

The Caribbean's secret Bay Islands



*#7 Lonely Planet's top ten best secret islands.
#1 Island Magazine's best islands to live on (Roatan).*

Travel to discover the untouched beauty of Central America's coast this year in Honduras's Bay Islands and succumb to the call of the Caribbean's best kept secret. Whether you pine for the cool lapping of ocean tides on white sand beaches, or the thrill of discovering the untouched beauty of the sea's depths, the true paradise which is the Bay Islands will provide.

Sitting only 60km off the north east coast of Honduras the Bay Islands operate as a gate way to the world's second largest reef: The Mesoamerican Barrier Reef. Beneath the clear turquoise waters is a trove of unbelievable riches: vibrant coral, massive sponges, multi-coloured fish and large pelagic species, like manta rays, sea turtles and whale sharks. Underwater film maker Kip Evans has captured some of the reef's beauty here: http://youtu.be/_KQILcC_qxM)

The surreal diving may be the draw card for this group of islands, but you won't have to hold your breath to be submerged in the cultural energy of island life.

Roatan - The home of Blackbeard

The biggest and most developed of the islands, Roatan brings the highest standards of luxury to the Island group. Named in 2011 by Island Magazine as the Number 1 Island to live on in the world, it is no surprise the former home of the infamous Blackbeard is being pinned as one of the Caribbean's real treasures.



Resorts



Escape to one of the Caribbean's finest private spots to soak away the time without worry. Below are links to a selection of Roatan's resorts to give you a taste of the magic that awaits you.

Villas Del Mar – (<http://villasdelmarroatan.com/index.php>)

Barefoot Cay - (<http://www.barefootcay.com/>)

Infinity Spa & Beach Resort – (<http://www.infinitybay.com/index.html>)

Palmetto Bay Plantation - (<http://www.palmettobayplantation.com/index.html>)

Island Activities



Diving – Immerse yourself under the coral canopy of reef life in one of the world’s most highly acclaimed dive areas. Swim through the hollow rooms of sunken ships in the company of migrating whale sharks (the world’s biggest fish!)

Sport fishing - Yellow fin tuna, black fin tuna, mahi-mahi, wahoo, barracuda, shark, marlin and sailfish are just some of the frequently found fish in the Bay Islands waters. The advantage of fishing in the Bay Islands is that the reef system is only a couple of hundred feet from shore, creating close fishing ground in deep water. Aside from deep sea, flats’ fishing is also very popular with permit, bonefish, jacks and barracuda to be found across the exotic flats.



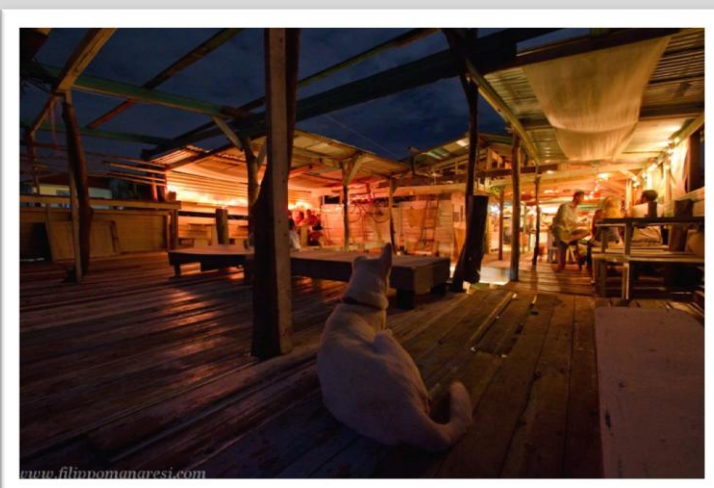
Sailing – The islands offer plenty of deserted islands and secret coves for exploration. Cruise the seas in comfort and style with Roatan’s huge selection of credible local operators, who will tailor trips to your interests and schedule.

Utilla

Utilla is the smallest of the major cays in the Bay Islands at 11 km long and 4 km wide. Utilla preserves the true feel of the Caribbean with no national or international food or accommodation chains, which spurs local business to thrive. Our intrepid travellers have given us an insight into a day on this island paradise:

It's what I wish I could be greeted with every day here; a cool summer breeze, aromatic seafood and friendly smiling faces. Once off the boat I discovered these happy faces mainly belonged to local street food vendors interested in sharing a taste of the local delicacies. Naturally I dived in, picking up a Cajun scallop and shrimp skewer for a bargain \$1 US. Five or six dollars later I was pulled off the dock before going through our day's budget and onto the street. Instantly I felt like I was doing more than I should as I watched the relaxed flow of locals drift about their day. Utilla only has a hand full of roads which circumnavigate the island with the odd one leading straight into the sea, as we found out. Turning left onto the main street we were surrounded by friendly local dive shops and restaurants all claiming either they had the most exclusive seafood on the island, or that only they could take you to the best dive spots. The flat and tidy dirt roads are both a path and a destination here, filled with unusual island forms of transport and colourful market stalls selling trinkets made from the ocean's treasures.

The first stop for us was a secluded Chepes beach at the northern tip of the island where an energetic expat lived with his family and two grand birds of paradise. After a 20minute walk we were greeted at the gates by a short festive gentleman with an enormous parrot, unlike any I had seen before. We had seen Toucans only days before in the jungle, but the cascading fall of colour and feathers from this Bird of Paradise really gave perfect justification to its name. After accepting some cold drinks from the bar we proceeded to lounge in half submerged deck chairs gazing across the turquoise waters of the harbour, discussing what I assume everybody who visits here does, "how much do you reckon we need from lotto to move here?" Sometime after swimming and sharing my lunch with Sandy (the bird of paradise) I remembered the alluring smell of the seafood street stalls. Leaving the bird and the beach behind we hailed down a tuk tuk (3 wheeled taxi) and asked to be taken to the best seafood restaurant on the island.



Our destination turned out to be Barbulus Bar & Grill the oldest dock restaurant on the island. Barbulus appeared to have grown out of the dock into a harmonious mix of traditional island cuisine and the atmosphere all lounge bars strive towards. We settled down at one of the outside tables overlooking the sun slowly sinking below

- Inside Barbulus Bar & Grill



Out the back of Barbulus

the sea. I had ordered the large whole lobster with salad and rice which cost \$19 US (yes, the price is correct). The islands tend to borrow culture from many walks of life which is best exhibited in their cooking style. From strong spices to light fruit chutneys, Uvilla and the Bay Islands is a melting pot of flavours to explore. Finishing up with a couple of cocktails we pondered the only logical next step, how are we going to leave?

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