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PORT EXPLORER & SHOPPING GUIDE

Roatan
HONDURAS

GENERAL INFORMATION Located a few miles north of the Honduras mainland, in the Spanish language they are known as “Islas de la Bahía” ... the Bay Islands. The three main islands are Utila, Guanaja and Roatán. Of the three, Roatán is the largest (35 x 2 miles) and most populous (around 70,000).

These islands were once the home to indigenous tribes. Over the past 500 years Roatán was slowly settled. In the 20th century Roatán saw a population explosion as European and North American ex-patriots and mainland Hondurans arrived.

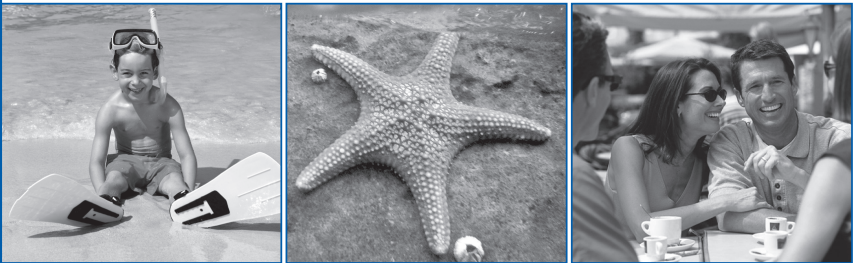
Coxen Hole is Roatán's capital and largest town. As a very popular cruise and vacation destination combined with its reputation as a spectacular scuba diving location, Roatán's infrastructure and economy is closely tied to the tourism industry. This is a beautiful island, above and below the blue waters of the Caribbean. The ancient Indian tribes who once made this their home obviously knew a good thing when they saw it ... and its name is Roatán, Islas de la Bahía, la República de Honduras.

HISTORY For centuries, if not millennia, prior to the arrival of the first Europeans the “Bay Islands” off the coast of northern Honduras were inhabited by a large community of Indians. Believed to have been related to the Maya, they lived a simple life; trading with neighboring tribes on the mainland, farming small plots and fishing in the rich waters of the Caribbean.

On the morning of July 30, 1502, Cristóbal Colón (Columbus), led his small Spanish fleet into the Gulf of Honduras. According to the journal kept by the Admiral's teenage son, Fernando, it was the brother of Columbus, Bartholomew Colón, who was warmly greeted by the Indians as he led the first shore-party onto the island of Guanaja, just 15 miles east of present day Roatán. This was the Admiral's fourth, most harrowing and final voyage to the "New World". Ailing, physically exhausted and nearly blind by age 51, this closing chapter of the great navigator's life was just the opening prologue for the major powers of Europe's "Old World". They soon followed in the Admiral's wake to Roatán and la Islas de la Bahía. After the death of Columbus in 1506, the Spanish were already in the process of enslaving the Indians of the Bay Islands and coastal areas.

As the Spanish acquired gold, silver and gems from the Americas, pirates and privateers were quick to pounce upon the prize. For a time in the 1600s there was no better island than Roatán from which to launch their attacks upon the galleons of the Spanish Treasure Fleets. Coxen Hole, the capital of Roatán, was named after the notorious English pirate, John Coxen. The Spanish eventually drove the pirates off Roatán only to watch the English move in. Throughout much of the 1700s the English built forts and towns on the island and eventually gained complete control.

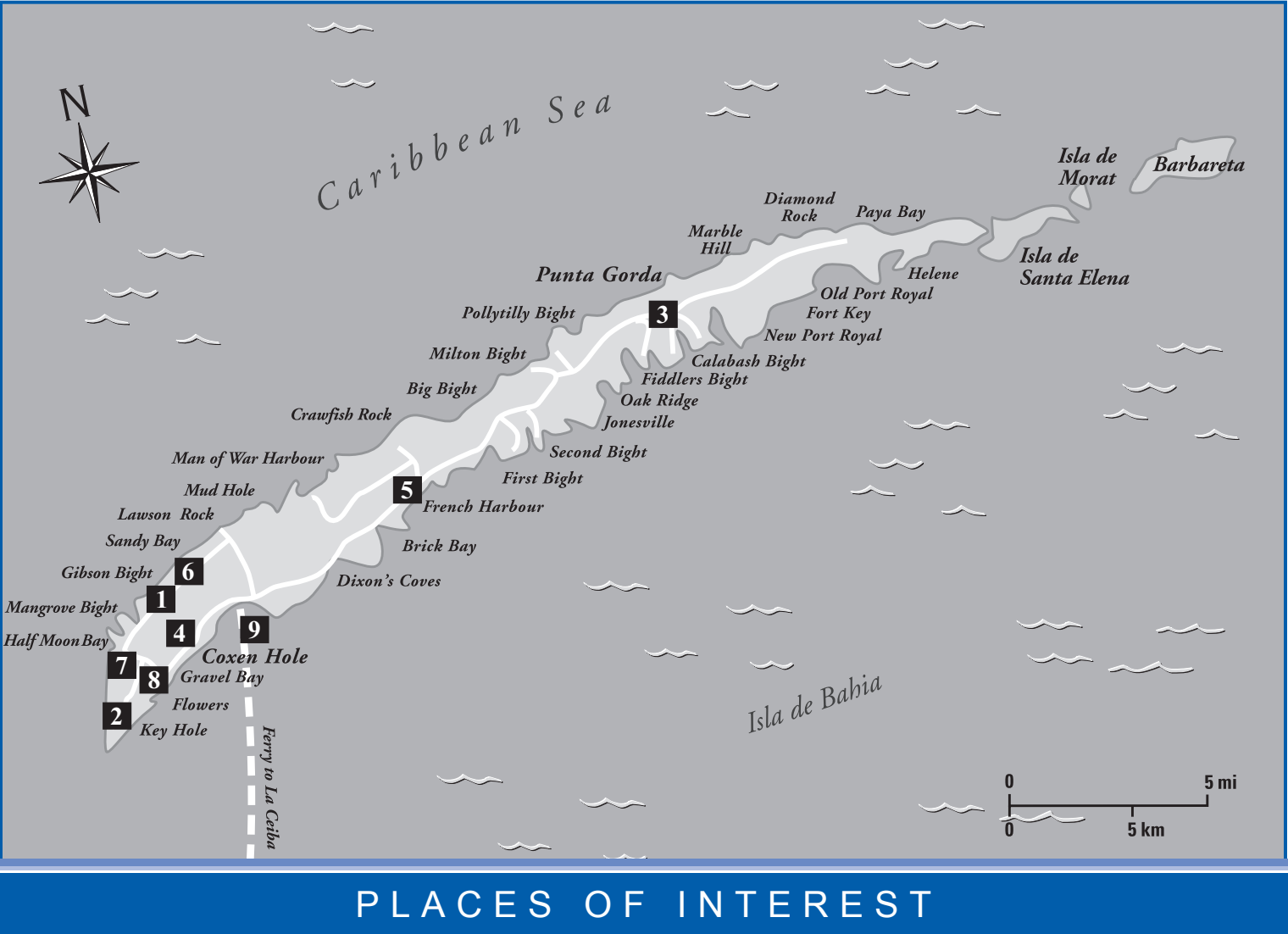
By the beginning of the 1800s thousands of Black Caribs (the combined ances-



try of runaway African slaves and Arawak Indians from the Caribbean) were brought to Roatán from the British held island of St. Vincent. Now known as the Garifuna, over the past two centuries they have proudly maintained many of their traditions. Today they represent and share a rich culture and way of life which has changed little from the times of their ancestors.

In 1859, and at the urging of the United States, Great Britain passed

ownership of Roatán and the Bay Islands to the Republic of Honduras. Yet even today, more than a century and a half later, despite national and international law, despite not holding a British passport or any hope of legal recognition by the Crown, there remain some descendants of the earliest settlers on Roatán who, when asked, respond with typical British resolve and composure ... “I, Sir ... am an Englishman”.



ROATAN PLACES OF INTEREST Scuba diving along the spectacular reefs in the crystal clear Caribbean waters surrounding Roatán is amazing. With top-to-bottom, 100 ft. plus visibility the norm, Roatán is one of the world’s première dive sites. There are countless outstanding spots around the island just waiting to be explored. After all, exceptional diving opportunities and the name Roatán are basically synonymous.

1 Avonlea Tropical Garden is a wonderful setting full of trees, plants and flowers gathered from all across Honduras. The garden also has collected over 50 varieties of palm trees from tropical locations around the world.

2 West End (located where the name implies) is the more developed side of the island. It has some very nice beaches, shops, boutiques, cafés and bars.

3 Yubu is located near Punta Gorda, towards the east end of Roatán. Here visitors are warmly welcomed as they have the opportunity to learn about the history and culture of the Garifuna (Black Caribs). The mixed descendents of African slaves and Caribbean Arawak Indians, they were brought to Roatán in the late 1700s. They have maintained many of their cherished traditions.

4 Mount Mariah is one of the highest points on Roatán. Well marked paths take hikers to the top of the mountain where an incredible panoramic view of the island and the surrounding barrier reef awaits.

5 Sherman’s Iguanas Refuge is a great place to see hundreds of these interesting and gentle creatures. Looking like small, prehistoric dinosaurs, this park offers a safe haven for iguanas which would otherwise end up as the main ingredient in a tasty and traditional island

stew.

6 Carambola Botanical Gardens is a lush 40 acre tropical setting filled with towering trees, delicate ferns, stunning orchids and flowering plants. Paths and boardwalks guide visitors through this beautiful oasis.

7 The Roatán Butterfly & Parrot Garden is filled with exotic butterflies gathered from all over Honduras. Among the gorgeous tropical plants and trees, colorful parrots and amazing toucans wait to greet visitors.

8 Gumbalimba Nature Park has lovely nature trails through a small rainforest with ponds and waterfalls. The bird sanctuary is home to parrots and macaws. The monkey refuge has white face, howler and spider monkeys; some of which are gentle and tame enough to hold.

9 Maya Key is just a few minutes across the water from the cruise ship dock. Lovely beaches, great snorkeling, a large swimming pool, lounge chairs, a beautiful garden and a small animal sanctuary all combine to make this a wonderful afternoon getaway.

SHORE EXCURSIONS To make the most of your visit to Roatán and the surrounding area we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For more information, please consult your Shore Excursion Order Form or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take with you only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

LOCAL CUSTOMS Bargaining: Prices are fixed in restaurants and stores. Local vendors may bargain. US dollars and major credit cards are widely accepted.

Tipping: A 10-15 % tip is customary.

LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES Though international dishes catering to visitors can be found in many of the island restaurants and cafés, the traditional food of Roatán center on chicken and sea food with staples of beans and rice. For being such a small island an amazing amount and variety of fruit and vegetables are locally grown. Limes, mangoes, bananas and plantains, breadfruit, cassava (also known as yuca or manioc), guavas and of course coconuts are just a few of the local products. Conch fritters, conch soup (sopa de caracol) and conch ceviche are all delicious. Baleadas are Honduran tacos.

Among the favorite Honduran beers visitors can try Barena, Salva Vida, Imperial and Port Royal. There are no real traditional drinks on Roatán however we did discover a drink which deserves a taste, if only for its name. Called “Monkey La La” this drink combines coconut cream, vodka, Kahlua and vanilla ice cream.

SHOPPING The shopkeepers and local vendors on Roatán have a friendly reputation. There is an open market with numerous merchants at the end of the pier. The nearby town of Coxen Hole is not really a tourist haven however visitors will find a number of fun and interesting shops. At West End, a destination for many of the ship’s tours, guests will find some nice shops and boutiques. Keep a lookout for the works produced by local artists and artisans. Some of their creations are quite marvelous.

LOCAL CURRENCY The Honduran Lempira (HNL) is the official currency on Roatán. U.S. dollars and major credit cards are widely accepted.

TRANSPORTATION Car rentals and taxis are available. Be sure to agree with the taxi driver on the fare prior to departure. Taxis which pick up and drop off multiple passengers along the way are called “colectivos”. They are very inexpensive. Two bus routes, east and west, begin and return to Coxen Hole. Water Taxis are available to take visitors to some locations. They can also be hired by the hour for visitors wanting to get to out-of-the-way coastal sites or nearby islands.

LANGUAGE The official language of Honduras is Spanish. English is widely spoken on Roatán.

Yes - Si
No - No
Hello - ¡Hola!
Good Bye - Adiós
Please - Por favor
Thank-you - Gracias
You’re welcome - De nada.