

## Lands of Contrasts – 3 Country Journey

**10 days / 09 nights daily from San Pedro Sula to Managua**

**Approach: Mayan Culture, Nature Experience & Colonial Cities**

### **Day 1: San Pedro Sula – Copán Ruinas (Honduras)**

Your guide meets you at the hotel reception. To start our tour we shortly visit the downtown area to observe the intense commercial activity of the fastest growing city in Central America. After our visit of the local handcraft market “Guamilito” with its colourful stores, we continue driving to the west of Honduras until we reach Copan Ruinas. En route learn about Mayan trade routes, social and political organization, and theories on their mysterious demise. Upon arrival you have enough time for a stroll through the romantic colonial town. 2 overnights in Copán Ruinas.

### **Day 2: Copán Ruinas**

Today we visit the archeological park of Copan. In the afternoon we take a deeper look at the "Sepulturas", a residential and burial site of the Mayan nobles. With a population of around 24,000 at its height Copan wasn't the largest Mayan City. However, it is nowadays known as the Athens of the New World, as at the peak of the Mayan development Copán was its principal cultural centre. In its development of sculpture, astronomy, and hieroglyphic writing Copan was far ahead of other larger and more powerful Mayan cities. Learn about the impressive 63-step stairway with over 2,500 hieroglyphs and the masterfully carved stelae. Appreciate to its full the significant number of ruins surrounded by giant trees that provide shades all over the site.

### **Day 3: Copán Ruinas – Santa Rosa de Copán**

In the morning we transfer to Santa Rosa de Copán, the most important city in Western Honduras. The charming city center, with its cobblestone streets and picturesque buildings, dates back to colonial times. In the afternoon we tour the village of Santa Rosa and visit the Flor de Copán tobacco manufactory. The factory produces about sixty very exclusive brands. During the traditional production process cigars are rolled by hand and covered by thin cedar wood, which characterizes the distinctive aroma of the Flor de Copán cigars. Nearly 50,000 handmade cigars are produced daily and sent to customers in Europe, America, China and Rusia. Overnight in Santa Rosa de Copán.

### **Day 4: Santa Rosa de Copán – La Palma – Cihutan – Suchitoto (El Salvador)**

After breakfast we continue to El Poy, the border crossing to El Salvador. First stop is at La Palma, a charming little town surrounded by verdant mountains and bathed in fresh air. La Palma is famous for its “artesanias” and its paintings. Painter Fernando Llorc moved to La Palma in 1972, and developed an art trend that today represents El Salvador around the world. Llorc's childlike images of mountain villages, “campesinos” or images of Christ are painted in bright colours on anything from seeds to church walls. After this visit we continue towards Suchitoto but before arriving, we tour Cihuatán, a relatively unknown archaeological site. It is believed that this site had been inhabited in the early post classic. An artistic reconstruction of the site shows a city with wall all around, with a pyramid, squares and minor structures, the figurines with wheels at Cihuatán, are testimony of the great imagination of the Mayas. It is one of the few complexes that have the ball game area almost restored. 2 overnights in Suchitoto.

### **Day 5: Suchitoto – Joya de Ceren – Tazumal – Suchitoto**

Today we visit the archaeological site of Joya de Ceren, also called Salvadorian Pompeii. Joya de Ceren was a pre-Hispanic farming community that was buried under a volcanic eruption about AD 590. The site was inscribed in the UNESCO World heritage list in 1993 because of the completeness of the evidence that it provides of everyday life in a Mesoamerican farming community of the 6th century. Later we continue to the Maya ruins of Tazumal. Highlight of this excavation site is a life-size, stone carved sculpture of the Nahua-God. The ruins of Tazumal are considered the most important and best preserved in the country.

**Day 6: Suchitoto – San Salvador – Choluteca (Honduras)**

In the morning we make a short city tour of El Salvador's vibrant capital visiting the National Palace and other important monuments. Later we leave the country to Honduras. Choluteca is the most important town in the southwest of Honduras and is steeped with living history. One of the many highlights is the centrally located cathedral from the 17th century. Overnight in Choluteca.

**Day 7: Choluteca – León (Nicaragua)**

Along the Pan-American Highway we transfer to León. After Granada, which is better preserved, León has the best colonial architecture in Nicaragua. One of the highlights of the ancient capital of Nicaragua is its cathedral, which is the largest cathedral in Central America. Built between 1747 and the early 19th century it is now a UNESCO world heritage site. The monument expresses the transition from Baroque to Neoclassical architecture and is characterized by the sobriety of its interior decoration and the abundance of natural light. Overnight in León.

**Day 8: León – Managua – Granada**

In the morning we visit the ruins of "León Viejo", the old León. The ruins are a UNESCO world heritage site and are situated outside today's city borders, on the banks of the Managua Lake. León Viejo was one of the oldest Spanish colonial settlements in the Americas. As it didn't develop, but fell down in ruins, it is one of the few towns from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which are preserved intact and unaltered by subsequent rebuilding. Afterwards we continue our journey towards Granada. En route we stop for a short city tour of Managua, the current capital of Nicaragua. Later you have enough time for a walk through the picturesque center of Granada. The cathedral, with its stunning yellow facade, is one of the highlights of the town. 2 overnights in Granada.

**Day 9: Granada – City Tour and Masaya Volcano**

Granada is the oldest colonial city in Nicaragua and offers many colonial sites to explore. Stroll over the Plaza Central and get carried away by the vivid city life. On our tour through the historic center we pass by old colonial houses and other important buildings like the San Francisco Convent or Guadeloupe Church. In the afternoon we visit the Masaya Volcano. From the vantage point at the crater you enjoy a panoramic view. At fair weather, you might see the Laguna de Apoyo, the Nicaragua Lake and the city of Granada.

**Day 10: Granada – Managua**

On time we drive back to Managua airport for your international departure flight. End of program.

**Services included:**

- 09 nights lodging incl. breakfast
- Bilingual Mesoamerica Travel guide
- Transfers in A/C vehicle according to itinerary
- Entrances and local guides according to itinerary
- Local taxes

Border crossing fees are not included in the rate.

Please find the rates for up to 4 participants on our web.

Wholesalers and groups 5+ please inquire special conditions at [sales@mesoamerica-travel.com](mailto:sales@mesoamerica-travel.com)



**Remarks:**

- For a small additional charge we transfer you back to Tegucigalpa or San Pedro Sula.
- You can book this tour in the opposite direction without additional costs. You can also extend or shorten it or propose program changes.
- We suggest extension stays on the Bay Islands in the Honduran Caribbean or at the lodge Morgan's Rock at the Nicaraguan pacific coast.