

IDENTITIES ABROAD: HONDURAS



IDENTITIES ABROAD

As you prepare for your education abroad program, you may be considering how your own identities may or may not interact with the host culture in similar or different ways than they do at home. Below you will find country-specific information on potential challenges for students who are from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in education abroad programs. This information, adapted from the Diversity Network's Country Diversity Notes (via [Diversity Abroad](#)), is intended to assist you in exploring how you might be received abroad based on your race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, or ability.

The information below features a country overview for Honduras as well as information pertinent to the socio-cultural climate that U.S. students of diverse backgrounds can reasonably expect while living in the country. It also offers bulleted information noting facts that may directly relate to student experiences in the country. Links with additional information resources on the various topics are also offered.

The below information provides a bird's-eye view of diversity matters in the country as they pertain to U.S. students. Purchase understands the below information is not exhaustive or inclusive of all possible student identities and experiences. We encourage you to conduct further research and chat with relevant points of contact including your program advisor, faculty leader, or peers who have traveled to Honduras, to gain a greater understanding of your host country and/or city.

If you would like to speak with us about any questions pertaining to diversity and inclusivity abroad, please contact us at study.abroad@purchase.edu and we will answer your inquiry to the best of our ability and/or refer you to others with the expertise that you need. Additionally, if you are interested in discussing other geographical locations, please don't hesitate to contact us.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

FAST FACTS:

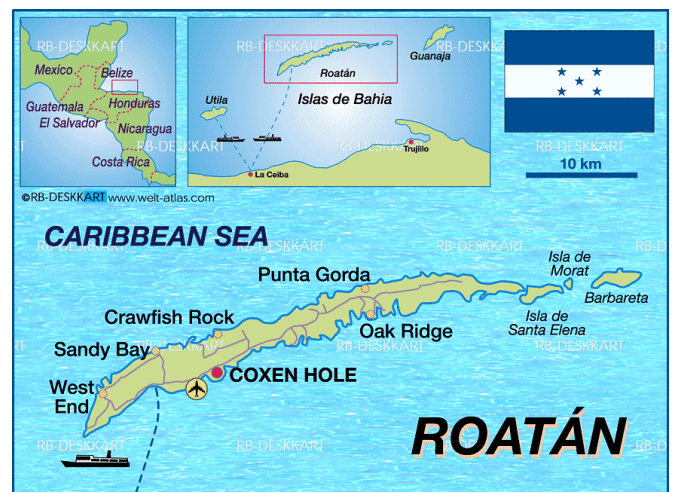
Capital: Tegucigalpa

Population: 9,346,277

Language(s): Spanish (official), Amerindian dialects

Religions: Roman Catholic 46%, Protestant 41%, atheist 1%, other 2%, none 9%

Ethnic groups: Mestizo (mixed Amerindian and European) 90%, Amerindian 7%, Black 2%, White 1%



Honduras is a small Central American country located just north of Nicaragua and east of El Salvador and Guatemala, it is slightly larger than the state of Tennessee. The capital of the country is Tegucigalpa and the national language is Spanish. The country is mostly mountain terrain in the interior with narrow coastal plains with a subtropical climate in the lowlands and temperate climate in the mountains. A majority of the population live in the mountainous region in the western half of the country, the urban population is distributed between two large cities; the capital city of Tegucigalpa and the city of San Pedro Sula. Only one area of the lowlands is densely populated; the Rio Ulua valley in the north. Honduras is susceptible to frequent but mild earthquakes as well more severe hurricanes and floods. A large storm in 1998, Hurricane Mitch, killed over 5,600 people and caused \$2 billion in damage. The economy in Honduras has slowly rebounded since then.

Today, Honduras is one of the poorest countries in Latin America and the second poorest in Central America. Over half the population lives below the poverty line and poverty rates are higher among the indigenous and rural populations in the south, west, and eastern boarder of the country. Most of the industries in the country are located in the northern and central regions. Though primary education enrollment rates are close to 100%, there is a very high drop-out rate and teacher/school accountability is low, so in turn the quality of education provided is poor. The rate of underemployment is very high, and the country suffers from extremely unequal distribution of income.

Roatan is a small island located about 40 miles to the north of Honduras, it is the largest of the Bay Islands of Honduras. It is on the southern edge of the Meosamerican Barrier Reef System, the second-largest barrier reef in the world, and offers many opportunities for diving. Most of the population is located on the western half of the island. The capital of the Roatan municipality is Coxen Hole which is one of the most populous towns of the island. It underwent major reconstruction between 2003-2005 to accommodate a growing business sector and population. The population that has been established on the Bay Islands since the 19th century are predominantly of European and British-Afro-Caribbean descent. English is the first language of native islanders, and Spanish is spoken second. This is due to the history of these islands as a British colony. In the late 20th century, the use of Spanish increased as there was an influx of mainland Hondurans migrating to the islands, but because of the tourism and cruise ship industries that support the economy of the islands, English remains the dominant language today. All native islanders prefer the term "Islanders" when being referred to.

Review current travel risks for Honduras:

[U.S Department of State Travel Risks](#)

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) [Open Doors Report 2019](#), 726 students from the United States studied abroad to Honduras.

ETHNIC MINORITIES IN HONDURAS

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

An important part of Honduran history is the Mayan presence around the city of Copan, located in western Honduras near the border to Guatemala. There are several other Mayan archeological sites in Honduras, but the civilization's population began to decline in the 9th century.

In 1502, Christopher Columbus arrived from Spain and named the country Honduras ("depths") for the deep waters off the coast. In 1524, captain Cristobal de Olid, under directive of Hernan Cortes, sailed to Honduras, landing east of Puerto Caballos, where he settled and declared himself governor. Honduras remained a Spanish colony until the early 19th century when Napoleon's occupation of Spain led to a number of revolts across Spanish America. A great deal of the fighting by those seeking their independence was done in the center of New Spain (present day central Mexico). Spain was defeated in the capital, Mexico City, in 1821 and news of independence was sent to all territories. Honduras joined in a joint declaration of independence from Spain, the Act of Independence, in 1821.

Today, about 20% of the Honduran population self-identify as indigenous or of African descent. Main minority and indigenous peoples include the Lenca, Miskito, Garifuna, Maya Ch'orti, Tolupan, Bay Creoles, Nahua, Pech and Tawahka. Discrimination and marginalization continue to be ongoing challenges for the indigenous and Afro-descent populations in the country, they suffer social exclusion, poverty, intimidation, and have less access to healthcare and education compared to the rest of the country.

The Garifuna people are made up of the descendants of enslaved persons from Africa and the indigenous Arawak people. They are particularly exposed to discrimination and human rights violations and currently have some of the highest rates of HIV in the country making them a very vulnerable

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population. They are closely associated with traditional ancestral lands, but the Honduran government does not recognize them as a people, despite them being the third largest minority or indigenous population in the country.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR:

- There is a strong history of racism and discrimination against indigenous and Afro-Honduran populations in Honduras, students of color may unfortunately experience this as well.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [World Directory of Indigenous People- Honduras](#), Minority Rights Group International
- [Garifuna: The Young Black Latino Exodus You've Never Heard About](#) Splinternews.com
- [Race and racism in Honduran soccer and society](#) The Washington Post
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Honduras](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [Culture of Honduras - history, people, traditions, women, beliefs, food, customs, family, social](#) Everyculture.com
- [The Garifuna](#) – Roatan online

SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN HONDURAS

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

While homosexuality has been legal in Honduras since 1985, same-sex marriage is unfortunately currently not legal. There are currently no laws protecting the right to change legal gender in Honduras, and adoption by same-sex couples adopting children, have been constitutionally banned since 2005. Currently, conversion therapy has not been banned in Honduras. Discrimination against sexual orientation and gender identity are illegal in employment, housing, and the military and hate crimes are criminalized. However, despite passing hate crimes legislation in the past 10 years, the country has yet to convict anyone on these hate crime charges.

Socially, there is a history of discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community in Honduras motivated by prejudice and machismo. A Gallup poll conducted in 2018 found that 75% of the population opposed same-sex marriage and only 17% were in support.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER OR QUEER STUDENTS:

- Transgender women in Honduras are especially vulnerable to hate crimes and violence.
- As a general rule, more tourist or city locations in Honduras are considered much safer for LGBTQ+ students than other parts of the country.
- The islands to the north or south of Honduras are also fairly LGBTQ+ friendly.
- Try to observe the customs, gestures, dress, etc. of Hondurans around you and try to match that.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Sexual Orientation Laws in the World \(December 2019\)](#), ILGA, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association
- [LGBTQ Travel Safety](#), Asher Fergusson
- [LGBT Rights in Honduras](#), Equaldex
- [LGBT Travel Information](#), U.S. Passports & International Travel
- [LGBT rights in Honduras](#), Wikipedia
- [Anti-LGBT Persecution in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras](#), Human Rights Watch (hrw.org)
- [Gay Honduras: Local Gay Stories, is it safe?](#), The Globetrotter Guys

DISABILITY IN HONDURAS

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Honduran law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, or the provision of other state services. Enforcement of these laws as they relate to employment have not been effective as the Secretariat of State Labor and Social Security has focused on workplace safety and pay problems. The law also requires that entry to buildings be accessible for persons with disabilities, but few buildings are fully accessible, and the national government does not effectively uphold these laws.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES:

- Upscale hotels and resorts are more likely to be accessible, but individual who use wheelchairs will find it difficult to navigate in Honduras due to poor-quality sidewalks and cobblestone roads.
- Public transportation options in Honduras are not very accessible, but the ferries to Roatan do offer wheelchair access.
- Hondurans with disabilities may have more difficulty accessing health services, both in getting to their health care facilities or paying for necessary treatments.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Mobility International USA](#), Resources for Americans Traveling Abroad with Disabilities
- [Information for Students with Disabilities Traveling Abroad](#), U.S. Department of State (see section under Local Laws & Special Circumstances)
- [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016](#), (see Persons with Disabilities).
- [Traveling with Disabilities and Medications](#), Transportation Security Administration
- [Accessible Travel in Honduras](#), Lonely Planet

RELIGION IN HONDURAS

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Honduras is a traditionally Catholic country, but other sects of Christianity are also present, including Evangelical Protestant. Various Protestant churches have been active in Honduras since the early twentieth century and have gained many converts. Hondurans usually keep their religious beliefs to themselves aside from some that may choose to wear a crucifix. Most Catholics only attend church on special occasions (funerals or religious holidays, for example) whereas Evangelicals may go to small chapels or other alternative meeting places for prayer meeting and Bible readings every night.

A minor ritual, *cruzando la milpa* (“crossing the cornfield”), is practiced in the Department of El Paraiso. This ritual is performed by a magico-religious specialist in order to eliminate a pest that could be damaging to a crop of corn. The ritual consists of the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer and sprinkling of holy water on the cornfield.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS STUDENTS:

- Honduras has one of Central America’s smallest Jewish populations. While there have been some incidents of antisemitism, most Honduran Jews have been generally able to practice freely and benefit from international Jewish and Israeli assistance.
- There is also a small Muslim population in Honduras, estimates range from 1,500 to 11,000 individuals, but small percentage of those practicing attend prayers weekly at a mosque. Prayers are typically led in a mix of Arabic and Spanish.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Countries and Their Cultures: Honduras](#) (see section on Religion and Expressive Culture), Every Culture

- [Faith-Based Travel Information](#), U.S. Passports & International Travel
- [Judaism in Honduras](#), World Jewish Congress
- [Islam in Honduras](#), Muslimpopulation.com
- [A Visit to the Biggest Little Mosque in Honduras](#), The Muslim Times
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Honduras](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [Mosques & Prayer Time in Honduras](#), IslamicFinder.org

WOMEN IN HONDURAS

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Honduran society ascribes to a machismo culture, meaning the men are expected to be strong and unemotional and dominate in public life, while women are vulnerable and needy and are expected to be domestic, taking care of children and a household.

Although laws in Honduras afford women and men the same legal rights and status, many women do not fully enjoy the same rights as men. Many women in the workforce are employed in lower-status and lower-pay occupations. Men are twice as likely to be employed than women.

Violence against women (especially domestic violence) is a significant issue in Honduras and laws meant to protect them are not sufficiently enforced. Due to very high impunity rates in the courts (up to 90%), many women do not report crimes against them, or withdraw their cases out of fear or economic dependency on their aggressor.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FEMALE STUDENTS:

- Catcalling may be experienced by female students, especially when men are in groups.
- As always, be aware of your surroundings. Try to always travel with a group and avoid going out late at night alone.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Honduras](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [Sexual Harassment and Prevention In College Students Studying Abroad](#), The Center for Global Education
- [Information for Women Travelers](#), U.S. Department of State
- [Culture of Honduras - history, people, traditions, women, beliefs, food, customs, family, social](#), Everyculture.com
- [Situation of women in Honduras](#), Female-rights.com

REFERENCES

Maps, flag, and country facts are from the [CIA World Factbook](#). Accessed online in June 2021

[IIE Open Doors Report](#) | [Lonely Planet Honduras](#)

Please note: The content within the resources provided were last reviewed in June 2021 and as such could have changed. Views expressed in links provided or in sub-links within the document do not necessarily reflect the views of the Office for Global Education.