

# Survival Guide

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# Directory A-Z

## Accommodations

We will list accommodation in order of preference. For those nights when you need a break from shared showers and thin mattresses, we've also included a few midrange options as well as a few splurges.

Accommodation costs vary from country to country. Generally Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala are the cheapest countries; Mexico and Belize (and many beach destinations), the most expensive. Features like a private bathroom, hot water and air-con drive up prices.

Reservations are necessary in tourist areas during peak season, particularly during *Semana Santa* (Easter Week) and the week between Christmas and New Year, when locals are also traveling around the region.

Prices do change; use any prices listed here as a gauge only.

## Camping

If you plan on camping, it's best to bring your own gear. Organized campgrounds aren't common. Facilities at campgrounds can vary; only some have fire pits, latrines and water. Another option is *refugios* (huts), usually found in national parks.

Some hostels set aside areas for campers. Some national parks and reserves (particularly in Costa Rica)

have basic facilities, but they can be hit-and-miss – sometimes packed and noisy. Prices start at US\$7 per person per night. In some places it's feasible to ask to camp on private land.

## Hostels

Hostels are found throughout Central America and mostly serve all ages. They generally charge around US\$7 to US\$15 for a bunk. Except for in Mexico and Costa Rica, Hostelling International (HI) membership isn't particularly useful as many hostels are independently run.

## Guesthouses & Hotels

Guesthouses are generally small, family-run lodgings. Most rooms have a fan and shared bathroom. Many do not provide a towel or soap. Options range from nice rooms with shared bath to a dumpy bed with smeared mosquito remains on the walls and a smelly, leaky-faucet shower down the hall.

In hotels, rooms with air-con and TV start at double the price of a room with fan.

Generally breakfast is not included in the overnight rate.

'Hot water' can be lukewarm and working only at certain hours of the day. Be sure to ask if water is cold, as it may just be a matter of turning on the hot water heater. Beware of the electric shower: a cold-water showerhead juiced by an electric heating element. Don't touch it, or anything metal, while in the shower or you may get a shock.

Used toilet paper should be placed in the receptacle provided.

We've done our best to avoid including places used by the 'hourly' crowd or prostitutes. If you stumble on some we've included, please let us know.

## Hammocks & Cabins

Sleeping in a hammock can make for a breezier night than sleeping in a stuffy room. Many beach towns have hammock rooms or areas for the same price as a dorm. *Cabañas* (or *cabinas*) provide memorable stays on the beach or in the jungle. Amenities vary – many are simple thatched-roof huts with a dirt or sand floor.

## BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodations reviews by Lonely Planet authors, check out [www.lonelyplanet.com/central-america/hotels](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/central-america/hotels). You'll find independent reviews, as well as recommendations on the best places to stay. Best of all, you can book online.