

TIME

THE WORLD'S GREATEST PLACES OF 2023

50 extraordinary destinations to explore

Roatán, Honduras

A quieter barrier reef



A view of Cayos Cochinos Archipelago, Roatan, Honduras. Antonio Busiello—Getty Images

Surrounded by the aquamarine waves of the world's second largest barrier reef, Roatán, located off the coast of Honduras, has attracted backpackers and nature lovers for decades, but new luxury properties are transforming the island's rustic

appeal. This summer, **Kimpton Roatan** will unveil a five-star resort—complete with a rooftop bar and pool, and a spa featuring treatments rooted in Indigenous traditions—overlooking West Bay Beach.

Elsewhere on the island, Azul, a new gourmet restaurant at the Blue Roatan Resort helmed by local chef Ramon Orozco, is responsible for some of the best meals here. Conch carpaccio and lobster with coconut and manchego cheese are served in a lush outdoor garden area where you're likely to glimpse macaws flying through the trees.

On the northeast tip of Roatán, the sleepy town of Punta Gorda boasts the title of the oldest permanent settlement on the island. Settled by the Afro-Indigenous Garifuna in the 18th century, the town showcases Garifuna dance, music, and food at weekly street parties.

About 20 miles off the coast of Roatán, the Cayos Cochinos archipelago, a marine preserve and UNESCO World Heritage Site, is also set to launch new upscale eco cabins this spring. Hop a 45-minute ferry from Roatán and you'll land on the isolated paradise of Cayos Cochinos. Brimming with surreal beauty, the island boasts 800 acres of protected land and 110 species of coral in its crystalline waters. The pearly sand beaches are home to hawksbill sea turtles as well as the pink Cochino Cays boa.