

ROATAN- ACTIVITIES GUIDE

There's lots to discover on our beautiful island! This activities guide has been created to provide our hostel guests an overview of attractions around the island, organized by geographical area, starting on the west side of the island in West Bay, then through West End, Sandy Bay, French Harbour and French Cay, up to the East end, as well as a few points of interest in between. It's by no means exhaustive, so I'm sure you'll discover other treasures of your own. If you find a great spot or activity that you think is worth sharing, please let us know so we can add it the next time we update our guide.

Have fun exploring our lovely paradise!



Mel James

Owner of Roatan Backpackers Hostel
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Roatan Backpackers' Hostel Activity Guide: West Bay

To get there, either negotiate for an expresso taxi (not on the bus or collective taxi route), or get to West End, then take a water taxi. It's possible to walk along the shoreline between West End and West Bay, which takes about 50 min, however there are sometimes muggings along this walk, so it's not recommended unless you're going with a pretty big group of people.

Beach: The most famous beach on the island, white sand and turquoise blue water. If buying any food/drink, lounge chairs, showers, bathrooms can be used at no extra cost at Beachers and Caribe Tresoro (not right on the beach, on the walkway at the northmost end, with a great pool and a couple small slides).

Snorkeling: The far south point of the beach (near Grand Roatan, where the iron shore juts out) has the closest snorkeling. There are usually a few guys along the beach that rent out gear, or take along from the hostel. Please don't feed the fish. Part of our marine reserve, no taking shells, broken sea fans or anything else. There's also a glass bottom boat, if you don't want to get wet

Parasailing: Costs around \$80 per person, there are usually guys walking around trying to get business for this

Rocket boots: Kind of pricey (\$75 for 15 min?), but looks like fun

Jet ski rentals, stand up paddle board rentals, kayak rentals: just walk along the beach to find what you're looking for

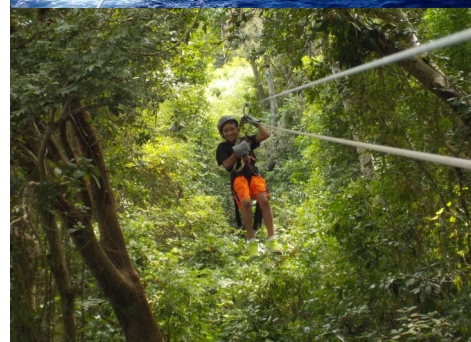
Ziplining/ canopy tours: There are 2 companies close to West Bay: one is Gumbalimba, a short walk up the shore to the north (you'll cross over a high metal bridge when you're reaching their property), and South Shore Canopy, which is on the other side of the main road, so you'd have a bit of a walk to get there, or flag a land taxi. Cost is around \$45

Beach vendors: massage, bracelets, hair braiding, sunglasses— every few minutes someone will come by you to try to sell their wares. If you don't want anything, a firm 'no thank you' is the way to go.

Entertainment: On Sundays, live music starts around 4 at Bananarama, followed by crab races (proceeds to to a non-profit) and fire dancers. Bananarama also has great brick oven pizza

Food and Drink: West Bay is a pricey area, but on the side street next to Bananarama, there are a few vendors that aren't as expensive. San Simon, Beachers, The Argentinean Grill and Bananarama usually put up sandwich boards with their specials noted on them.

Cash points: There's an ATM machine in the reception area of Infinity Bay as well as one at the little plaza called West Bay Mall, which is along the main road (take the little laneway next to Bananarama to get there).



Roatan Backpackers' Hostel Activity Guide: West End

To get there, either take a bus or collective taxi, which is about a 5 min ride. It's possible to walk, which takes around 50 minutes.

Beach: There is a small beach in West End, called Half Moon Bay. Sundowners bar is right on it, and has lounge chairs to use.

Snorkeling: Snorkeling is accessible from Half Moon Bay, just watch out for boat traffic. It's probably close to a 300 meter swim out to the reef. The Marine Park has an office in West End, and rents snorkel gear.

Diving: there are easily a dozen dive shops in West End, with all comparable pricing. Ones we hear good reports about are Reef Gliders

West End Divers, Moana Divers, Kotos, Coconut Tree, Sundivers and Island Diving, but there are plenty of others that are great as well.

Bars: West End is where the nightlife is, with Friday being the 'big night'. Thursdays is karaoke night at Blue Marlin, and Tues is taco Tuesday at Sundowners. For happy hour any day of the week, to watch the sunset, Sundowners is the most popular choice. The Beachhouse right next to Sundowners also is a good spot for the sunset, they have a bar at the end of a dock. Other popular West End spots are the Booty Bar, Franks Cigar Bar, and Blue Marlin. Generally dancing doesn't start til after 10: Blue Marlin, Booty Bar and Mixx all have dance floors.

Restaurants: Lots of restaurant choices in West End. Crazy Beans for coffee and wi-fi. Cannibal Café has great tex-mex style food that's reasonably priced, including vegetarian options. Drunken Sailor has great pizza,

Marlins good seafood, Pazzo for pasta, Rotisserie Chicken is a favourite of many, at affordable prices. Splash Inn is another popular pick, has different specials depending on the day.

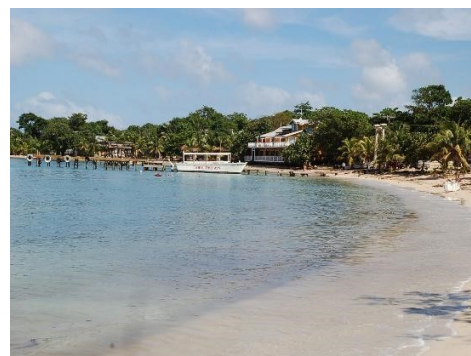
Shops: if you need any dive/snorkel gear, there's a Mares store just to the right of the entrance, before Sundowners. Waves of Art has lots of beautiful artwork, and Rusty Fish has a shop in West End as well as on the way to Sandy Bay, selling art made from recycled materials. Several souvenir stores in town as well.

Groceries: The best selection is at the grocery stores in Coxen Hole, but there's a small grocery store, Woody's, located just past the Argentinean Grill, a bit further than Sundowners.

Water fun: Happy Harry's has kayaks, ATVs, and some fun water activities, including a big bounce thing in the water, and some over the water swings

Chocolate: Satisfy your sweet tooth with some free samples at the Roatan Chocolate Factory, and then buy a couple handmade chocolate bars to take home

Cash points: There are a couple ATMs in West End, but both have had ongoing problems with card skimming. Just out of town, there's an ATM at the gas station.



Roatan Backpackers' Hostel Activity Guide: Sandy Bay

Home, sweet home! There are lots of great things to check out in Sandy Bay.

Beach: The closest beach is a 5 min walk away, and isn't very pretty due to the mud and turtle grass in the shallows, but the snorkeling is excellent, and it's also a nice spot to take a beach walk. Eventually to the east, the beach is nicer. Another stretch of beach, which is nicer, is located a 15 min walk from the hostel— to west to Anthony's Key, enter their driveway, then turn left at the bottom and walk through the community, cross over a little wood bridge and then you'll get to the beach.

Snorkeling: There's terrific snorkeling in Sandy Bay, about a 250 meter swim from shore. You can swim out from either beach area (snorkel gear is available at the hostel for \$5/day).

Diving: Octopus Dive School is located a 15 min walk to the west of the hostel, and offers special rates (seadiversroatan@gmail.com). Octopus Dive School (octopusdiveschool@gmail.com) is outside of walking distance, but does pick ups and also offers hostel guests a discount. Sandy Bay' Divers and Le Grand Bleu are on the same beach as Sea Divers.

Ziplining/ canopy tour: Mayan Jungle Canopy Tours is located on the south side of the main road heading towards West End— a bit out of walking range, would probably be a 30 min walk. Has monkeys, birds and other animals.

Botanical Garden: Located just across from Anthony's Key Resort, about a 5 min walk to the west of the hostel, this is a small but pretty botanical gardens with trails leading up to a beautiful view from the top of the hill. \$10 entry.

Restaurants: To the west a 15-20 min walk, there's the Beach Grill, Sunken Fish, and Papa Bones pizza. There are also many inexpensive comedores that sell typical local food, such as Elizabeth's down on the beach road (take the cut through then turn right). About a 10 min walk to the right, there's a great Asian-Caribbean fusion restaurant called Dragonfly. On the way, you'll pass Pirate's Den and Cafe 314.

Dolphins: Anthony's Key Resort, located a 5 min walk to the west of the hostel, has different activities (\$65+) that you can do with the dolphins, which are in a netted enclosure off the beach of their cay. No money for that? You can swim to the outside of their enclosure for a peek at them, just don't touch the netting. There are also a few well-trained dolphins that are allowed out of the enclosure to open sea to do the dolphin dive, so sometimes if you're out snorkeling, you might be lucky enough to have a dolphin zip by you!

Fitness: Island Gym, about a 7 min walk east of the hostel, is pretty pricey but well maintained. There's a bare bones gym at the entrance to the colonia, and Pilates and yoga classes at a couple different spots.

Entertainment: A few of the restaurants have live music and events on different nights.

Groceries: We have an excellent grocery store a 3 min walk from the hostel.



Roatan Backpackers' Hostel Activity Guide:

French Harbour & French Cay

To get there, take a bus to Coxen Hole, then ask around for a bus going to Oo-kridge. You can also negotiate with a taxi to go expresso, or take a colectivo taxi to Coxen Hole, switch on to the next colectivo taxi route to French Harbour (changing taxis in Coxen Hole).

Restaurants: The Buccaneer is located in French Harbour on the water, with a U shaped deck the has a 'pool' area in between. It's \$5 to use the 'pool', which is a lovely spot to spend a few hours, swinging in a hammock over the water. Gios and Romeos are 2 other restaurants located along the water in French Harbour. If you just want a fast bite, Pizza Inn and Bojangles Chicken are both located right at the entrance to French Harbour, and there's also a Petro Sun gas station for baleadas, pastelitos and more.

Groceries: if you're headed out for a day of exploring and wanted a picnic but forgot to stop to stock up in Coxen Hole, there's also an Eldons Supermarket in French Harbour, just after turning in, on the right hand side.

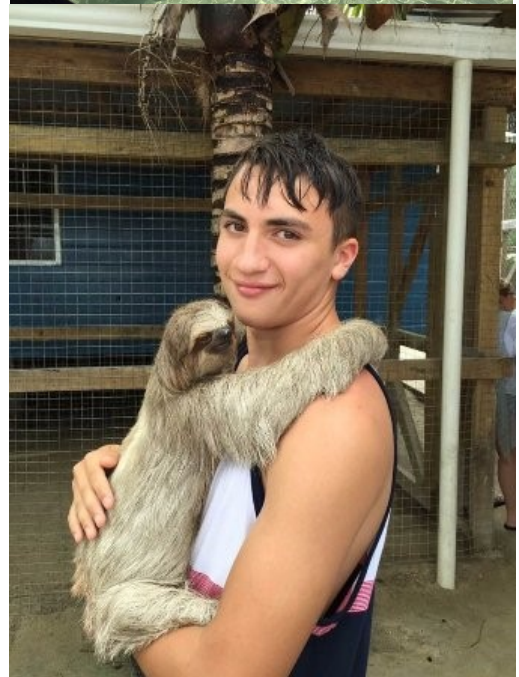
Monkeys and Sloths: Located in French Cay, Daniel Johnson's Monkey and Sloth Hangout is basically in a family's yard, with several different animals and birds. The highlight is getting to hold a sloth (they have a limit of 15 hugs in a day, better to go in the morning), and having the monkeys jump on your head. \$10

Iguanas: The iguana farm has been around for ages—the family protects these reptiles, as islanders like to eat them. There are hundreds of massive iguanas, and you can feed them lettuce leaves. Best on sunny days, \$12 In French Cay

Private Cays, Snorkeling and Beach: Big French Key and Little French Cay are 2 private islands located just off of the coast by the community of French Cay. Primarily targeting the cruise ship crowd, they both charge a day access fee to go over by boat and use their beach, go snorkeling, use their restaurant etc. The boats to Big French Key depart just next to the sloth hangout, and sometimes just showing up at their dock, they'll take you over for \$10 instead of a hefty day access fee.

Golf: There's a Peter Dye golf course just outside of French Harbour before reaching French Cay, on the left, called the Black Pearl (located at Pristine Bay).

Cash points: There are several banks and ATMs in French Harbour.



Roatan Backpackers' Hostel Activity Guide: East End

To get there is not easy: the bus system just goes as far as Oakridge (switching buses in Coxen Hole), and taxi drivers ask \$80-\$100 to get all the way to Camp Bay. The best option is to rent a car, around \$40/day, and get some other hostel guests to share the cost, then spend the day exploring. Well worth it!

Jonesville: There are mangrove tunnels by Jonesville as well as Oakridge, and Trico Bar and Grill can rent you a kayak to go explore them. There's also a boat that leaves Jonesville to spend the day snorkeling and having fun, going all the way to Pigeon Cay, a sandy little cay with nothing on it, off the far east point of the island, to the south. Hole in the Wall is a quirky bar and restaurant only accessible by boat— just drive to the end of Jonesville and ask around for someone to call them for you for a pick up (lunches \$12-\$15).

Oakridge: A picturesque community with all the homes on stilts over the water, and the starting point of boat tours through the mangroves.

Restaurants: Kristi's Overlook and Bella's are both along the drive heading east. Or drive through Punta Gorda to try some Garifuna cuisine.

BJ's Backyard is in Oakridge, and La Sirena is in Camp Bay (east of the public beach). There are a few other little spots you'll pass along the drive, if you want to give one a try. Also Hole in the Wall (see Jonesville section for details).

Paya Bay Beach: Paya Bay is a clothing optional resort, and has a couple of beaches at their property, including a nude one. Might have a small entrance fee.

★ **Camp Bay Beach:** My favourite beach on the island, the hour and a half drive is long, but worth it once you get up there. Nothing's built along the beach, usually you'll have pretty much the whole beach to yourself (except weekends and holidays, when it's a little busier). Beautiful white sand and turquoise water with no one trying to sell you anything. Take a hammock, pack a picnic (you can borrow a cooler at the hostel) and be prepared to spend the day. No bathroom facilities or anywhere to really buy anything at the public beach, but if you go further east, there's Camp Bay Adventure Lodge and La Sirena Bar and Restaurant right over the water.

Kitesurfing: There's a kitesurf school past the public beach of camp bay, offering both lessons as well as equipment rentals for those who already know how to do it. Very weather dependent, it's a good idea to check in with them before heading up all that way.



Roatan Backpackers' Hostel Activity Guide: Places in Between

If you're out exploring around the island, there are a few places that you might want to check out as you travel from one community to the next.

Road from West End to West Bay: Along this road, you'll find the lighthouse (a small turret structure with a view, sometimes has a restaurant inside, and often souvenir vendors just outside), and the Rum Company. There's also 2 zipline companies along this road, Gumbalimba and South Shore.

West End to Sandy Bay: The Petro Sun gas station is actually a great spot to pick up some food! They sell baleadas, pastelitos and other local dishes. There's a chocolate store just across the road from them as well as a Rusty Fish which is a store that sells recycled art. Also along the drive between West End and Sandy Bay: Wok restaurant and Fresh Bakery, as well as Glam Hair Salon if you'd like to get your hair done.

Sandy Bay to Coxen Hole: Not too many points of interest along this drive, but there is the turn off that goes towards the secondary road along the north shore, which has recently been paved and is a great drive. There are a few quiet beaches along there (you might need to pay something to access, Marbella and Palmetto), and there's also the Roatan Brewery

Coxen Hole to Flowers Bay: You'll pass by one of the cruise ship ports, and also the 'ROATAN' sign that you can pose with is along this drive. There's a cameo factory, as well as the Steel Pan Alley (if you want to take a lesson in playing the steel pan drums)

Coxen Hole to French Harbour: You'll pass the fire department, the ferry that goes to the mainland, the second cruise ship dock, a computer store, a few restaurants, a development called Las Palmas that has a beach, a congested area called Los Fuertes, our power company RECO, and just before French Harbour, you'll pass the mall, Megaplaza. There's a huge used clothing store at the mall called Megapaca, as well as a good coffee place called Espresso Americano, and multiple banks.

French Harbour to Oakridge: Just after leaving French Harbour, you'll pass Pristine Bay, home to the golf course, and Pineapple Villas, home to Herby's Sports Bar, if there's a special sporting event you want to watch. There are some beautiful views along this drive, worth pulling over and taking a pic or two, if you're in a car or on a scooter. There's a huge replica of a pirate ship next to the main road, which was constructed as a night club until the owner was taken away in handcuffs by the DEA from US, for money laundering for a Mexican cartel.

Oakridge to Camp Bay: There's a fork in the road, if you take the left, you'll go into Punta Gorda, a Garifuna community. On Sunday afternoons, they do their traditional dancing and drumming, and sell food. If you go back to the main road towards Camp Bay, you'll pass Marble Hill Farms, where they sell tropical jams and jellies made on site.

