

Uncommon Adventures

Tropical FAQ

Kayaking: Experience is helpful, but not mandatory. You can develop your skills with our ACA certified open water instructors throughout the week as you learn to handle a sea kayak in wind and waves. Being on a tropical island in the tradewinds does present some great opportunities for gentle paddling as well as rough water paddling without the dangers of cold water. You can also learn how to snorkel right out of your kayak on a fantastic living coral reef!

Skill level and pacing: We make every attempt to group people into particular weeks by skill level, so you are most likely to be balanced with a group with similar skills. Sometimes we may make two short trips in a day to give people options, some days we may be paddling for four or five hours. By utilizing two guides, singles and tandems and having a flexible schedule we can accommodate a variety of skill levels and paces. Want to read by the water one day? No problem. Spend the morning snorkeling? Me too! Go diving? Bring your card and we'll set it up with some of the best instructors in the Bay Islands. Go out and work on surf skills on a day when the wind is up? Count me in, it's all possible.

Location: The Bay Islands of Honduras are just 90 miles south of Belize on the second largest barrier reef in the world. Many of the natural features that people visit Belize to see are actually much more abundant in Honduras without some of the negative aspects of tourism.

Getting There: Flying directly to Roatan has never been easier. United, American and Delta all serve Roatan with DIRECT flights every Saturday; United from Houston, Delta from Atlanta, American from Dallas or Miami. United and Delta also offer service on other days and we are happy to help you sort out the details, find the right flights and the best rates as a courtesy.

Since many of our trips end on Thursday (which fits with best United schedules), many opt to spend a couple of extra days on their own -- either on our quiet East End or you can opt for the nightlife of West End. We are happy to help with our favorite lodging options:

East end - Marble Hill Farms <http://www.marblehillfarms.com/>

West end - Posadas Arco Iris or Las Orquideas <http://www.roatanposada.com/reservas.html>.

For those extending their stays (flying on other days than Saturday) or doing one of our trips that originates on the mainland, Taca, American and United/Continental airlines provide daily service to San Pedro Sula from Houston, Atlanta and Miami. Costs vary a lot depending on fuel prices, but you should be able to fly round-trip from most cities in the US for about \$1000 total round trip cost. If you are lucky enough to live near one of the gate cities, that figure is more like \$550. Call us for specials and best deals. Search engines will often yield large and inaccurate numbers, so don't panic, let us give you a hand.

Travel Insurance: Highly recommended. See links at bottom of your itinerary page.

Other Money Matters: Airport Exit tax is about \$47 when you leave Roatan. Some airlines are beginning to include it in your ticket cost. Ask at your gate at check in. Gratuities for the guides are not expected, but are appreciated. Investing a bit in those that take care of you always pays high returns and customary amounts in the travel industry amount to 5-10% of total trip costs. 90% of your trip fees go to support local people and you do have a very positive impact on their community.

Overstays and Trip Extensions: We are most happy to help you plan trip extensions on the mainland or on the island for \$50/hour consult fee. We can usually help you build a great custom trip in 2-3 hours. Rainforests, Mayan Ruins, coffee plantations...you name it, Honduras has it and we can help you find it all!

Scuba: Roatan is known the world over for its diving and for those coming early or staying late, we can recommend good dive companies. Getting Open water dive certified with excellent instructors on Roatan is about \$250 and we'd be happy to help arrange this before or after one of our trips.

GENERAL TRAVEL TIPS:

Culture: Afro-Caribbean, English settlers of the 1700's, Spanish mainlanders and numerous European and American Expats.

Topography: Roatan has mountainous (up to about 2000') tropical forest to the edge of the sea. The Honduran mainland coastal mountain range visible from Roatan includes Pico Bonito which rises to 8000' just about a mile from the coast (sea level) which makes for a very dramatic coastal mountain range bringing us waterfalls, whitewater rivers and some brilliant inland hiking opportunities.

Time Zone: Central

Climate: Fall is hurricane season, but during summer (Feb/Mar/April), daytime highs can range to 90, evenings in the low 70's with a seabreeze. Roatan Summer is the dry season, so rain is infrequent and sunscreen a must. This is also some of the best snorkeling/diving time with 80 ft. visibility in 82 degree water.

Currency: The local currency is called the Lempira and currently trades at about 21 to the US dollar. In other words, a 100 Lempira note is worth about \$5. You don't have to change currency...everyone takes dollars here.

Food: Island food is typically small red beans and rice (not at all spicy), corn tortillas, coconut bread, plantains, chicken stewed with peppers and saffron and seafood. I cook some island style and mix it with some other Caribe flavors. You may enjoy vanilla banana pancakes, pinto gallo (a Costa Rican breakfast), coconut grouper, conch stew, spicy shrimp pasta, snapper in fresh fruit sauce or traditional stewed chicken. Healthy fresh foods prepared this way take a little time, but there's always time for good food. We only patronize restaurants we trust and your food is carefully prepared to western standards by your guides. Vegetarian or non-seafood tastes are easily accommodated.

Language: Although Spanish is helpful, most islanders speak English.

Passport, Visa and Immunizations: You need a current passport and your 30-day visa is issued on arrival. A recent tetanus booster and hepatitis A shot is a good precaution against third world adaptation problems. You need to do this a few weeks in advance. Check with a travel medicine clinic or the CDC website (link opens in new window) for up to the minute info. Malaria--although uncommon, some people choose to take chloroquine as a preventive measure.

Drinking Water: Like most of Central America, you really shouldn't drink or brush your teeth with tap water...except at our house! Our community well provides fresh and pure water for our little community of Punta Blanca.

Critters: Biting insects--sand flies or no-see-ums can be nasty when the wind dies, but it is predictably at dawn/dusk and clothing does the best job. We usually choose to sleep in on buggy mornings and do an inside "happy hour" during the short evening bug period. Snakes--yahoo, there are no poisonous snakes in the Bay Islands! Disreputable American Real Estate agents abound and are the worst pests in the islands.

Have we ever done this before? Yes, since 1995. I developed this program for Slickrock Adventures, a well-known outfitter that operates a variety of good programs in Belize. I ran it for two winters and it was taken over by two other guides who ran it for another season before leaving it in favor of developing their programs in Belize. I've guided other winter paddling destinations in New Zealand and the Everglades for many years and this is my favorite. Mountains, coral, tropical forests, fun local culture, great paddling....its got it all. Other questions? Call your guide: Michael Gray [\(231\) 882-5525](tel:(231)882-5525)