



## Roatán guide: Why this Honduran island needs to be on your go-list



Aerial view of West Bay Beach, Roatan, Honduras • Image: dstephens/Getty Images

### **And where to eat, stay, and play on this underrated island.**

With its golden beaches, turquoise water teeming with marine life, and varied landscapes—from rain forests to mangroves to mountains—it’s a wonder Roatán isn’t more widely known. And yet, the tiny island off the north coast of Honduras remains blissfully off the radar of most travelers (save for backpackers who have long loved it for its budget prices).

Later in 2023, Kimpton will open its first Honduran property on Roatán, likely bringing with it a rush of new interest in the island. For now, however, it remains one of the best destinations for a Caribbean vacation without the high costs or crowds. Read on for where to eat, stay, and play and get started planning the perfect tropical trip.

# What to do in Roatán



A coral reef in Roatán, Honduras • Image: Antonio Busiello/Getty Images

Framed by the second-largest coral reef in the world, Roatán is all about getting in the water. Snorkeling, scuba diving, and glass-bottomed boat tours with outfitters like [Hyde Tours](#) and [Las Moskitia Eco Adventures](#) are popular ways to see the reef, but for a more special experience, go with [Las Cascadas Lodge](#) to [Cayos Cochinos](#), an isolated archipelago and marine preserve where you can spot jewel-toned fish and sea turtles in the healthiest water in the country. It takes about an hour to sail to this archipelago, inhabited only by the Afro-Indigenous Garifuna people. Once there, you'll take a dip in the pristine water, then go hiking to try and spot native pink boa constrictors.

To learn more about Roatán's Garifuna population, pay a visit to Punta Gorda on the northeast end of the island. The town is Roatán's oldest permanent settlement, founded in 1797 by Garifuna deportees from Saint Vincent, who were stranded here by the British. On Sundays, the village comes alive with a festive street party featuring live music, dancing, and food like *sopa de pescado* (a fish-and-coconut-milk soup that's scooped up with *machuca*, bites of mashed yellow and green plantains).

Another must-do is Las Cascada Lodge's [waterfall rappelling tour](#), which tests you physically and mentally with a trek through the rainforest before descending a waterfall on a rope. If you're after something slightly less extreme, go floating through serene mangrove tunnels with a [local guide](#) to learn about Roatán's fascinating ecosystem and natural history, or tour [Gumbalimba Park](#) to see local Capuchin monkeys, macaws, sloths, and iguanas.

# What to eat



Grilled octopus, spicy shrimp, and fried ceviche at Azul • Image: Management/Tripadvisor

Honduran food is a delicious blend of local seafood and Indigenous, Spanish, and Caribbean flavors. The most beloved dish, baleada, involves a wheat-flour tortilla stuffed with refried beans, cheese, and cream, all sprinkled with your choice of toppings like scrambled eggs, chorizo, and avocado. A popular breakfast food, baleadas can be found at [Calelu's](#), a West End cafe and grocery, where you can also enjoy hearty dishes like seafood soup and chicken with rice and beans.

For elegant dining, try [Romeo's Restaurant](#), a waterfront bistro on French Harbour that serves Italian and Caribbean cuisine. Here, you can pair dishes like chorizo-and-gorgonzola pizza and whole red snapper in Creole sauce with live music and ocean views. Also check out [Yurumei Sports Bar and Restaurant](#) in Punta Gorda for Garifuna specialties like sopa de caracol (a rich conch soup that's a favorite all over Honduras) and gifty (a spirit made with herbs and rum). The spot sits right on the beach, so you can watch the fishermen catching the ingredients for your meal.

Roatán's top gourmet experience can be found at [Azul](#), the main restaurant at the upscale [Blue Roatán Resort](#) in West Bay. The chef's menu offers an array of elevated Caribbean dishes, from conch carpaccio to coconut-cream lobster.

# Where to stay



Aerial view of the Grand Roatan Caribbean Resort • Image: Management/Tripadvisor

Though small in size, Roatán boasts everything from budget rooms for backpackers to five-star resorts. The best places to stay, however, highlight the island's natural resources. The Lodge & Spa at Pico Bonito plunges guests into tropical splendor with spacious cabins surrounded by lush gardens and cacao groves, plus a striking mountain backdrop. Each cabin has a private porch and hammock for taking in the scenery, and the resort features its own hiking trails as well as a spa that uses organic ingredients grown in on-site gardens.

Ibagari Boutique Hotel's open-air lobby displays local art and wooden furniture, while the infinity pool offers sweeping ocean views. In the plush rooms, balconies and deep-soaking tubs make for a luxurious stay. There's also a fantastic restaurant, Luna Muna, serving king crab tortellini and beef tenderloin with mushroom risotto.

In summer 2023, the already stunning Grand Roatan Resort will become a Kimpton hotel after a major expansion that includes 126 renovated guest rooms and seven new suites with plunge pools overlooking the Caribbean Sea. For the time being, guests can still look forward to suites with outdoor showers and private terraces surrounded by bougainvillea, as well as the show-stopping Kao Kamasa Spa, which draws inspiration from indigenous Pech culture for treatments like an obsidian palm stone massage in a temazcal (sauna).