

ROATAN

June 2013



A group of Lunarfans recently returned from the Roatan trip arranged by the Herring's. The entire group had been on last year's Roatan trip. Roatan is the largest of the Bay Islands of Honduras, 33 miles by 4 miles, and about 20 miles



off the coast of Honduras. The island is the above water projection of the largest barrier reef in the Caribbean (second largest worldwide after Australia's Great Barrier Reef).

We stayed at the Splash Inn, a 24-room hotel in the small community of West End. West End is on the water's edge at northwest corner of the island, several miles from Anthony's Key Resort. The community has several small hotels, our favorite restaurants from previous trips, mini markets, street vendors, and bars. Splash Inn has an open-air restaurant overlooking the Caribbean, and fully equipped dive shop. Both have a great staff. Most rooms have an ocean view. The dive shop has equipment rentals, nitrox, and two wash tanks for gear, a drying room, and a secure storage room. The staff loaded tanks and setup our gear on the boat for our dives. All we had to do was walk approx. 50 yards to the boat, check our gear and we were off.

There are over 70 dive sites at West End, most less than 15 minutes from the dock. The morning dive was at 9:00, and for the surface interval we came back to the dive shop and enjoyed cold watermelon before the second dive at 11:30. We would be back at Splash Inn for lunch, and then it would be time for siesta or prepare for the 3:00 dive. Night dives were also available. It would be easy to make four dives a day.

Diving conditions were near perfect; water temp around 82, seas calm, visibility excellent, and little to no current. Top of the reefs averaged 25 to 30 feet and then the wall. Dives began at a mooring buoy or the boat followed as we swam along the reef. Since several Lunarfans were photographers, the dive guides let us set the pace. Most bottom times were 50 to 60 minutes. Wall dives offered sheer drop offs, giant sponges, swim trough's, caverns with available light, and crevices. One swim through was the *Hole in the Wall*, which began at the top of the reef and exited on the face of the wall at 110 feet. Top of the reefs offered coral gardens and a variety of marine life.

The waters around Roatan are marine sanctuaries so there is a great variety of sea life. A few of the highlights were: numerous huge groupers (all kinds) nice wreck dives, *Hole in the Wall*, blennies, cryptic teardrop crabs, anemone shrimp, turtles, nudibranchs, morays, midnight parrotfish, and great barracuda. Saw only a couple of lionfish.

Everyone is in agreement we are looking forward to a return trip.

