Honduras – The Lodge at Pico Bonito

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Fly USA; overnight
Day 2	Fly San Pedro Sula; transfer Pico Bonito
Day 3 – 8	Explore Pico Bonito & surroundings
Day 9	In flight
Day 10	Arrive UK

Pre-tour Highlands Extension

Day 1 – 2	La Tigra National Park
Day 3 – 4	Panacam
Day 5	Transfer to Pico Bonito

Departs

November and February – see website

Focus

Birds (mainly) & other wildlife

Grading

A/B. Easy birding walks only

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code HND01)

Highlights

- Over 420 bird species recorded in Pico Bonito Park
- Lovely Cotinga and Honduran Emerald amongst several specialities.
- Agami Heron and various wetland birds at Salado Wildlife Refuge.
- A whole host of hummingbirds, woodpeckers and raptors on offer.
- Various monkeys, Tamandua, Coati.







From top: Black-throated Trogon, Purple-crowned Fairy, Black-crested Coquette

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Introduction

Honduras is an enchanting place where the past mingles with the present. It is a land where mountains run into the sea, where ancient civilisations once thrived and where one can still be immersed in large expanses of wilderness. The country is about the size of England and is part of northern Mesoamerica, sandwiched between Nicaragua to the south and El Salvador and Guatemala to the west. The sparkling Caribbean Sea lies off the north coast. It is 83% mountainous with the highest peak rising to 9,000 feet. More than 100 protected areas of different sizes dot the countryside and these represent every major habitat found here. In eastern Honduras the Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve alone is larger than all of Costa Rica's reserves combined. Such is the low volume of visiting natural history tour groups that it is not uncommon to have a whole national park to yourself!

Honduras sits on an ecological divide and contains elements of North America, Central America and South America, making this a naturalist's paradise. There are many major ecosystems that range from coastal mangrove estuaries, vast wetlands, and lowland rainforest to cloudforests, vast pine/oak forests and rain shadow valleys harbouring arid thorn scrub forest. The country is a birders' paradise, with nearly 800 species of birds. It has one known endemic (Honduran Emerald) and offers some spectacular bird watching in its diverse and accessible habitats. Some species that are easier to see here than elsewhere in their range include Keel-billed Motmot, Lovely Cotinga, Fulvous Owl, White-breasted Hawk, Middle American Screech-owl, Great Swallow-tailed Swift, Speckled Mourner and White-vented Euphonia to name a few.

On this tour, we will be based at the comfortable Lodge at Pico Bonito. The Lodge nestles at the base of 250,000 acre Pico Bonito National Park which has contiguous forest cover from sea level to over 2,400 metres (8,000 feet.). We will hike the Lodge trails through lowland rainforest in search of key species such as the prized Keel-billed Motmot. The observation tower by the river can produce the glimmering Lovely Cotinga which often sits atop the emergent trees. During our stay we will also visit the 30,000 acre Cuero y Salado wildlife refuge, a coastal mangrove estuary. We will take a short drive to reach the reserve, followed by a 2-hour boat ride in search of mammals, reptiles and birds.


Pico Bonito National Park

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1 In flight

We depart from London in the morning on a flight to the USA. Upon arrival we will transfer to a convenient airport hotel to spend the night before our onward flight to Honduras the following morning. An ESTA will be required for transit in the US.

Overnight: USA airport hotel

Day 2 The Lodge at Pico Bonito

Our flight down to Honduras will arrive around midday. We will then drive for four hours from San Pedro Sula north-east towards the port city of La Ceiba, turning off into the Pico Bonito National Park. The Lodge at Pico Bonito is located on the northern (Caribbean) coast of Honduras. This fantastic place is uniquely nestled between the Corinto and Coloradito Rivers and its 400-acre-reserve borders the park involving various habitats including riparian areas, lowland tropical wet forest, and some small plantations (coffee, banana, orange and cacao). Each area harbours its own set of bird species with some being confined to very specific areas, while others can be seen at several sites. The lodge's three strategically located observation towers offer maximum viewing and photography opportunities. This extremely comfortable lodge will be our base for the next seven nights.

Overnight: The Lodge at Pico Bonito

Day 3 Pico Bonito

Our first day at the Lodge at Pico Bonito will begin with an early breakfast/orientation on the spacious, front deck of the Lodge's Itzama Restaurant. For the next several hours our guide will lead us through the Lodge grounds, looking for and familiarising ourselves with numerous bird species that are common around the lodge grounds. A climb to the top of the 'Toucan Tower' observation platform, offers a bird's eye view of the forest canopy that can include views of the coveted Lovely Cotinga.


Keel-billed Toucan


Lovely Cotinga

Throughout the morning, we will bird areas of tropical, secondary and gallery forest and plantation areas along the Rio Coloradito. Along this route, diversity is high with possible species including: Lovely Cotinga; Masked Tityras; Turquoise-browed Motmot; Tody Motmot; Keel-billed Toucan; Collared Aracari; Ferruginous Pygmy Owl; Black-cowled Oriole; Black-headed, Collared and Slaty-tailed Trogons; Northern Royal Flycatcher; Green, and Red-Legged Honeycreepers and up to 16 species of hummingbirds including Crowned Woodnymph, Blue-throated Goldentail, Violet Sabrewing, Purple-crowned Fairy, Stripe-tailed Hummingbird, Brown Violetear, Mexican Violetear and White-necked Jacobin.


Crowned Woodnymph


Violet Sabrewing

In the afternoon, after lunch and a siesta/rest period, we'll ascend with our guide along the Lodge's loop trail system in search of some of the forest interior birds that this rainforest paradise has to offer.

In addition to the Toucan tower at the beginning of the trail, this route offers views from an elevated ridge, which overlooks the Rio Coloradito and surrounding forested slopes. Forest-dwelling species may include, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Tawny-crowned Greenlet, Green Shrike-vireo, Black-throated Shrike-tanager, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker and our first attempt at the Keel-billed Motmot. Overlooks often produce White Hawk, Black Hawk-eagle and at times Ornate and Black-and-white Hawk-eagles. Other species we will be on the look-out for include Great Potoo, Middle American Screech-owl and White-vented Euphonia. Many species of parrots, toucan, flycatchers, orioles and hummingbirds can be found around the pool area.

We'll may also visit observation Tower #3 along the way, set amidst an area of bird-rich secondary forest and overgrown plantation. White-collared and Red-capped Manakins occur at various locations here. Species may also include the Slaty-breasted Tinamou, Little Tinamou, Scaly-throated Leaftosser; Keel-billed Toucan; Yellow-eared Toucanet; plus Collared Aracari, and a host of flycatcher species, including the Northern Royal Flycatcher, and many of the trogon, woodpecker, woodcreeper, tanager and oriole species in the national parks 420+ bird list.

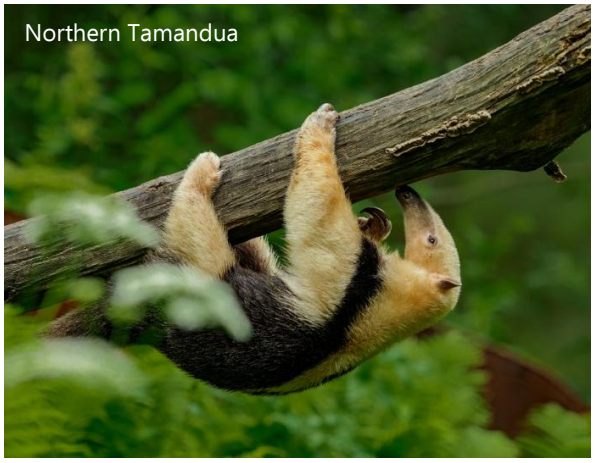
In addition to superb viewing from the lodge's towers, this route passes several overlooks along the Rio Coloradito and sightings of many raptor species can be made here. Great Potoo are also common here with the chance of Northern Potoo as well.

Overnight: The Lodge at Pico Bonito

Day 4 Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge

After early pre-breakfast birding around the lodge's gardens, we will get ready to jump on our bus and drive towards the mangroves of Cuero y Salado, located one hour away from the lodge. Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge is named after the Cuero and Salado Rivers which meet the ocean here and we'll likely take a packed lunch today so that we can enjoy fully our time in the field. The Refuge comprises over 35,000 acres of rivers, lagoons, mangroves, and forests that are home to diverse wildlife and a variety of birds exceeding 350 species.

Once at the Refuge, we will board a small, motorized skiff and cruise slowly through the mangrove estuary which is comprised of three different species of mangroves, as well as other hardwood tree species. Our guides and boat handlers have great eyes and, when needed, prefer to silence the boat's motor to quietly paddle in for a better look. Agami Heron, Boat-billed Heron, Bare-throated Tiger Heron, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Tricolored Heron, Jabiru, Ringed Kingfisher, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Sungrebe, Laughing Falcon, Bat Falcon and Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture are but a few potential highlights of a visit to Cuero y Salado. During the right season (February and March), we may also have the opportunity to visit an established Boat-billed Heron rookery, consisting of several hundred pairs. Mantled Howler and White-faced Capuchin monkeys are fairly common here, and Manatee could be the highlight of our mammal list if we are lucky! Crocodile populations are also plentiful and Tamandua, Central American Coati, Raccoon and Green Iguana are all possible.


Northern Tamandua


Sungrebe

Having driven back to Pico Bonito we will spend the late afternoon birding the trails again (depending on the time) or birding the lower grounds, looking for species such as Red-lored Amazon, Great Potoo, Lovely Cotinga, White-necked Manakin, Black-headed Trogon, Cocoa, Spot-crowned and Olivaceous Woodcreepers, Red-capped Manakin, Green Shrike Vireo, Black-throated Shrike-tanager, Russet Antshrike, Rufous Mourner, Dusky Antbird, Ovenbird, Northern Royal Flycatcher, Northern Tufted Flycatcher,, Black-faced Antthrush, Olive-backed Euphonia, White-winged Tanager, Black-faced Grosbeak, and many more!

After dinner, we'll be guided around the Lodge's gardens and plantation areas where Mottled Owl, Middle American Screech Owl and both Great and Northern Potoo may be found.

Overnight: The Lodge at Pico Bonito

Day 5 Rio Aguan Valley and the endemic Honduran Emerald

We will dedicate today to visit the River Aguan Valley and Olanchito areas, home of the only Honduran endemic: the Honduran Emerald. This beautiful but critically endangered hummingbird survives only in remaining pockets of tropical dry forest to the south of Pico Bonito National Park. Descending the 'rain shadow', or southern side of the Park, cloudforested peaks and pine-studded slopes give way to an arid, almost desert-like plain, once dominated by tropical thorn or dry forest. Although endangered, the Honduran Emerald is considered common within its habitat. As such, regardless of season, our chances of seeing the Honduran Emerald are very good.


Honduran Emerald

We need to leave very early today – 0415 – in order to be on site at first light. Our ride into 'Emerald country' will be an interesting one, as a surprising number of bird species inhabit this dry forest and it'll provide a look at a very different side of Honduras. Along the way, we'll also visit pockets of wet areas within this arid region. These sites can be magnets for wading birds and other species such as Double-striped Thick-knee, Lesser Roadrunner, Lesser Ground Cuckoo, Northern Beardless Tyrannulet, White-lored Gnatcatcher, White-bellied Wren, and Canivet's Emerald among others. We will aim to reach the Emerald site for breakfast and will walk a short distance to search for them.

We will enjoy lunch in the nearby ranching town of Olanchito and return to the Lodge mid-afternoon in time to relax before dinner.

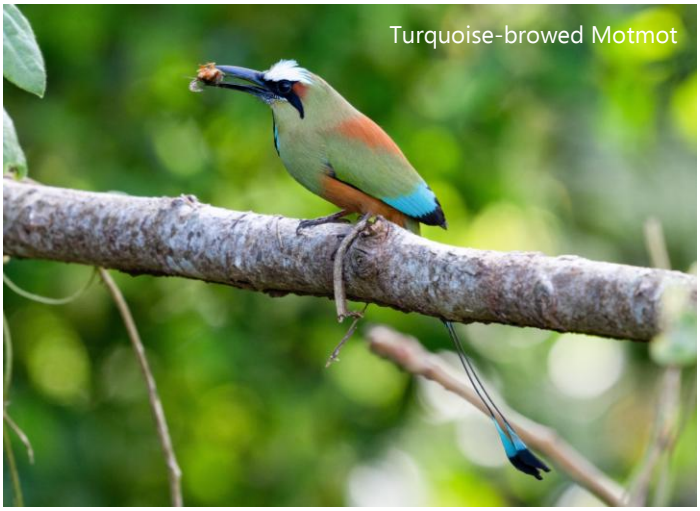
Overnight: The Lodge at Pico Bonito

Day 6 Corinto Pearl

This morning we shall have breakfast together before departing for Corinto Pearl Eco Resort, a private reserve located just 15-minutes from Pico Bonito Lodge. Located in the lower part of Pico Bonito National Park, throughout the morning we shall enjoy birding areas of tropical, secondary and gallery forest, and the plantation areas along the Rio Corinto. This area also gives us to see many fast-growing riparian trees and allows us interaction with many open forest birds.

We will be walking the main access to the property on where, thanks to the diversity of tree species, a typical day of birding here could yield; Lovely Cotinga, Crimson-collared Tanager, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Lesson's Motmot, Black-headed Trogon, Blue-crowned Chlorophonia, Yellow-billed Cacique, White-collared Manakin, Long-billed Hermit, Stripe-throated Hermit and many more species.


White-collared Manakin


Turquoise-browed Motmot

We'll have lunch back at The Lodge & Spa at Pico Bonito which gives options for the afternoon of either revisiting the Lodge's upper and lower trail system, and trying for species we haven't yet seen, or better views at some we have, or by this time the spa might be calling your name!

Overnight: The Lodge at Pico Bonito

Day 7 The Lodge at Pico Bonito

This is an ideal day to walk one of the long trails at Pico Bonito. Alternatively some may prefer to relax, enjoy additional hiking or focus on photography. Our guide will be free and available at all times. If there is interest today, there is the possibility to take part snorkelling excursion to the Cayos Cochinos archipelago, payable locally. The excursion includes the guide, gear, several snorkelling stops, a short island hike in pursuit of an endemic subspecies of Boa constrictor and lunch on a small island called Cayo Chachaguate. If you are interested, please speak to the lodge during your stay.

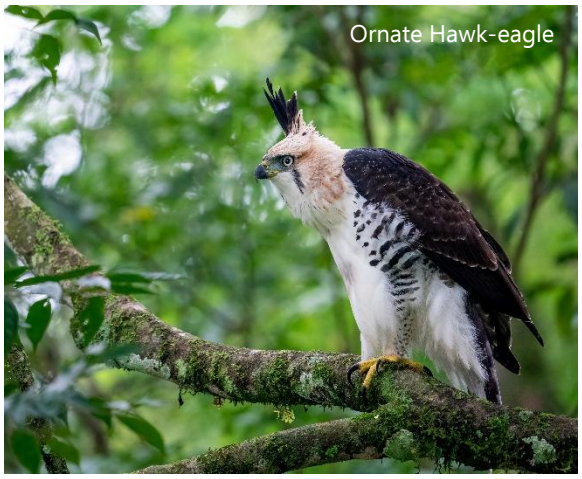
Overnight: The Lodge at Pico Bonito

Day 8 Lancetilla Botanical Gardens

The Lancetilla Botanical Gardens is another of the must-see birding hotspots in Honduras. Set amidst a coastal valley flanked by low, rain-forested hills, William Popenoe of The United Fruit Company founded Lancetilla in 1925 as a station where tropical fruit (especially bananas) and trees were studied for commercial value. Since Popenoe was a plant biologist he also experimented with fruits and plants from all over the world. Some of this work continues, although this diverse tropical treasure, composed of a mosaic of forest and edge habitats, is today arguably best known for its superb birding. Honduras 'annual Christmas Bird Count' is held at Lancetilla; every December birders flock to confirm, and add to, the Garden's growing list of colorful, tropical species.

The current bird list includes motmots and manakins, woodcreepers and warblers, woodpeckers, toucans, tanagers, and scores of others. Thanks to this diversity, a typical day of birding here could yield, Common Black Hawk, Ornate Hawk-eagle, Ruddy Crake, White-fronted Parrot, Red-lored Parrot, Squirrel Cuckoo, Black-headed Trogon, Gartered Trogon, Collared Trogon, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Blue-crowned Motmot, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Great Antshrike, Barred Antshrike, Trilling Gnatwren, and a host of other resident and migrant species. We will complete our morning at Lancetilla with lunch in the beach-side town of Tela, and return to the Lodge by late afternoon.


Bat Falcon


Ornate Hawk-eagle

Overnight: The Lodge at Pico Bonito

Day 9 Pico Bonito – San Pedro Sula

Today, we will be transferred to San Pedro Sula in order to catch our flight to London via the US.

Day 10 Arrive in London

Arrive in London mid-morning.

Pre-tour Honduran Highlands extension

A 4-night/5-day, 2-centre birding extension to La Tigra and Cerro Azul Meambar National Parks, Lake Yojoa and Los Naranjos Archeological Park.

Day 1 In flight

We depart from London in the morning on a flight to the USA to spend the night before our onward flight to Honduras the following morning.

Overnight: USA airport hotel

Day 2 Tegucigalpa

A late morning departure takes us down to the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa. Upon arrival you'll be met and following a journey of approximately two hours we will arrive at a comfortable hotel located close by to the La Tigra National Park, with excellent birding providing a nice introduction to birding in Honduras.

Overnight: La Tigra National Park

Day 3 La Tigra National Park

We make an early departure to La Tigra National Park. At 59,500 acres, this is one of the first national parks established in Honduras. The park consists of a beautiful expanse of cloudforest with easy, open trails that makes the birding here a delight. Taking a picnic lunch with us, we'll spend a full day in the park looking for a wide variety of birds. The entrance road consists of mixed pine oak forest and secondary growth, harbouring species such as Blue-and-white Mockingbird, Rufous-browed Wren, Band-backed Wren, Rufous-collared Thrush, Azure-crowned Hummingbird and Green-breasted Mountaingem.


Resplendent Quetzal

Progressing deeper into the park we'll be on the lookout for Resplendent Quetzal, Singing Quail, Wine-throated Hummingbird, Crescent-chested Warbler, Slate-coloured Solitaire, Ruddy-capped Nightingale Thrush and Bushy-crested Jay.

After dinner back at the hotel some may choose to go back out with our guide to look for owls and nocturnal birds.

Overnight: La Tigra National Park

Day 4 Panacam

We'll use the early morning to drive up in to La Tigra once more in an effort to track down any species missed thus far. We then depart for the Cerro Azul National Park.
Cerro Azul is 3 hours' drive from La Tigra and offer easy access to mid-elevation rainforest and pine-oak forest. Upon arrival that afternoon, we will bird around the park's visitor centre looking for Keel-billed Motmot, Black-crested Coquette, Tody Motmot, Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner, Collared Trogon, White-bellied Emerald, Bushy-crested Jay and many more. In the afternoon we'll check in to a comfortable and clean Lodge within the Cerro Azul.

Overnight: Panacam

Day 5 (day 1 of main tour) Panacam

This morning we will bird the 'Panacam Lowlands', a mixture of pine oak and tropical forest. One key target will be Prevost's Ground-sparrow, as well as other species such as Green-backed Sparrow, Scarlet-rumped Tanager. Plain Chachalaca, Black-crowned Tityra, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Dusky Antbird and many more.

We will have lunch at Lake Yojoa (45 minutes west of Panacam) and afterwards spend the afternoon birding 'Los Naranjos' archaeological park. A shoreline boardwalk here offers an easy walk and possibilities of Ruddy Crake, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Muscovy Duck, Gray-breasted Crake, Northern Jacana and more wetland/lakeshore species.

Overnight: Panacam

Day 6 (day 2 of main tour) Panacam/The Lodge at Pico Bonito

After early morning birding at the lodge grounds, and breakfast, we depart for Honduras' north coast, and The Lodge at Pico Bonito, the highly acclaimed birding/rainforest resort within 270,000-acre Pico Bonito National Park. We'll stop for lunch along the way and collect the main tour group from the airport. A late afternoon arrival at the Lodge will afford us time to unpack, refresh and enjoy some light birding in Lodge's grounds before dinner. The incoming group will join us at the lodge.

Overnight: The Lodge at Pico Bonito

Tour Grading

To enjoy the trip to the full you should be reasonably fit and mobile as we will be spending the majority of each day on foot. It is by no means a strenuous or difficult tour though, and all outings and walks are optional. Some of the walks will of course be on paths that are occasionally uneven and with occasional inclines or declines. This is not a hard-core birding holiday from dawn to dusk with an eye on rushing around and sweeping up as many Honduran species as possible. It is a relaxed, but focused, birdwatching holiday in lovely surroundings.

Weather

Pico Bonito National Park, located in northern Honduras, is renowned for its diverse and dynamic climate, driven by its unique topography and geographical location. The park spans from sea level along the Caribbean coast to peaks exceeding 2,400 meters (7,870 feet) in the Nombre de Dios mountain range, creating a variety of microclimates. At lower elevations, the park experiences a tropical climate, characterized by high humidity and temperatures averaging between 24°C and 30°C (75°F to 86°F) throughout the year. Rainfall is abundant, particularly during the wet season from May to November, with October often being the rainiest month. These conditions support lush tropical rainforests teeming with biodiversity. As elevation increases, the climate transitions to cooler and more temperate conditions. In the cloud forests near the park's peaks, temperatures can drop significantly, particularly at night, averaging 12°C to 20°C (54°F to 68°F). These areas are frequently shrouded in mist and receive consistent moisture from cloud cover and precipitation, creating a habitat distinct from the lower tropical zones.

The park's location along the Caribbean coast also exposes it to occasional tropical storms and hurricanes, especially during the Atlantic hurricane season from June to November. However, its diverse ecosystems are adapted to withstand these events. This climatic variability makes Pico Bonito a haven for biodiversity, supporting numerous endemic species and providing a crucial ecological corridor. The park's climate is a vital factor in its role as one of Central America's most important conservation areas.

Panacam and Finca are at 700 metres and have a daily high / low of 28°C - 22°C while The Lodge at Pico Bonito is in the lowlands where days will be around 30°C dropping to 24°C at night.

Flights and visa requirements

Standard flights are via Miami, Atlanta or Houston. Extensions and US stop-overs are easily arranged but you must state your intentions at booking. It is difficult/impossible to change flight plans once booked. You will need to arrange an ESTA before travel. https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/. On 12th January 2021, the US inexplicably added Cuba to its State Sponsors of Terrorism list (which also contains North Korea, Iran and Syria), meaning that anybody who has travelled to Cuba since is not eligible to apply for an ESTA, and therefore has to apply for a US visa instead. Quite often Cuban immigration staff do not stamp tourist passports and are not doing so currently, which means this an ESTA application and entry to the US could still be successful. If you have been to Cuba since January 2021, regardless of whether you have a stamp in your passport or not, please contact us to discuss further.

As of 31st October 2026, British citizens can visit Honduras for up to 90 days without a visa. Non-British nationals should check with their nearest Embassy to enquire whether visas are necessary.

Food & accommodation included in the price

All accommodation and meals are included (except meals in the US during the outbound overnight stay), together with water at meal times. The Lodge at Pico Bonito supplies complimentary bottled water in the cabins. These can be re-filled for free at water coolers in the lobby and restaurant. Our groups will eat from the restaurant's menu each evening.



The Lodge at Pico Bonito

Extra expenses

Please note that we do not include the following in the cost of this holiday: all items of a more personal nature such as drinks not mentioned above, laundry, tips and souvenirs.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.