

Surviving Honduras

Two former South Africans are taking three years out of everyday life to explore the world's most beautiful trails, which are often in the most dangerous countries!

We found running in Central America to be quite challenging. Although there are several organised ultra races and multi-day stage events in the region, the idea of running still seems rather foreign to the locals. Runners out in running gear thus attract a fair amount of attention, and it's not always positive. Stories abound of tourists being relieved of their cash, cameras, and smartphones. Luckily, we never had to deal with anything more serious than heckling from the odd ill-behaved local while running.

Last issue we talked a little about our favourite Guatemalan running experiences. Beautiful Guatemala left us feeling excited and energised, and we had to mentally prepare ourselves for Honduras, a country of ill repute. According to the UN, the country reported 7,200 murders in 2012. With only 7.9 million inhabitants, this number translates to the highest rate in the world. The main transportation hub, the city of San Pedro Sula, is practically impossible to avoid for the backpacking trail runner and is

universally recognised as the world's most dangerous and violent city.

Understandably, we were slightly edgy while on the road in this beautiful country. However, we would not be deterred, and armed with our adventurous spirits and heaps of common sense, we boarded a bus from Rio Dulce in Guatemala for *la frontera de Honduras* at the town of Copan Ruinas. This beautiful little town provided a wonderful introduction to Honduras, leaving us confident that there would indeed be real value to experience in this oft-maligned country. Copan Ruinas offered us a number of great road runs, including a run that took us to the amazing pre-Columbian Mayan ruins, a UNESCO World Heritage site, which gives the town its name.

It wasn't until we made our way to the unimaginably humid cloud forests, staying in the hard to reach village of Los Naranjos for a few days, that we managed to scope out a legitimate trail run. After speaking to the wonderful staff at D&D Brewery and Lodge, founded by a craft brewer from Virginia in the US, we mapped out a run which

would take us into and through a part of the Cerro Azul Meámbar National Park just to the east of the vast Lake Yojoa, the largest lake in Honduras, with a surface area of 80km².

With its many waterfalls and dense foliage, it provided an amazing playground. The running, however, was tough. The trail was slippery, steep, and gnarly (read: super-technical). The steepness, of course, also meant we were provided spectacular views. This was also the first time that one of us ran - literally - into wildlife. A small bird flew directly into Bev's face, luckily



leaving no permanent damage to either party!

After taking in just over 25km of this rugged beauty, which included more than 1,200m of elevation gain, we were ready to head back to our lodge at D&D Brewery, where we knew a delicious pale ale, and awesome vegan bean burritos were waiting.

The hardest part of the day was not the run, but reaching the national park. It involved a section of highway that is known to be patrolled by a local band of thugs, who wield their machetes in order to extract an ever-changing toll from passersby.

To make matters worse, the bandits are in cahoots with some of the taxi operators, basically guaranteeing delivery of your possessions to them if you hire the wrong ride. This is where local knowledge demonstrates its worth, as the staff at D&D Brewery ensured we knew who to trust and who to avoid. We successfully navigated the pitfalls, and even though we were (willingly) extorted to the tune of a 50% premium by our return taxi driver (as we all knew that we had no other means of transportation home), it was still a bargain to get back home without meeting any machetes.

After a day spent avoiding bandits, negotiating safe transport in broken Spanish, exploring a forbidden and unknown land, and running gorgeous trails in 100% humidity, we really felt *alive!* 🏔️

BEV & RICHARD ATTFIELD

Their journey started in Belize, Central America, and has taken them through 21 countries, including South Africa. eatrunsee.com

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Vagabonding vegans!



Fuelling our global travels on a plant-based diet is a major component of the Eat.Run.See manifesto.

Living comfortably in Canada as vegans for the past 10 years, we want to experience how our lifestyle can be replicated in each of the countries we visit.

On the road for over a year now, our travels have taken us through more than 20 countries. With few exceptions, our taste buds have been delighted by the local fare and availability of plant-based staples such as non-dairy milks, nuts, beans, lentils, breads, pasta, peanut butter, and of course, exotic fresh produce and fruit.

When possible, we shop in local markets and grocery stores to prepare our own meals. This offers a fascinating look at global and local food availability, eating behaviours, and offers a rare, intimate glimpse into local culture.

Many countries also have natural food stores in larger towns and cities that are generally well stocked with imported grains, soy products such as tofu, quinoa, cereals, and protein bars. These items can be expensive, so we limit ourselves to a few treat items and instead favour the more budget-friendly local vegan staples.

We also like to eat at restaurants to sample dishes and flavours unique to each region.

The biggest challenge is often explaining what

our dietary requirements are, especially in countries where English is not widely spoken or understood, and where the concept of plant-based eating is quite foreign. Similarly, understanding foreign food labels with no English subtitles leads to interesting interactions with local shoppers and store clerks to ensure that what we're buying is in fact vegan!

Long travel days are the most difficult



for us from an eating perspective, as road and airside food options are often quite limited, expensive, and unhealthy. We overcome this by packing snacks, which often include fruit, peanut butter sandwiches, and nuts. And we jump for joy whenever we can supplement our snacks with something fresh, interesting, and tasty!

FOOD OSCARS

Most vegan-friendly country India.

Least vegan-friendly country Argentina.

Best beverage The *Jesus Shake* at *Simon Says Smoothie Bar*, San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua (soy milk,

banana, peanut butter, almonds, and cacao). **Most unusual food experience**

Home-brewed Nepali hot millet beer called *tongba*

enjoyed at a Himalayan mountain hut. **Best vegan meal in a restaurant** All the freshly-made vegan options on the menu at *Cafe Campestre*, Isla de Ometepe, Nicaragua.

Biggest food surprise

The wide variety of tofu and other vegan dishes on the menu at *Los Amigos Hostel* in the small town of Flores, Guatemala. **Best value** Beans and rice in Central America (less than R10 for a large plate!)

Quirkiest food Steamed corn from a bus vendor in Nicaragua. **Most risky meal** *Papusas*, a bean-filled flat bread with hot sauce and pickles, from a roadside stall in Panajachel, Guatemala. Usually we avoid street vendors due to diet, health and cleanliness concerns. Think poor food preparation and storage, unclean surfaces and utensils, dirty water, non-vegan food cross-contamination, and you get the picture. In this instance, we really wanted to experience this food and be part of the local atmosphere. So we picked the place where the locals were flocking to, and enjoyed our riskiest (but very yummy) meal yet and lived to tell the tale! **Best grocery store** Woolworths, South Africa. **Food we can't live without on the road** Soy milk, followed closely by peanut butter. **What we miss most from home** Our signature spinach and banana breakfast smoothies made in our kick-ass Vitamix blender.