

Western Honduras



Honduras' rich past is remarkably evident here. You see it in the faces of the Lenca farmers as they head out at dawn to work the earth, in the expressionist gaze of the Maya carvings at the Copán archaeological site, and in the natural cycle that smites out death and decay each year with new growth in the wildlife reserves protecting the region's forests and mountains.

For the intrepid explorer, there are mountain romps in the pine and cloud forests of Montaña de Celaque National Park, and early-dawn bird-watching excursions in Parque Nacional Cerro Azul Meámbar and around the nearby Lago de Yojoa. And while most travelers end up spending the majority of their Western Honduran time ascending bird-towers, visiting butterfly farms and tromping through the tunnels and mysterious pyramids of Copán, it's definitely worth your while to extend your trip in the region for a few days, maybe even a few weeks, leaving time to visit the small whitewashed villages along the Ruta Lenca, witness the unique pageantry of the Semana Santa processions at Comayagua or venture further afield to towns and wild areas still untouched by the tourist trail.

Trips to the region generally begin and end in the crowded city environs of San Pedro Sula. It's not the prettiest – or safest – city in the world. But there are a few nearby sights and city-bound cultural attractions worth checking out before you put your nose to the wind and head out into the unspoiled wilds of this unique region.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Spirit yourself through tunnels and up ancient stairways in Honduras' only major Maya site, **Copán archaeological site** (p126)
- Hold your breath and watch your step as you tread lightly through the excellent bird-watching territories around the mist-shrouded **Lago de Yojoa** (p151).
- Find yourself on the **Ruta Lenca** (p133), where you can climb Honduras' highest peak in **Parque Nacional Montaña de Celaque** (p141) or simply get away from it all in the traditional whitewashed pueblos of **La Campa** (p143) and **San Manuel de Colohete** (p145)
- Leave **San Pedro Sula** (opposite) – it's the smartest move you'll make all day!
- Ascend to spiritual heights at **Comayagua's Semana Santa** (p160) celebration, where intricate *alfombras* (colorful sawdust carpets with religious iconography) mark the righteous path.



