



Friends, Fun, Food and Diving!

By Denise Laberee, Mike Ford and Dawn Gilbert, all bubble blowing adventurers

Last year our diving group took off for Roatan, Honduras on a week long dive trip. It's not a place that most of us had really thought about going, but with the promise of clear, warm waters, friends to dive with, a nice place to stay that would feed us and take us diving, and was inexpensive, we were off!



We landed at the Roatan International



Airport, of which the name is bigger than the airport, on a typical tropical day and were stuffed into a large van with all our luggage and dive equipment. We will never understand how it all fit, although the person in the last seat who was folded into a pretzel with part of him around a suitcase knows...After a short drive around part of the island we went through the gates to the Luna Beach Resort. We continued to drive through the most incredible landscape. Think Jurassic



Park here! Colorful flowers were everywhere and Basilisks ran headlong across the road. Then we were there and everyone unfolded out of the van. We were delighted! Ahead of us was a dock with the water we had been dreaming about beneath it! To the right were large colorful birds squawking their welcome and to the left was the office connected to a bar serving delicious Monkey La Las, connected to lots of outside seating in front of a sparkling pool!



Behind us was a rather arduous hill. Many times as we walked up and up we looked longingly at all the other houses along with hill and down at the ones located along the beach and thought about



how we could have picked any one of them, but no! It was only about 150 meters but the grade was a killer for some



of us. Those who would later arrive at the top not even panting would be glared at by those of us swearing to start exercise programs the moment we got back. For now, once we had the keys, the van took us and all our

stuff to the house at the top of the hill. After looking around at our home for the next week we unloaded. It was wonderful. Truly the best place for friends to share a house. Four bedrooms, each



with fan and a private bath, then a large living room, dining area and kitchen all connected to form a large area perfect for socializing. It was nicely furnished, very clean and wonderfully air-conditioned. And the view...oh my goodness did we mention the view!

The next day started with breakfast at the on-site restaurant. We had all opted to have our breakfast and lunch included and chose to explore the island for dinners. Although you can choose from no meals a day to all three if you want.

Breakfast was just fine and well proportioned to hungry divers...once it arrived. If you are in a hurry for anything, especially your food, skip Roatan. The staff treated us like family and the service was great. They take your orders and bring you drinks etc., but you are going to wait. Dinner took at least 2-2 ½ hours each night. Breakfast was around a 45 minute wait. Luckily the dive boat was waiting for us!

The resort also has an on-site dive shop with a freshwater place to wash and hang your gear after dives and lockers to store your other things so you didn't have to lug them up and down that hill. It



also had a number of nice dive boats and dive masters ready to help! They offer certification classes for Padi and SSI. Once we were in the boat it took off and we settled back for the short ride to the first site. The longest ride we took to any dive site was about ten minutes. Most of them took about five! We were in the water as soon as the DM explained the site, the plan and it was wonderful! Fish, coral, turtles, rays, it was all there waiting for us.

The visibility was incredible. Somewhere between 70-100 feet depending on the day! You could dive up to three times a day and they also had night dives. The red eyes of the shrimp catching in your flashlight were really fantastic, not to mention the octopus we saw who changed his colors under the light right before our eyes. One of our group, while snorkeling under the Luna Beach dock, even got to see a seahorse.





There were lots of different dive sites just minutes away. We never had to visit the same one twice unless we wanted to. There were tons of fish in The Blue Channel. We dove there once by day and then later as a night dive because there was so much to see. We saw turtles and a very sleeping octopus diving The Shallow Seaquest. We dove the Lighthouse Reef, Dixie's Place and then The Bite the next day. Later we dove down about 98 feet to reach the El Aguila lying at the bottom of the ocean. It was a fun wreck to explore. One site we were exploring along a reef, then suddenly it was like there was a cliff off the edge of the reef into nothingness. We were looking down into the deepest

blue we had ever seen. For a moment we teetered floating just above the last bit of sea bed we could see, like we would fall off the cliff until we each realized we could jump off and instead of falling we would fly into the unending blueness!

Once our diving was over each day, there was still plenty of time to explore the island and we did. We went to the Iguana Farm and went zip lining! We explored the west end which was a short walk down the beach to the West End where we explored the small shops and ate at the restaurants. There we found an



Italian place and an Argentinean place that were great! The shops in the West End carried a lot of kitschy, Honduran crafts to stuff into your suitcase to bring home. Some of our group also



went horse back riding with Sharkey and had a very nice time, not to mention great views of other parts of the island. The horses were small but very sturdy and well taken care of. Another day we went zip lining while taking a tour of the island. We also visited Coxson Hole and the East end of the island as well. Frankly, don't bother! There really isn't much anywhere on the island in the way of towns and the West End was by far the most charming and where there was something happening after hours that you might want to be a part of.

Since our group is comprised of a few diving travel agents, we spent part of one day traveling to other places you can



stay on Roatan. The first place we checked out was Anthony's Key Resort. This place struck us as a great place for families. There



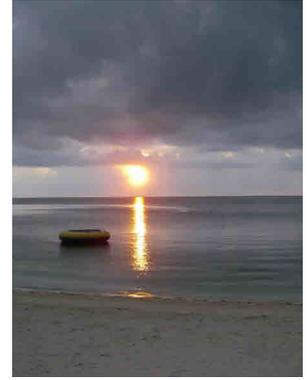
were lots of programs designed especially for kids. However it was also for people who don't want to lay around on the beach for vacation. There are boats for diving and fishing as well as kayaks and canoes to take out. There is a fully stocked store and dolphins you can visit and learn about. They can set you up to go white water rafting, snorkeling as well as day and overnight trips. The rooms were cabins built all around the property. Some even out on an island you had to take a boat out to. They also have an Island Fiesta Night show. Overall it looked like a lot of fun for a family or an out-going couple or group of friends who love to enjoy the great outdoor and play.



Next we headed to Fantasy Island. It is indeed on an island and is a good place for the economy traveler. It also felt a lot like being on a cruise ship. It had lots of people ready to help you sign up for day trips or any other activity you might be interested in. There were also monkeys in the trees, one we watched go to an upstairs balcony where a nice mid-afternoon snack was laid out and help himself to a large piece of pink cake. There are two restaurants and bars on-site along with basketball courts and a private dock. They also have sporting equipment for rent as well as many different planned events throughout the day. They had a well stocked dive shop with plenty of boats.



Then we visited Turquoise Bay. It was a long drive out to that side of the Island and seemed very private but it was well worth the drive. Since it was near dinnertime when we arrived, we stayed and tried out the restaurant and it was delicious. Those of us who ate there would most certainly recommend it. From what we saw it was the nicest restaurant on the island. Turquoise Bay had that quiet feeling of honeymooners sitting by the beach enjoying a drink from the beach bar absorbed in each other yet not missing the views of the sun setting from the private beach, perhaps celebrating a 25 year anniversary or just that you managed to get away this year. However don't think you would be bored there, they had plenty onsite to keep you busy, plus a dive shop to take you out and they can arrange any kind of trip or activities you are interested in.



Every place we went had gorgeous, sparkling water just calling you to jump in! Our group got lots of diving in. Some of us honed our diving skills and others just enjoyed the beauty around them. Our house had hammocks on enclosed porches where you could sleep away the afternoon. That too was a pleasure. Nothing to do, no clothes to wash, no email to read, just lay in your hammock and contemplate where you want to go for dinner that night or dream of tomorrow's dive through crystal clear waters.

