

HONDURAS

"I think Honduras is an interesting country among the Central American countries. I have learned the differences between Honduras and Thailand lifestyle—including the culture, education and the language. We had different opportunities to present and demonstrate many things of our country to the Hondurans. Also most of what we learned of Honduras came from our hosting families because they are very important and have influence in our lives: to learn how to adapt and live with the family members."
Patchareepan, sejourner from Thailand

"Don't expect to get a lot of privacy—it basically doesn't exist. On the other hand, the friendship, the warmth and the love you will find for these people will be unlike anything you've previously experienced. Believe me—they're unique and very warm hearted."
Carolyn, sejourner from Australia

Honduras, the most mountainous country in Central America, is celebrated for its Mayan ruins and ecological bounty. In fact, the government has designated nearly one-quarter of the land as either national parks or nature preserves. Most Hondurans are the intermingled descendants of European colonists and local Indians, which means that ethnic tensions, often found elsewhere in Latin America, are largely absent. One of the least developed nations in Latin America, Honduras is often bypassed by tourists and international developers, which contributes to a leisurely-paced lifestyle, even in the cities.

AFS & Your Experience

AFS Honduras has been in existence since 1963. AFS volunteers across the country work hard year-round to provide you with a high quality intercultural experience. During the year, AFS Honduras hosts approximately 70 AFS students and 50 participants on Community Service programs from more than 20 countries.

AFS will be at your side throughout your intercultural exchange. Even before leaving your home country, you will participate in organized AFS orientations and have the assistance of experienced AFS volunteers. Once in your host country, you can rely on your local volunteer contact and other chapter volunteers to support you in your experience. Together we will ensure that you have the support you need during your sojourn abroad.

Landing in Honduras

You will arrive in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, where AFS Honduras staff and volunteers will help you and your fellow AFSers to clear customs.

If your host family lives in Tegucigalpa, you will join them the first night. If they are a distance away from the capital, you will stay with a welcome family for a couple of days until after the Arrival Orientation, when you will travel by bus to your host community to meet your family.

Arrival Orientation

Your one-day Arrival Orientation will be held at a relaxing site near Tegucigalpa. AFS staff and volunteers will run the orientation principally in English, but of course Spanish and other languages may be used to help everyone. This is a chance to relax and meet other AFSers from around the world while learning about AFS Honduras and Honduran culture, receiving safety tips and sharing your expectations.

Living in Honduras

Life Style and Family Living

No matter where you may live, you will experience the cheerful and warm hospitality that unites the Honduran people. *Mestizos*, Europeans, native Hondurans and Garifunas (black population), no matter who you visit you will be always invited to stay and share a meal.

Students are mostly placed in urban (30%) or suburban (60%) areas, with just 10% in small rural areas. About 45% of the students are placed in the northern plain of the country, and one-quarter of these are

placed in communities near the beach and the Garifuna villages. About 53% go to the central part of the country, which is mostly mountainous, and just a few are placed in the west.

Honduras is quite conservative compared with most western countries. For one thing, Latin parents tend to be very protective. Teenagers are expected to respect their parents and all elders, and live by the family's advice and rules. In general, you will be expected to show care and appreciation to all sorts of people.

In many families the father goes out to work while the mother stays at home and runs the household. Although it is common for host families to have a maid, a daughter is normally expected to help her mother with running the home, while a son runs errands and does odd jobs. When children date, parents tend to be stricter with their daughters.

Honduran host families, like AFS host families worldwide, are not paid. They open their homes to students in order to share their community and culture as well as to enrich their own family lives. Although punctuality is not of major concern among friends, it is important for school, church or formal occasions.

Dress and Appearance

In general, it is best to bring casual clothes such as jeans, T-shirts, slacks and skirts. It may be chilly during winter in the mountains, but remember that Honduras is a tropical country. You should bring one or two nice outfits (dress shirts and ties for men, dresses for women) and clothes for the rainy season. Don't over-pack: you may want to dress like your friends and buy clothes during your stay.

Most schools require students to wear uniforms. Please bring about US\$150 to cover this cost.

Diet and Meals

Honduras is one of the largest exporters of bananas in the world, and you will of course gain knowledge of the subject while eating the typical fried *plátanos* (a starchy variety of banana cooked and eaten like potatoes). Fruits are an integral part of the diet, as they are used in many dishes. Typical foods include *frijoles* (beans), eggs, rice, *tortillas* (similar in appearance to pancakes but not sweet and made of corn) and white and red meats combining Caribbean and Latin American cuisines. Equally characteristic of Honduran food are some beverages: Honduran coffee is highly appreciated, and natural fruit juices are popular.

Usually the whole family eats together. It is considered inappropriate for individuals to request special foods for themselves or to raid the refrigerator.

School

In an effort to increase the national level of education and provide everyone with the best instruction possible, Honduras offers an extremely wide and diverse variety of schools and study program. Attending high school is regarded as valuable and prestigious in Honduras, since not all teenagers have the possibility. Host families will expect their AFS students to take school seriously.

Honduran secondary schools can be either public or private, bilingual or non-bilingual, Catholic or Laics, academic or vocational.

Whether you will be placed in a College Preparatory, a Commercial Education or an art-oriented school will largely depend on the schools available in your region, your music or art skills, and the school affiliation and location of your host family. Grade level placement decisions are up to your school and will be partly determined by your academic record at home. Most AFSers are placed in the junior or senior year.

College Preparatory is oriented to preparing for university studies, and in these schools students are highly motivated in continuing their studies. Academic courses include math, physics, biology, languages and history. Commercial Education schools are business schools offering accounting, statistics and secretarial skills. There are also technical schools that teach students to be mechanics, electricians, and woodworkers.

The school year lasts 40 weeks beginning in February and ending in November, with vacations at Easter, June, September, and a two-month vacation in December-January. Bilingual schools, on the other hand, run from August to June with similar vacation periods. Classes are normally from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. or from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. Subjects are chosen for students by the school, depending on the area selected and/or grade placement. You will have few optional courses. As part of classes, you will be required to take tests, give speeches and do daily homework. The teaching method is direct and simple and will involve a lot of note-taking and the use of textbooks, which will be provided by AFS but should be returned at the end of the program.

Depending on your age and grade, you may be placed in the last or second-to-last year of school. All students attending the last year of high school must complete 144 hours of social work. This is a great opportunity for you to get acquainted with the social and economic reality of Honduras. High school students will help poor communities provide free assistance in such areas as education, health and construction. This assistance is a requirement, together with completing classes, for graduating. You will not get a diploma, but depending on the school you attend you could obtain a "recognition diploma" and a transcript of your grades.

Even though not common, some schools offer extracurricular activities usually related to school bands and sports, or they may have dance and drama groups available.

You will meet a lot of people and make friends at school, but remember that students are expected to keep good manners and respect school rules while in school (and in school uniform).

Teen Life

Most Honduran teenagers are serious about their studies, and little time is spent on extracurricular activities during weekdays. Few teenagers are sports-minded, but there are sports (soccer, basketball and volleyball) and other activities in which you can become involved.

Teenagers go out together as a group; they may go to a party, a movie, a disco or other social gathering, play sports, or simply hang out together in a park and talk. Honduran teenagers are noisy, playful and warm; there is often a lot of good-natured teasing and they will be glad to share a smile and make a new friend. Dancing and music play an important role for Hondurans of all ages, and they often reflect different ethnic heritages.

AFS Activities

In addition to an orientation at your arrival, AFS Honduras will provide you with two other orientations. AFS orientations are a chance for participants to meet (often for a weekend or for a few days) and talk about expectations for the future program and past experiences. Orientations involve participating in group activities and self-examination. Sessions usually provide new information and ways of looking at things while also allowing participants to share points of view. AFS orientations are social, interactive and educational, bringing together young people from many countries and helping them to better understand their own intercultural learning experience.

The second orientation will be a couple of months after your arrival. An AFS bus will pick you and your fellow AFSers up on the way to the Copán Ruins, one of the outstanding monuments of Mayan civilization. In this four-day orientation, you will also have a chance to talk about your home country and visit the finest expressions of Mayan art.

Two or three weeks before departure, you will participate in the so-called End-of-Stay orientation in Tegucigalpa. This is a three-day get-together with other AFSers to look back at your exchange experience, share memories and think about the future.

Besides these activities, AFS volunteers may plan others for you during your stay, perhaps an informal gathering, picnic or other event.

Travel

Although it is natural for you to want to travel while in Honduras, AFS is not designed as a tourist program. AFS offers the rare opportunity to be immersed in a culture and a country. It is likely, however, that you

will have some opportunities to travel with your host family, school, community organization, local chapter or AFS Honduras. We strongly discourage travelling on your own or with friends.

Spending Money

Host families usually pay only for ordinary family events in which hosted students are expected to join. For other activities with your friends or alone, such as going out or personal shopping, the expenses are your responsibility.

AFS recommends that you bring no more than US\$70 a month for spending money. Remember that spending more than your peers and family may create a distance between you and them.

Safety and Support

Like your country, Honduras can be safe if you are aware of the potential dangers and act accordingly. You will learn some safety tips at your arrival orientations and from your host family as well. AFS Honduras educates students to enable them to have a safe and rewarding experience.

During your stay, local AFS volunteers will be available to assist you as you learn to live as a Honduran. In the event of an emergency, AFS staff can be reached 24 hours a day by you in your host country and by your natural family at home.

For the welfare of participants, AFS worldwide has two rules: no driving and no use of drugs for non-medicinal purposes. Any student who violates either of these rules will be automatically sent home. AFS Honduras may have additional rules.

Health Precautions

In addition to the precautions mentioned above, AFS suggests that you discuss the health recommendations for Honduras (which you can get from your government or easily find on the Internet) with your personal doctor to determine what is best for you and your personal needs.

If you require any medical assistance during your stay, your host family or local volunteers will be ready to help find it. As an AFS participant, your medical expenses are covered for illness or injuries incurred while on the program, exclusive of pre-existing, dental or visual aid expenses.

Documents

You must have a passport that will be valid for six months longer than your intended stay. In addition to your passport, you also need a visa to enter and reside in your host country. Visas are obtained through the consular offices in your region and requirements often vary from consulate to consulate.

Consulates charge fees for their services, and obtaining your visa can be a complicated and lengthy process requiring a great deal of paperwork, patience and persistence. It is your responsibility to obtain your visa and pay the fees. However, AFS will let you know how to proceed and will provide you with the documents you need to apply for the visa.

Program Prices

All participants are required to pay participation fee **and** do a mandatory fundraising. To get further information, please visit our website www.afscanada.org or contact us.

The program price covers the following: round-trip international travel with your AFS group; travel in the host country to your host family; travel from your host family to your international departure point; AFS's medical plan; placement with your host; orientation in your home country and your host country; 24 hour emergency assistance in your home and host countries; a global medical assistance organization to support extreme emergencies; a network of trained volunteers who support you throughout your experience.

In order to keep costs low and provide good service, AFS utilizes a network of volunteers and staff in 50+ countries around the world. Volunteers need training, support and assistance from professional staff in each country. Other expenses you will normally need to pay in addition to the program price: passport

and visa fees, required inoculations, expenses for eyeglasses, contacts and dental care, school uniforms (where applicable) and personal spending money. Your housing and food are provided by your host family as part of their commitment to our program.

Country Information

Geography and Climate

Honduras is a small country located in the heart of Central America, between Guatemala and Nicaragua on the east and west respectively and El Salvador on the south. Honduras has a short coastline on the Pacific and reefed coasts on the Caribbean to the north. Mostly mountainous, Honduras has high peaks as well as lowlands, but all is covered with flourishing wildlife.

The climate in Honduras is tropical but varies from region to region owing to the diversity of the nation's topography. The northern coastal zone is generally warm and humid, while the mountainous central region is dry and cool with maximum temperatures of 25-30°C (77-86°F). Honduras has two seasons: the rainy season from June to October and the dry season from November to May, although on the Caribbean coast may see rain all year. Temperatures during the rainy season are slightly cooler than during the dry season.

Population

With a population of approximately 6.5 million, Honduras has several interesting minorities. Ninety percent of the population is classified as mestizo, a mixture of Spanish and native Honduran Indians. Approximately 7% are pure native Honduran Indians differentiated in several groups as "Lencas", "Chortis", "Payas" or "Sumos." Another important minority is the "Garifunas," a mixture of African descendants and Carib Indians who live on the north coast and islands.

Forty percent of Hondurans, or "Catrachos" as you may hear them referring to themselves, live in urban areas.

Language

Spanish is the official language spoken throughout the country. The various ethnic groups also have their own languages. English is widely spoken, particularly along the northern coast and among the inhabitants of the Bay Islands, with a broad Caribbean accent.

Government

Honduras is a democracy with a President elected by popular vote. The Constitution of 1982 establishes three branches of governmental powers: the Legislative, represented by a National Congress of 128 elected deputies; the Executive, made up of the President and the 13 members of his cabinet; and the Judicial, consisting of the Supreme Court and nine Judges chosen by the Congress.

Religion

The great majority (90%) of Hondurans are Roman Catholic, but there are also many other Christian sects and denominations such as Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Baptists, Pentecostals and Evangelicals. The indigenous tribes have their own religions, often existing alongside Christianity and incorporating elements of African and Indian animism and ancestor worship.

Launching Your AFS Experience

Evaluations by previous participants support our belief that those students who prepare prior to leaving have the best experience. In order to get ready, first make every effort to learn some key Spanish words and phrases so that you arrive with at least some basic knowledge of the language.

To familiarize yourself further with life in Honduras, make use of your local library and/or the Internet. A lot of general information is available about Honduras and its culture.

Although each participant's experience is unique, we strongly suggest that you speak with a recent AFS participant to Honduras. This person will be an excellent resource regarding living as a Honduran. If you

do not know any alumni, please contact your local volunteer or AFS Interculture Canada office. In addition, AFS Honduras will provide you with a special packet of country-specific information. Honduran people will be curious about your home community. You may be surprised to find out how much they already know about your country. Therefore, it is also helpful to be as informed as possible about current events in your community and country.

Welcome to the AFS Family and welcome to Honduras. We wish you a wonderful experience!

Curiously Honduran

- ☀ Honduras has one of the oldest working clocks on the American Continent.
- ☀ Honduras lies along the world's second largest barrier reef.
- ☀ Honduras is the only place in the world where whale shark can be seen all year long.
- ☀ Despite its modest size, Honduras is considered the second "lung" of the world, featuring the Biosphere del Rio Plátano.
- ☀ At the "Copán Ruinas", you can see the largest stone book of the Mayan Culture: Escalinata Jeroglíficos (the Hieroglyphic Stairway).

How to Apply

You first have to fill out the Preliminary Application form that you can find on our website at www.afscanada.org. If you don't have access to Internet, call us at (514) 288-3282 or 1-800-361-7248 and we will send you the document by mail

Quick Facts

Student age (upon arrival)	16 years to 17years 6 months	
Country data	Size	112,492Kmq 69,745 M2
	Population	6,560,000
	Official language	Spanish
	Government	Democracy with a President elected by popular vote
	Currency	Lempira, divided into 100 centavos
Useful websites	www.honduras.net www.honduras.com www.letsgehonduras.com www.hondurasindomita.com www.hondurastips.honduras.com	
AFS Honduras website	www.afs.hn	
AFS Honduras e-mail address	info-honduras@afs.org	

Why Honduras?

- ☀ Live in a country that has a lot to offer, from Caribbean beaches to wild nature and Mayan culture (three distinct worlds).
- ☀ Your time in Honduras will be a special opportunity for personal growth, especially because the country is unique in many aspects, and because its poverty and developing nature offers a challenge and a wide range of new things to learn (rich culture, customs and traditions).
- ☀ Because of the country's excellent weather, there is no need to spend money on winter clothing.