



Birds and Beaches: Unique Lodgings in Honduras



By Pamela Conley

In the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, **Honduras** has cleaned up most of the mess, and miles of white sand beaches and rich mountain rain forests beckon adventure seekers. Two unusual eco-lodges; distinctly different from each other, offer visitors a true Honduran experience.

Pico Bonito Lodge

Located on the Caribbean coast, only 30 minutes from La Ceiba, **Pico Bonito Lodge** opened in June, 2000. The first first-class nature lodge in Honduras sits at the base of the largest national park in Honduras.

The view of rich rainforest rises at the base where waterfalls can be viewed when the clouds give way to sunshine. Towering peaks of the Nombre de Dios Mountain Range point to the stars while the base sprawls down to the sparkling sea.

Pico Bonito National Park

Pico Bonito National Park is also the most impenetrable national park with access to trails mostly on private land.

Pico Bonito Lodge has built trail access on the 200-acre property. With the help of guides, the visitors will be able to identify some of the 270 species of birds recently recorded there. Several trails lead to waterfalls. This is also home where the jaguars and ocelots prowl, monkeys hide in the treetops, and shy kinkajous play in the dark shadows.

The grand wood and stone lodge is connected by raised wooden walkways that connect to the restaurant and conference buildings. An inviting pool with a terrace and bar looks up at the forested slopes of the highest peak in Honduras.

One of the most popular spots to watch birds is from a river deck overlooking the cascading river of Rio Corinto. Tropical plants lead the way on gravel paths to the private duplex cabins, each with their own private porches, ceiling fans, and shuttered windows, blending rustic refinement at its best.

The Pico Bonito Lodge also makes a good base for exploring the other attractions in the area. Aside from the butterfly farm located at the hotel, make sure to visit the **Cuero y Salado Wildlife and Manatee Refuge**, kayak and raft the **Cangrejal River**, tour the ancient ruins of **Copan**, take an excursion to the **Bay of Islands** for scuba diving or sailing, and visit **Lancetilla**, the largest botanical garden in the world where trails lead to some of the best bird watching. All of these excursions can be arranged at the hotel.

Transfers to the Pico Bonito Lodge will be provided from the La Ceiba International Airport. Prices vary due to season from \$95 to \$125 based on double occupancy. Optional meal plans are offered.

Campamento

A different kind of luxury can be found at **Campamento**, a family farm (*finca*) located 2.5 miles west of Trujillo, near the Garifuna community of Santa Fe. Owned by Arturo and Orleis Ramos, Campamento offers five new modest cabanas for rent on one of the most remote and pristine beaches in Honduras.

As visitors drive into the entrance off a dirt road (4WD in rainy season is important), they are greeted by a collection of farm animals including goats, sheep, deer, turkeys, ducks and geese. The new cabanas, rebuilt after Hurricane Mitch destroyed the entire farm, are modest and clean with red tile floors.

A porch with table and chairs overlooks the beach in the front and a rich rainforest behind. Campamento also offers camping and horseback riding, and there is a boat available for small tours around the area. Arturo and Orleis can also provide guides to the various National Parks and the Lagoon.

Besides having strength and courage, a love for animals, and an eye for beauty and gardening, Orleis is a great cook. Campamento has a large outside restaurant and bar covered with a thatched roof, where she serves typical Honduran food as well as all kinds of seafood dishes. And at \$40 per night for a cabana on a quiet, beautiful beach, Honduras doesn't get better than this.