to scheduled arrival date.

Medication List (Medical Clinic Guide)

**Our office will provide your group with a listing that describes some of the medications commonly prescribed at our medical clinics.