

HONDURAS THIS WEEK

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2009



Seafood Lovers
– Head to
'Rojo, Verde y Ajo!'
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FARC terrorist
campaign may
intensify

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Cindy Burgess - Honduras This Week

The surgical team from the U.S. works with local health care practitioners to ensure continuity once the team returns to the U.S.

Medical Team Mends Hearts, Provides Hope

Cindy Burgess

Honduras This Week

TEGUCIGALPA – Julio Valle was a desperate man. His baby boy was dying, and no one in Honduras could help him. “I even thought of

killing myself because I couldn't do anything for him,” he said. “That's how bad my situation was. I felt useless.”

His son Noe was born four months ago with a heart defect called pulmonary atresia. The condition left him bluish in color and

struggling to breathe. But today Noe is on the road to recovery, thanks to a medical team from the United States.

“They're my angels,” Julio smiled.

Just a few weeks earlier, Julio had been in a race against time.

The San Pedro Sula resident had been told there was no one in Honduras who could perform the type of surgery Noe needed. So Julio packed his bags and flew with Noe to El Salvador.

The doctors in San Salvador said they could do the surgery – but not

until June.

“I knew if I would have waited, my boy wouldn't be here,” Julio said.

Next stop – Guatemala City. Julio was almost there when he got word that some American doctors

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EDITORIAL

An Education Denied

Therese McKinny-Wood

Last week, a new school year began in Honduras. My once-quiet morning walks are now punctuated with the sound of children shouting to their friends as they clamor to get to school. It should be a hopeful sound, but I know that there are many young faces absent from the blue and white uniform clad masses this year. Some are in the fields, working to help feed their families; others, after years of overcrowded classrooms and insufficient attention from teachers, have simply given up, resigned at age ten to years working in the fields under the hot sun. The Honduran government has failed these children and allowed them to complete a cycle of poverty that an adequately funded education could have broken.

In no situation is the government's failure more evident than in the case of Marisol. Marisol is 16 years old and is the hope of her community. When she completed sixth grade, a feat in itself in her village, she convinced her skeptical parents to allow her to continue her education. Because the cost of transportation to and from the nearest high school was more than she could afford, she enrolled in an alternative, self-directed program called "El Maestro en la Casa."

Anxious to share her educational good fortune and help her community, Marisol started teaching kindergarten, as there was no official post for the position in her village. She wasn't paid much, but she saved what she could. She had high hopes of becoming a teacher one day and she knew enrolling in a bachelerato program would be expensive. In December, she completed ninth grade and she had a stroke of luck: an American volunteer in her community agreed to help Marisol pay her school fees. She was one step closer to her dream of becoming a teacher.

Then, she had the door slammed in her face. On enrollment day,

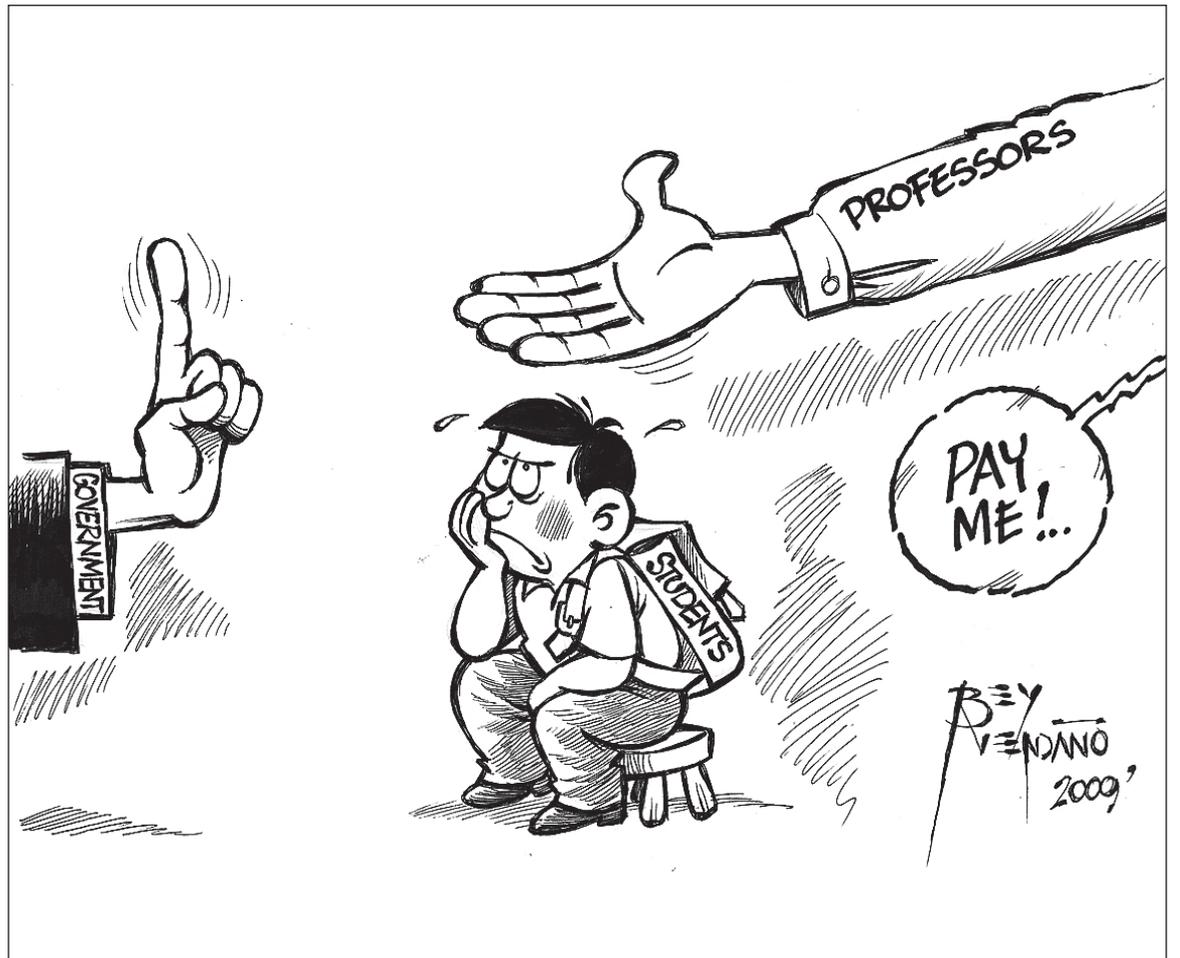
Marisol arrived at the front of the matriculation line, after hours of waiting, only to be told that the school was full. She was devastated. Marisol overcame long odds to even consider standing in line to matriculate that day, but despite having done everything right, Marisol was denied the educational opportunity that she deserved.

Who deserves the blame in this situation? The school? The teachers? The government? It's true, strings could be pulled and another student could be added to the already swollen student body, but what would that accomplish? Marisol was one of many turned away on matriculation day and the school barely has sufficient resources to educate the students already enrolled. To ask teachers to take on more responsibility and expand their class sizes even further would do little more than lower the overall quality of education for everyone. No, it is not the school, nor the teachers, who must take responsibility for this educational crisis: it is the Honduran government.

It is a sign of progress that more Hondurans are reaching secondary school, but getting them to the door is not enough. The Honduran government must guarantee that there are enough qualified teachers and secondary schools available to meet the educational needs of every young Honduran like Marisol. To do this, they must inject sufficient resources and funding into secondary education. By denying an adequate education to its most promising youth, the Honduran government is disabling its citizenry's most powerful tool for sustainable, long-term development.

Therese McKinny-Wood currently lives in Copan Ruinas and is working on an education project there as a Fulbright Scholar.

OPINION



LETTERS

Dear HTW:

As a health care professional, I have always wondered about all the medical missions from North America that come to Honduras.

While I think it is great for people who don't normally have access to quality medical care (if any care at all) I have concerns about any kind of follow-up these

patients have after they've had surgery or medical care.

Do these teams of doctors and nurses come back to check on their patients? Do local people get properly trained to examine surgical wounds, blood pressures, blood sugars, whatever the case may be?

I know some medical care is better than none, but true quality care requires follow-up. I would

love to think that these teams have put into place some kind of sustainable care for these needy, deserving patients.

Sincerely,

Cathy Moses, RN
Raleigh, NC
via e-mail

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Honduras This Week
PO Box 1312
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NATIONAL

SURGICAL MISSION: Patients benefit from teams of doctors, nurses

con't from page 1

were in Tegucigalpa to do heart surgery. He drove straight to the capital and Noe's case was the last one the doctors reviewed.

"When we saw him, he was very blue," said Dr. Jeff DeMare, an intensivist at Children's Hospital in Omaha, Nebraska. "We knew we had to get him in right away."

Noe was the second of 23 Honduran children to undergo heart surgery at Instituto Hondureño de Seguridad Social from January 12 through 23. But he won't be the last.

The doctors' visit is part of a five-year program aimed at developing the skills of pediatric heart surgeons and critical-care nurses in Tegucigalpa.

"We're working with the local cardiologist, nurses -- everybody that we can bring to the effort -- so that over time, we develop a local capability to take care of these kids," said Dr. James Hammel, a pediatric cardiothoracic surgeon from Nebraska. "Because unfortunately there's a long, long backlog of children."

The program is coordinated by

the International Children's Heart Foundation, with the assistance of groups such as Helping Hands for Honduras and Rotary International. Doctors and nurses from all over the world volunteer their time and expertise, and often bring with them thousands of dollars' worth of donated medical supplies and equipment. It's estimated this trip alone cost more than \$50,000.

"At first you come into a hospital like this and people are a little suspicious," said Hammel. "They aren't sure how this team is going to work out. But then you do a couple of cases and they see the children doing well...and there starts to be more enthusiasm."

That enthusiasm was dampened on day nine, when a four-month-old patient named Delcia passed away. She had undergone surgery three days earlier to repair a large hole in the center of her heart, but wasn't strong enough to recover. Her death hit the entire team hard.

"When the mom said she couldn't bury her daughter, that was the final straw for me," recalled Inez Rodriguez, a respiratory therapist

who was very involved in the case. Rodriguez said she had to leave the room to avoid bursting into tears in front of the baby's mother.

But all of the team members agreed -- the good on this trip far outweighed the bad, and overall the experience was very rewarding.

"Just the smiles on the families' faces, you know, when they get to hold their child who's healthy again," said DeMare. "That's well worth the time."

No one would agree more than Julio Valle. He has his son -- and one heck of a story to tell him when he's older.



Cindy Burgess - Honduras This Week

Father Julio holds a healthy Noe, his son, following surgery.

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NATIONAL

The Minimum Wage is a Red Herring

Marco Cáceres

Honduras This Week

A few years ago, I visited a young doctor in the town of Copán Ruinas. She was working at the government health clinic there. She was anxious to leave her position and get a job at a local clinic overseen by a North American non-profit organization, but was hesitant. You see, the doctor had not been paid by the government for eight months, and she feared that if she resigned she would never see a penny of her back wages. Her sole rationale for staying was a distant hope that she might eventually receive some of the money owed to her.

I returned to Copán Ruinas a year later and found her happily working at the non-profit clinic, where she was being paid regularly and on time. The doctor had worked an additional two months at the government clinic before she finally decided she was deluding herself. The woman worked hard for 10 months caring for patients with inadequate equipment and hardly any medications, and was never compensated. How do you figure this?

The situation reminds me of a friend of mine from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

named Quentin who told me that in his country people who are employed consider themselves fortunate. And he said that people consider themselves very lucky if they actually get paid.

I understand the argument for significantly increasing the minimum wage in Honduras. I am aware that even an increase of 60%, as the Zelaya administration recently mandated, is still not much of a "living wage" for Honduran workers. But the reality is that the current debate about the pros and cons of raising the minimum wage is nothing more than a "red herring." It is a diversion from the more fundamental problem with wages (particularly in the public sector), which is that all-too-often people do not get paid for months. And when people do get paid, they find that their wages are incomplete. But they're so happy to have received anything that they don't complain much.

I have tried to work through institutions in Honduras to provide stipend funds to individuals of limited means. I recall sending funds to an individual in the town of Santa Rita de Copán for more than a year through an institution based in San Pedro Sula. It was \$100 per month. I assumed that the organization would simply wire the

money to a local bank in Santa Rita where the man could walk over and make a withdrawal.

It turns out that the organization insisted that the man take a bus from Santa Rita to San Pedro to pick up his funds. Once a month, the man had to spend an entire day traveling to pick up his money. He spent about 15% of his stipend in order to get his stipend. The man complained a little, but he did not dare complain a lot.

The primary issue in Honduras is not that workers get paid puny sums... rather, that they do not get paid consistently and that they have to spend so much of their time, energy and emotional capital fighting for what is owed to them. It doesn't matter at what level wages are set if the money is not going to be delivered as promised. While there is no doubt that Honduras has cash liquidity problems, the bigger problem has to do with administration and trust.

The new school year in Honduras began earlier this month. However, the teachers are on strike again, so about 1.85 million children will not be going to classes for a while. Some 3,000 teachers are protesting the fact that they have not been paid at all for months or have received only a small portion of their wages.



Problem # 30

Three equalities of Fours
Can you write 100 using

1. Using only seven fours?
2. Using only six fours?
3. Using only four fours?

Answer to Problem # 29
The Congress Committee

Although there are 3 equations and 4 variables, the difficulty is only at mirage.

$$PSOE = 1/2 UCD$$

$$UCD + PCE = 8$$

$$AP = 1/2 PCE$$

$$PSOE + UCD + PCE + AP = 1/2 UCD + 8 + 1/2 PCE$$

But since $PCE = 8 - UCD$ then:

$$1/2 UCD + 8 + 1/2(8 - UCD) = 12$$

We received correct answers from:

- Octavio Peña, San Pedro Sula
- René Umaña, Danlí

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CULTURE

Seafood Lovers – Head to
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Jose Eduardo Atala M.

Honduras This Week

Stone crabs and jumbo-sized pacific oysters are part of the new weekend menu at the always-popular Rojo, Verde y Ajo.

For years now, restaurant owner Mandy Bermudez has been serving her conch soup on Saturdays: the soup is so good and so popular that customers reserve themselves a bowl usually a day in advance. The soup is mainly directed to seafood lovers - for those who need a quick remedy from a long night, its hearty and thick composition will replenish the body with all the rich minerals it contains.

Another classic weekend dish at "Rojo" is the fish filet ceviche; surprisingly one of the few ceviches in town that is not "mexicanized" with additions of tomato or avocado, a version found in just about any restaurant in the city. The ceviche at Rojo has a surprisingly fresh taste with finely chopped cilantro, serrano chiles, coconut and lemon juice and ripe papaya that gives it a very distinct sweet and sour taste.

Recently, jumbo-sized oysters from the Gulf of Fonseca have been

added to the weekend seafood menu at "Rojo." Although different from the oysters found in the U.S., these are much larger and come with all the works one could possibly imagine when eating oysters, from cocktail sauces to light mayo, lemon juice and vinegars. Whether you eat them in moderation or by the dozen, the bar is fully equipped to satisfy your needs to eat these delightful mollusks.

Another exciting option, which is new at Rojo, is the stone crab claw. Rarely found fresh on the mainland, these large sized claws - weighing in at about half a pound - are flown in directly from Miami from the same distributor as the famous Joe's Stone Crab restaurants.

It's safe to say that Rojo is quite possibly the only restaurant in Tegucigalpa offering such a vast array of exotic, imported and cultured sea foods, and not only do they have these specialty weekend dishes, but on their daily menu you can find anything from lobster tail to octopus, shrimp and calamari.

So, if you're craving seafood, there is seafood galore at Rojo!

For reservations and directions, call 232-3398.



Jose Eduardo Atala M.



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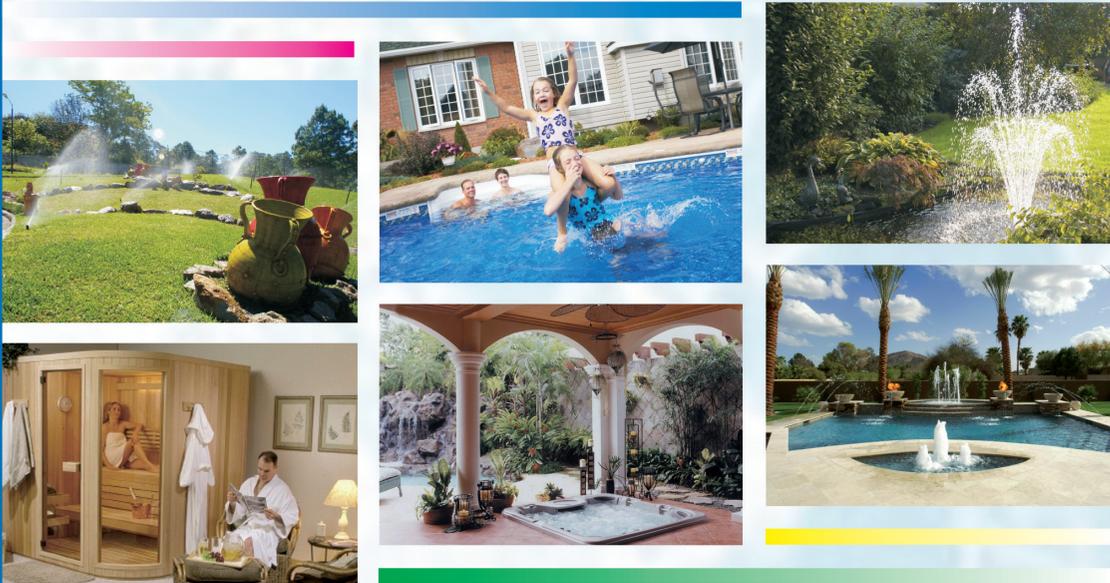
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Week IN Review

Executive Board of Economic Income improves system for fiscal recollection

In the last three years Honduras has climbed in the rankings of 'Doing Business 2009' of the Worldwide Bank. At the moment Honduras is in first place in Latin America, in the areas of preparation, presentation and payment of taxes. In order to improve the platform of recollection, authorities from the Executive Board of Economic Income (DEI) will soon have a new system for paying taxes on the web.

Union Statutes propose unreachable payments

The increase in the minimum wage (approximately 60%) is the result of a predictable economical crisis. For example the statute of university teachers defines base salaries of professionals by calculating a determined number of minimum wages. If raises are given to teachers, the university's budget would have a deficit of approximately Lps. 800 million; this amount was considered unreachable by university teacher Jose Antonio Borjas Massis who is also vice-president of the Treasury Department.

Supporting Small and Medium Industry

Representatives from the Swiss Agency of Development and Cooperation (COSUDE) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Farming (SAG) hosted the first meeting of the Committee of Strategic Direction for Small and Medium Rural Companies. This meeting will include representatives from Honduras and Nicaragua. The economic support from the Swiss totals \$3.9 million that will generate 50,000 jobs in the rural area.

Tractors promised by Venezuela have arrived to Honduras

Tractors promised by Venezuela in August of last year are finally in the hands of farmer's confederations that will now be the official organizations in charge of renting them to the farmers; the prices have not been revealed by the authorities. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez promised the delivery of these tractors to support productive sectors.

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NATIONAL

The Jabberwocky Biennale: A Glimpse into the World of Institutionalized Art

Federico Rosa

Honduras This Week

Art is not merely an imitation of the reality of nature, but in truth a metaphysical supplement to the reality of nature, placed alongside thereof for its conquest.

-Friedrich Nietzsche

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a biennial is an event occurring every two years. According to fine art institutions, a biennale (note the sophisticated "e" suffix, attaching it subtly to the more sophisticated sounding French language) it is an indefinite number of artistic contests or events in which the so called "best" art of a given time and place is given a chance to be seen publicly, that is, before galleries and museums steal them away from us forever into the abyss of capitalism. Other biennales utilize the event as a platform for more 'experimental' art, or art less likely to find a commercial niche due to strong political overtones, sexual connotations, and public desecrations of other social taboos. So now, of course, we have biennales springing up, under the clause of public art support, from Central America to Istanbul.

The problem is that many of these biennales, especially in underdeveloped countries, is that it becomes a platform for ideologies, and not necessarily of aesthetic concerns. A particular work or piece might be turned down if it isn't political enough, especially if it is not the right sort of politics. Do not fool yourself; there is, paradoxically, no freedom of expression in the biennale. Most of the time, curators and critics obtain the benefit of the doubt as they organize the event and carry out the selection of artists to be shown; but they know what they are doing ideologically, if not aesthetically. The public, on the other hand, has no idea what

the biennale is about. In the case of Central America, it is about left-wing politics and a sarcastic view of the world.

The current edition of the Central American Isthmus Biennale can be seen at the Museo para la Identidad Nacional, a privately funded, non-profit museum, located in the center of Tegucigalpa. It is an interesting show, where the main goal is to give Central American emerging artists opportunities to showcase their work, which is germane, since the few existing galleries in Central America do not usually exhibit new art.

This is good news, in part because it does give local artists the opportunity to showcase their work. However, there are more artists working in contemporary methods than one would think. Who gets chosen? The truth is, few would say that the ones who really deserve to be there. The ideology is suspiciously similar all around the exhibition rooms, and none of the works diverge from a very mainstream left wing ideological position; some is anti imperialism, others pro animal rights, but very left of center.

This leads one to suspect that perhaps there is a predominant ideology among artists, but how about the excluded artists? It might turn out that their ideology is different from the curators, which puts the objective nature of the selection in question. We will never know. These are all, of course, not accusations, but a reminder that even in art, power is exclusive. Another negative aspect of these biennales is the fact that it is confusing to follow them. There is a biennale in Panama, (even though Panama participates in the Isthmus Biennale), and one in Costa Rica as well. Which begs the question: What is a Central American Biennale? Which one should reflect the concerns of Central American artists?

First place in the Isthmus Biennale went to Marcos Agudelo, an aspiring architect in urban planning and development. The winning work consists of a portable video device attached to a rock, which is supposed to be a symbol of resistance against evil oppressors and invaders, specifically against Nicaragua, and the video piece shows the artist digging a grave to the unburied, unknown patriots, named "A la tumba perdida de Andrés Castro." The award given is named the "Tlacuilo de Oro." The ideology here is more important than the piece, one would assume.

Jonathan Harken's (from Panama), piece utilizes slide

projections of montages critiquing Honduran affairs and public apathy from a moral standpoint. For instance, Honduran President Manuel Zelaya is presented as an effeminate cowboy, in front of the Museo del Hombre, pistol ready to fire (the critique being that a macho president is posing as a macho archetype, but sarcastically is presented as effeminate, and criticizing the existence of a Museum of Man, and not a Museum of Woman). Other slides were of drunken youngsters in front of Francisco Morazan's statue in Central Park.

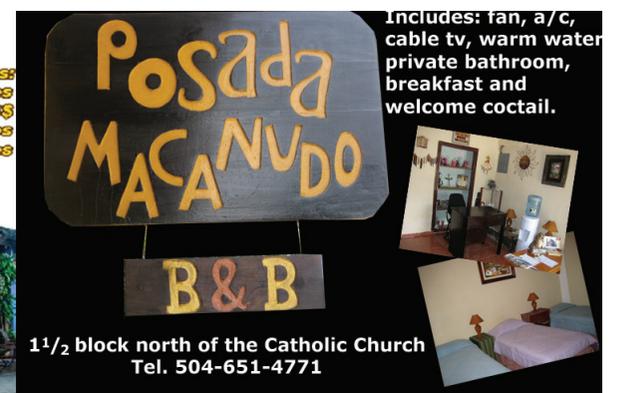
As with Harken's work, not one piece dealt seriously with poverty, violence, immigration, foreign

policy, dogmatism, but rather a sort of apathy and sarcasm, which grows tiring and humorless. Few pieces dealt with a formalist, aesthetic approach, except some works by Alex Galo and Ana Garuz, which, nonetheless, were feebly placed within an ideological framework.

The Central American Isthmus Biennale's pieces and ad-hoc curatorship, which, despite (I assume) their best efforts, seemed somewhat desperate to look sophisticated, and resulted often in an incoherent montage. There were few memorable pieces, and the curators and organizers have two years to make a better show for their next exhibition.



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THE MAYA CALENDAR

A GUIDE TO THE BEST IN HONDURAS CULTURE

ARTS

WOMEN IN THE ARTS - Mujeres en las Artes. One of the strongest artistic movements in Tegucigalpa. Mujeres en la Artes Leticia de Oyuela constantly sponsors workshops, exhibitions, conferences, art shows and community events in the city. For the complete schedule, log on to www.muaartes.org.hn or contact Veronica Romero at 222 3015 or email to: mua@cablecolor.hn

PEÑA ARTISTICA AT EL RINCÓN DEL ARTISTA. Next to Casa Mexicana, in front of Wendy's Tepeyac, Tegucigalpa. Wednesdays-Saturdays. 8:30 pm, Musical Group Klasicos is inviting

FEBRUARY AT CCET, CULTURAL CENTER OF SPAIN IN TEGUCIGALPA (All activities are free) Open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 8 pm, Sundays from 9 am to 3 pm closed on Mondays. Saturday 21: Film Exhibition, Ciclo de Fernando León de Aranoa: Los lunes al sol, 11:00 am. Sunday 22, Children and dancing, with the instructor Yoslany Sánchez, 10:30 am Tuesday 24: Scholarships & Information. Presentation of scholarships and grants for study in Spain, by Elizabeth Romero, Scholarship Program and Training AECID in Honduras www.becasmae.es www.fundacioncarolina.es 10:00 a.m. Thursday 26: Movies, one manifestation of political documentary • 38 days of hunger and dignity, from Caminantes by Fernando Leon de Aranoa, 6:30 pm, Friday 27: Movies, one manifestation of political documentary • El Porvenir, Oscar Estrada • The back of the world Javier Corcuera, 6:30 pm Saturday 28: Movies, one manifestation of political documentary • The effect Iguazú, Pere Joan Ventura • La pelota, de Julio Medem • Murder in February, Ortega Eterio • Memoirs of a guerrilla Pau Vergara • Children in Russia, Jaime Camino 11:00 am / 2:00 pm / 5:00 pm / 7:00 pm / 9:00 pm For more information: Centro Cultural de España, Col. Palmira 1ª calle, #655, Contiguo al Redondel de los Artesanos. Tegucigalpa, MDC, Honduras, C.A. Tel +504 238-2013 Fax 238-5332, E-mail: info-ccet@aacid.hn

THE EXPOSITION MIGRATIONS: FACING SOUTH. At the Honduran Institute of Hispanic Culture. Tuesday, February 24 in Tegucigalpa. A group of 13 artists from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Miami will be presenting their work, 7:00 pm. www.mirandosur.org

MONTHLY CONVERSATORY AT MUÑOZ LOBO BOOKSHOP. The Muñoz Lobo bookstore and the editorial group Satyagraha invite you cordially to join us at the monthly Conversatory, a free space center, which takes place every first Thursday of the month at Ave. Cervantes, opposite to Museum of Honduran Man in Tegucigalpa, from: 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

"FRENCH ALLIANCE CINEMA CLUB. More information at www.afhonduras.com or at 239-6165

CAFÉ PARADISO EXHIBITING FILMS. Every week you can enjoy excellent films at Café Paradiso in Barrio La Plazuela in Tegucigalpa. Contact: anarellavelez4@yahoo.com

EL PARNASO. Visit www.elparnasohn.tripod.com, you will find all kind of artistic expressions

TERCO CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS. Contact them; they always have info on cultural activities. E-mail: terco-producciones@gmail.com. Visit www.karlalara.com

PROYECTO GRITON ACTIVITIES. Visit www.proyectogriton.com and focus on KUPIAKUMI, you'll find the daily logbook of the activities of this cultural group.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AT CAFÉ PARADISO. Café Paradiso (downtown) is always performing cultural activities. Contact paradiso@cablecolor.hn

EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE OF HONDURAS. Visit the website www.telah.org. They are presenting plays, essays about theatre culture. Tel: 220-0690, 238-3726

ARTEACCION AND HIS BLOGSPOT: www.arteaccionculturaenmovimientoblogspot.com. An area where you can learn about the work and events performed at the cultural association Arte Action. You can also visit the website: www.arteaccion.org, which has been updated.

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La Grotta: Located in Blvd. Morazan
Email: lagrottahn3@gmail.com
Office: 236-7010 Location: Blvd. Morazan, next to Jetstereo, Tegucigalpa

THE FASHION ROCK AT THE NATIONAL ENGINEERS COLISEUM. It is a fashion and design show, including design and rock music. Guest musicians: the legendary DNA band, Godzend, Antivirus, Alasterra Angela Bendeck and Polache. Saturday, February 26, 7:00 pm

ROCK CONCERT WITH THE CATHOLIC GROUP "GOLGOTHA." At the Museum of Anthropology and History in San Pedro Sula, Saturday, February 21, 4:30 pm. General entrance: L. 30.00. Tickets on sale at the museum and at Radio Luz.

JAZZ CONCERT OF ERIC LOHRER QUARTET. At the Manuel Bonilla National Theater in Tegucigalpa.

Tuesday, February 24, 7:00 pm. They French Embassy and French Alliance are inviting to enjoy this event.

CULTURAL CONCERTS ENVOY TROMBONE LUIS BONILLA. With the "Supremos Poderes" Band of Honduras, February 26th, 5:00 pm, at Central Park of Tegucigalpa, free admission; and March 5, 7:00 pm at the Manuel Bonilla National Theatre, free admission. (<http://www.trombonilla.com>)

TWO CONCERTS PERFORMED BY THE HONDURAN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA. The Philharmonic Association of Honduras began its season concert for 2009, this time with two spectacular performances in the Manuel Bonilla National Theatre. The first concert will be held on Thursday February 26 at 7:00 pm with the presentation of works from Beethoven and Mozart. The value of the entrance to this magnificent concert is L.300.00 for Palco and L. 100.00, for seniors and students will have a fifty percent discount. The second concert is free and is scheduled for Sunday 1 March at 11:00 am, is a concert for the whole family, implemented as a major work, the famous musical tale "Peter and the Wolf", the public may also listen to classical and popular music.

CULTURAL FRIDAY AT "CAMINANTE" BOOKSTORE. Karla Lara and Camilo Korea will welcome to the Cultural Friday "Caminante" bookstore, 6:00 pm. At the Caminante Bookstore. Our events are advertised on page <http://www.libreriacaminante.com/eventos.htm>

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Las Colinas, El Dorado Street in front of Hillcrest School, home # 35. More Information contact Melissa Torres at Tel: 9800-7170.

METTA ACTIVITIES. This Center has an excellent physical development plan for adults older than sixty years: dancing, pilates, stretching, and more. For information visit www.mettahn.com. Metta is on the street behind Emisoras Unidas. Tel. 239- 52 78, 206-7022, 213 -3375

CINEMAS. Log into www.cinemarkca.com

FOR THE KIDS: CHIMINIKE INTERACTIVE EDUCATION CENTER. <http://www.cohcit.gob.hn/contacto.html> (504) 230-7673 / 230. Next to the Honduran Council of Science and Technology CAD Building, Blvd. Armed Forces, Tegucigalpa, Honduras. http://www.cohcit.gob.hn/programas_chiminike

A CONTINUOUS TRAINING PROGRAM. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tegucigalpa (CCIT) has a continuous training plan for its members. Contact: Fabiola Saenz: fsaenz@ccit.hn

HONDURAN BOOKS AT GUAYMURAS EDITORIAL. New webpage for Honduran books: www.guaymuras.hn. Sections: Who are we, New books, Honduran authors, Other Honduran Editorials, Month's book

DAY HIKES INTO THE PICO BONITO NATIONAL PARK AND THE LODGE AT PICO BONITO. Includes a guided hike on the Lodge's natural trail into the Pico Bonito National Park with a stop at the Mermaid Falls swimming hole (Hike can be made at 8:00 am or 1:00 pm). Before or after your hike enjoy a delicious meal at the Lodge's restaurant and explore the Butterfly Farm and Serpentarium also located on the Lodge's property (before or after the hike). Price includes guide service, lunch, and park entrance fee paid to the Pico Bonito National Park Foundation (Drinks not included) Please call ahead to be sure we have guides available. E-mail: pico-bonito@caribe.hn, Tel. 504-440-0388/0389/0468

REPUBLIC HISTORY MUSEUM AT VILLA ROY. Schedule: 8:00 - 4:00 pm from Monday thru Saturday. Barrio Buena Vista, Tegucigalpa. Entrance fees: Hondurans and Central

Americans: L. 10.00, from other countries: L. 20.00. For more information contact: Patricia Cardona museosregionales@yahoo.com, Tania Ramirez ardontania@gmail.com, Telephone: 238-0608.

HONDURAN DOCUMENTARY CENTER OF HISTORICAL INVESTIGATIONS (CDIHH). Has a great collection of books and national file documentary. Old Presidential House, Barrio El Centro. Visits from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm. Attended visits, all Wednesdays, cost: L. 5.00

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CHRISTIAN BUSINESS WOMEN MEETINGS. Sharing testimonies and praying. Every Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m. at Glifo Room in Honduran Maya Hotel, free entrance. yam@cablecolor.hn or Tel. 9996-6707

INTERDENOMINATIONAL MINISTRY SUITABLE WOMEN. Schedule of meetings: Every first Saturday of the month, they offer a breakfast at El Candelero Room, Honduran Maya Hotel, 7:40 a.m. L. 100.00.

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◀ Tourism / Environment / Development / Community ▶



F.A.D.: New approach to ocean fishing can increase fish counts

■ see page 10



Easter on Roatan: Something for everyone, every budget

■ see page 12

Vintage Pearl Restaurant: Romantic ambience & good food add up to a memorable experience

■ see page 13

Navigating Roatán: What's What/What's Where

■ see page 14

Cayos Cochinos: Small Islands Dealing with Growing Pains

■ see page 11

Island Green

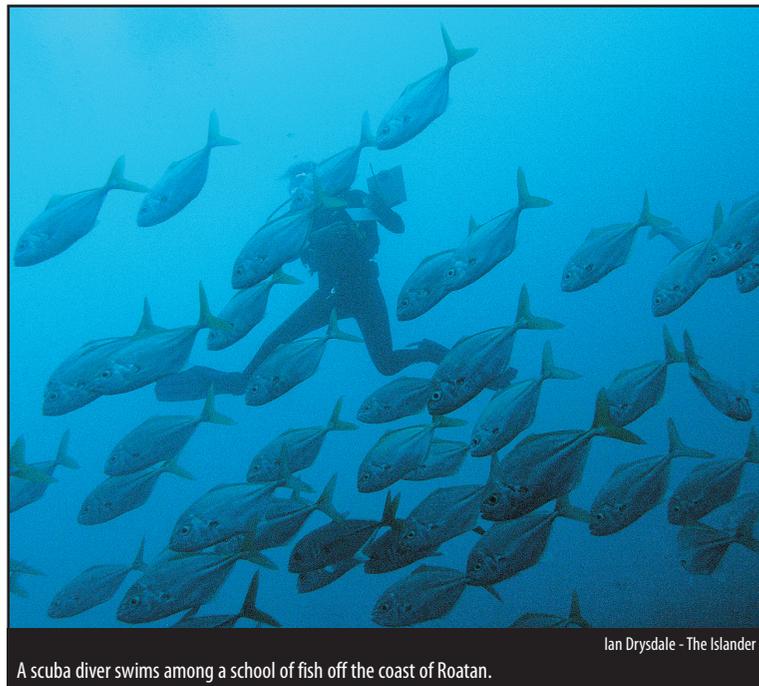
F.A.D.: New approach to ocean fishing can increase fish counts

Ian Drysdale
The Islander

Blue fish, red fish, green fish, BIG fish – they're all colorful fish. That is what goes through your mind when you dive on a coral reef. That is what goes through your mind when you dive on a HEALTHY coral reef. That will go through your mind when you dive two of the most amazing sites on the Island of Roatán.

As a means to ensure survival and successful procreation, certain reef and pelagic (open ocean) fish aggregate at certain times during the year to reproduce in vast quantities. If you are at the right place at the right time, you can see over 400 mature groupers in one area. That is more than you will ever see by doing normal dives during the rest of your life! Other species that aggregate in Honduran waters are snappers, jacks, barracudas and permits.

Reef fish aggregations, as defined by the Mesoamerican



A scuba diver swims among a school of fish off the coast of Roatan.

Ian Drysdale - The Islander

Barrier Reef System Project (MBRS) are "groups of fish gathered for either spawning, feeding or shelter." More specifically, "a group of non-specific individuals grouped

together in densities three times higher than those found in non-reproductive periods."

A joint effort between The Nature Conservancy, the Roatán

Marine Park, Luna Environmental and the dive shops in Roatán, has enabled a group of volunteers to monitor two sites on Roatán. During ten days every month between December and March, fish count and identification has been carried out. The objective is to clearly define if these two sites in fact are fish aggregation sites, and if so, how to effectively manage them.

Fishermen are the best repository of knowledge for identifying these sites. They know when and where large groups of economically important species meet, and so, have an abundant catch those days. If these sites are overfished without any kind of management, populations can decline within a period of five years! Now, looking at the other side of the situation, fishermen can be the most important key players for ensuring the continued presence of these fish. Managing an aggregation site allows a "spill-over" effect, by which fish are found in larger

numbers and larger sizes on the outskirts of the managed site, and thus, repopulating fish stocks all over the island.

As we go to print, the new Fishing Law of the Republic of Honduras is being socialized. This new law must take into account the NEED to declare areas as no-take zones. No-take zones, declared in areas where fish aggregate, ensure that spawning species are protected during their mating season, as well as allowing fish stocks to replenish in nearby areas.

What alternatives can then be provided to fishermen who are no longer allowed to fish traditional sites?

One possible solution to be studied more in depth is the use of a FAD to reduce fishing pressure of reef species. A what?!

A F.A.D., a Fish Aggregation Device, acts as an artificial ecosystem, creating shade that attracts small fish, which attract bigger fish

■ continued on page 12

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Island Community

Cayos Cochinos: Small Islands Dealing with Growing Pains

Cindy Burgess
The Islander

CHACHUATE – Forget the school bus.

On this tiny tropical island off the north coast of Honduras, children take the school boat.

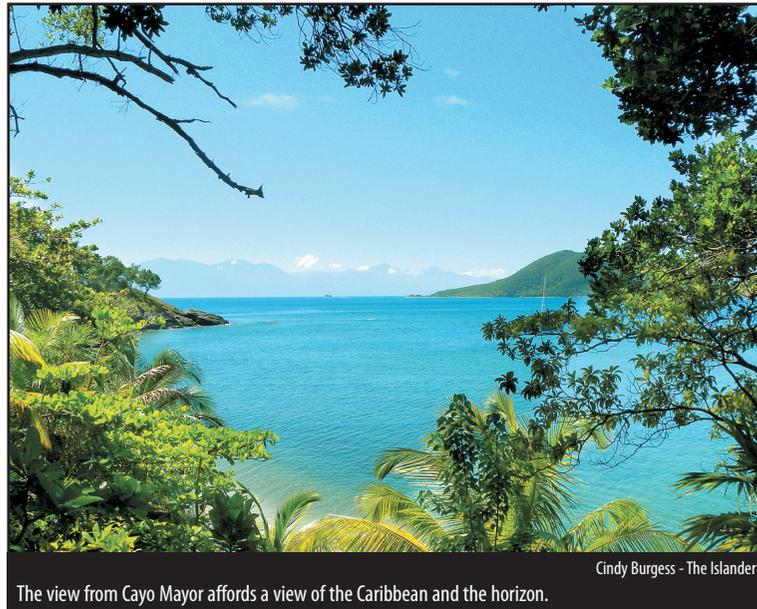
Every weekday morning at 6:00, about 40 kids pile into a wooden boat powered by a single motor for the 20 minute trip across the turquoise waters of the Caribbean to neighboring Cayo Menor, where they attend classes until 1:00pm.

Such is life in the Garifuna community of Chachuate, one of 13 coral cays and two volcanic islands that make up Cayos Cochinos (English translation: 'Hog Islands').

Located about 30 kilometers northeast of La Ceiba, Cayos Cochinos has long been an overnight stopover for Garifuna fishermen paddling dugout canoes.

In 1993, the cays and the rich fishing grounds around them were designated a Marine Protected Area. Ten years later, the 489 square kilometer reserve was further declared a Marine Natural Monument.

The monument in question is the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef, which stretches from Mexico to



The view from Cayo Mayor affords a view of the Caribbean and the horizon.

Honduras and is the second largest in the world after the Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Australia. The reef is home to a flourishing marine life, which makes for spectacular diving and snorkeling.

The marine reserve is managed by the Cayos Cochinos Foundation, which is responsible for protecting the reef and cays and their inhabitants.

"Every year we see impact from the mainland like sediment, contamination and disease," said

Adrian Oviedo, the Foundation's executive director, "so we have to be monitoring the status of the reef."

Much of that monitoring is done at the Foundation's research facility on Cayo Menor, the smaller of the two main islands. Scientists and volunteers come from all over the United States, Canada and Europe to study the area's fragile ecosystem.

Researchers can also study the pink boa constrictor, a harmless

species of snake found only in Cayos Cochinos. About 3,000 pink boas live on Cayo Menor alone.

The white sand beaches of the cays are also an important breeding ground for sea turtles such as the hawksbill. During breeding season, armed park rangers patrol the waters in search of poachers, who dig up the turtle eggs to sell as aphrodisiacs on the streets of La Ceiba.

"They think if they drink the eggs they're going to become like Superman in bed with a woman," laughed Melvin, a guide with Tourist Options. "It's not gonna give you the energy that some people think."

Cayos Cochinos has become more popular as a tourist destination recently because of its starring role on television. For the past three years, one of the cays has been the setting for a Survivor-type reality series broadcast in Italy, Spain and Colombia. But the move hasn't been without controversy.

"This is supposed to be a biological reserve and they're letting these people use these protected cays to film," said Roger Remington, the manager of Plantation Beach Resort on Cayo Mayor. "It's for promotional tourism and for money."

But Adrian Oviedo was quick to point out that the film crews and contestants are limited in what they can do. For example, they can't eat terrestrial organisms such as birds or turtles – only what they can fish.

"They have to follow the management plan that we have for the protected area," he countered. "They have to follow all regulations."

But with the number of visitors to Cayos Cochinos now reaching 10,000 a year, Oviedo admits they're keeping a close eye on the impact tourists are having on the environment.

"We're starting to get concerned," he said. "We don't have a magic number to say you can't have more than this."

Oviedo said they're trying to lessen the impact by diversifying tourism to the area, so that not everyone stops in Chachuate, for example, or visits the same dive sites and beaches.

Either way, Cayos Cochinos has come a long way from a simple fishing stopover. And the hope is that future visitors will experience the same pristine paradise that the Garifuna have enjoyed for centuries.

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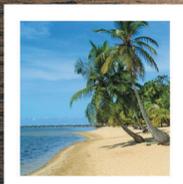
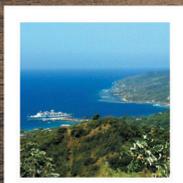
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FADs create new fishing sites on the reef

con't from page 10

which then attract HUGE fish. It is installed off the reef, in deep waters, where the fish to be captured are pelagic, such as sailfish, marlin and others.

It removes fishing on the reef and creates new fishing sites in deeper waters. A FAD is expensive, somewhere between \$10 to 20 thousand, so it needs to be created, maintained and fished by a group of organized fishermen. On the Island of Guadeloupe, in the French Antilles, fishermen joined their efforts to reduce pressure of reef fish by installing and maintaining FADs.

Again, this is only one possible solution out of many, so other alternatives that would work on Roatán need to be studied.

Some traditional fishermen are changing their ways to incorporate tourism by adopting catch and release methods, where tourists can enjoy the thrill of hooking a large one, and then releasing it to allow them to reproduce. Sustainable fishing practices also involve restaurant operators, who are key actors in deciding which fish to buy, which not and what sizes will then appear on their main dishes.

Consumers also need to be more educated, they must request

their favorite restaurants to serve proper sized catch, as well as avoiding eating those which are endangered, such as shark, grouper and conch.

Now, after all this fishing around, let's return to where we started: fish spawning aggregation sites. Once both of these aggregation sites on Roatán have been monitored, a socializing process must begin: a space where all users can voice their opinions and come to sensible conclusions. Some of the possible solutions may be similar to those adopted in Guadeloupe. Some of these may be original ideas applicable only on the Bay Islands. Others are already being used.

Once fishermen realize that protecting fish aggregation sites is similar to having a savings account, they will be eager to participate in protecting these sites, and when managed effectively, fishing away from these sites is like living off the interest generated by a savings account.

Ian Drysdale is the owner of Luna Environmental in West End, Roatan. He can be reached at planetazulroatan@yahoo.com or by calling 504-445-4123.

Island Tourism

Easter on Roatan: Something for everyone, every budget

Jose Eduardo Atala M.
The Islander

Semana Santa is right around the corner, and whether you are seeking adventure or looking for luxury, Roatan is a vacation paradise suited for any traveler. Its blue skies, sun-drenched, clear turquoise water, and year round warm temperatures (low 80s) – all of it appeals to any stressed-out tourist.

Roatan continues to develop its tourism, real estate and infrastructure such as transportation, water, sewer, power, and trash removal, but that development has taken great strides and is well underway. We can expect major change for the better in the next couple of years.

While Roatan offers first class scuba diving, scuba certifications and outstanding snorkeling, it also provides great water activities including deep-sea fishing, fly-fishing on the flats and mangroves, swimming with the dolphins, and ocean kayaking, etc. But for those who like leisure, good food and clubbing, Roatan also delivers.



Mark Havey - The Islander
West Bay beach is the most popular destination on Roatan with its white sand and pool-like beach.

Accommodations on Roatan run the gamut

Roatan has yet to offer high-rise hotels (and maybe that is a good thing), but West Bay has a variety of four-star hotels with a "boutique-y" feel. You can lounge next to infinity pools, enjoy awesome appetizers on the beach, people-watch at all hours of the day and have as many monkey lala cocktails as you want. With hotel prices ranging from US\$60-\$350 per night, there are a variety of hotels from the cheap and chic Bananarama to the spectacular Infinity Bay.

Restaurants and nightlife: Choices exist for any palate, pocketbook

If it's Indian, American, Italian or even Thai, Roatan's current restaurants roster is impressive. And while there is an abundance of restaurants of all types, at this point, the island does lack fine dining or gourmet restaurants that are available on other Caribbean Islands like St. Martin, Aruba or the Cayman Islands. But what's great about these restaurants is that they all have a 'homey' feel and most of them are all reasonably priced.

Head down to West End for dinner and drinks; water taxis from West Bay are under \$20 at night

and very accessible. Regular cabs can get from a restaurant in West End to a hotel in West Bay in about 10 minutes for about \$10-\$15.

BIDA, with its international cuisine menu, is a fairly new, ultra trendy restaurant where owner and island native Dino Silvestri heats up his kitchen with tasty flavors for sea foods, steaks and pastas; on weekends you can also see him as a DJ at his very own outdoor bar "Tu Mango" located under BIDA.

As far as discos and clubs, Roatan continues to be very laid back, but West End is a colorful, active place to unwind, relax and enjoy the island life as there are more than enough bars with karaoke, live music and good food for fun.

Classic stand-bys like Geo's and Romeo's can be found in French Harbor - both have excellent king crab legs and seafood dishes.

All in all, Roatan has a choice for everyone and activities are increasing around the island now that it has become a destination for cruise ships. If it's fun and sun you are looking for this Semana Santa, Roatan is a great escape with a full spectrum of options in dining, accommodations, nightlife and budget!

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THE ISLANDER

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Roatan Bruce

Bruce Starr

Vintage Pearl Restaurant: Romantic ambience & good food add up to a memorable experience

Roatan is at the beginning stages of remarkable growth. Whether or not you like the idea of more, bigger and better cruise ships coming to the island, they are on the way - bringing unprecedented opportunity for work and higher incomes for islanders.

With over a million people coming to our shores in the next year, that also translates into more people catching a brief glimpse of our beautiful lush, green island with crystal clear warm waters and the best reef in the world for snorkeling and diving.

No doubt many will be returning for a longer look.

Businesses from the mainland are already starting to make a claim to some of the riches coming our way. They are setting up stores at the new malls at the docks and in French Harbour. I believe that with all the interest in our Free Zone (Zolitur) island, our area will suffer the least from the world wide economic crisis because of all the growth and opportunity.

As people come to our shores by air and by sea, there will be the need for more and varied types of quality restaurants. Quality restaurants do not necessarily mean expensive eateries, but it does mean excellent food prepared by skilled, reliable cooks and chefs. It also means more than typical food. With all the foreigners already here and more coming to our island, they will want good food "just like at home."

What types of international restaurants would easily and quickly experience success here on the island? Authentic Chinese, Thai, Japanese, along with Greek and Indian eateries, are in demand across the island. These types of places are especially needed in the middle of the island. The French Harbour area is quickly becoming the new center of growth with the first large scale mall, Pristine Bay Golf Course and Nikki Beach, the first five-star luxury resort in various stages of construction.

This new column will allow me to let you know about new and existing places to eat. I will also include attractions, events and activities that will help increase your knowledge and widen your choices of fun and exciting things to do while visiting or living here on the island. Here is the first of my reviews.

Vintage Pearl Restaurant

The Vintage Pearl Restaurant is located on West Bay Beach inside the Bananarama Resort. Those of you that have been on the island for awhile know it is where the former Island Pearl used to be. One of the initial things I liked about it is, from the outside you would have no idea about the intimate, romantic atmosphere that awaits you inside. Once you walk up the few steps, you are quickly greeted by Nicole and Angela, two women from the northwest United States who offer warm, kind and professional service.

Red cloth table tops and the pleasant and unusual music added to the "European" type experience. It could have easily been in an Italian, French or German city. Having been to Italy and missing the great food there, I liked it already and only hoped the food could compete with the atmosphere. It more than does!

We started our dinner with a bottle of Montez Cabernet Sauvignon. I am not a wine drinker at all, but this light, dry wine from Chile was very good and added to all the foods I was enjoying.

The three-course, fixed menu offers appetizer, soup or salad and an entree. My choice of appetizer was something I had not had in at least five years: escargot here on the island? Could it be? Smothered in a garlic, butter and white wine sauce, it was a true delicacy. Lorin had a generous portion of Baked Brie in a crusted shell with sliced almonds. We both thought we were in heaven.

The salad and soup were very good. I had a bowl crême of broccoli soup. It was smoothly prepared and incredible.

Some places I have eaten have disappointed after a great start, but not The Vintage Pearl. Lorin had the "melt in your mouth" filet mignon with croquet potatoes. I stopped eating steak years ago when I found it either tough or with no taste. This filet changed my mind about steaks. The potatoes were pureed, lightly breaded and deep fried. I never tasted potatoes quite like that before.

Just that day, I was telling friends I had not had scallops in over a year. When Nicole told me one of the four main dishes offered was seafood pasta with shrimp and scallops - that was for me! One of the complaints I have had about some of our local eateries was why they served small to tiny shrimp

when we are the "shrimp capital of the world." These shrimp and scallops were large and delectable. The pasta tasted homemade. For dessert we had real dark chocolate mouse. It was a real treat. We savored every spoonful.

The service was excellent. The prices for the pre-fixed menu varied from \$25 to \$50. Some of the dishes on the menu change and

some are always available. I initially thought this was the place to go and celebrate special events like birthdays or anniversaries. Then I said why would I want to limit myself to that? We walked out saying class, class, class! Thank you Vintage Pearl for a wonderful experience. We will be back!

Food - Boom!

Service - Excellent
Atmosphere - Great!

"Roatan" Bruce Starr is the host of a talk radio show on The Wave 101.1 FM, from 9 am to 1 pm, Monday to Friday. Please e-mail him at roatanbruce@yahoo.com, or Skype or Yahoo Messenger him at roatanbruce. Visit his website at roatanbruce.com.

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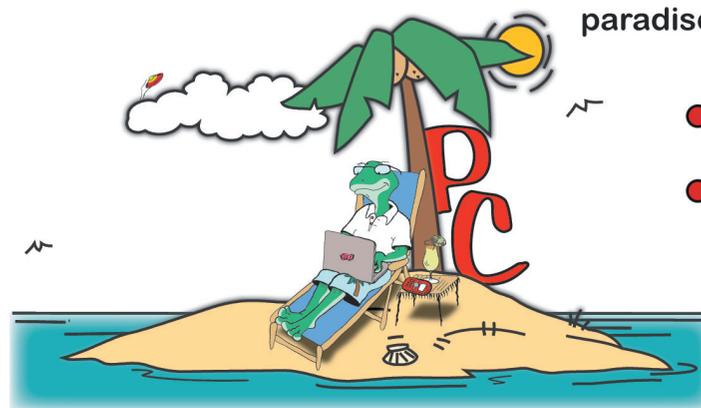
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Island Development

Navigating Roatán: What's What/ What's Where

Mark Havey
 The Islander

In the first installment, I discussed the process by which foreigners can legally buy and own property in Honduras. In this installment we are going to look at and comment on how the island is laid out, and look at some of the developments and the different types of investment opportunities here on Roatan.

The island is laid out in 3 parts, East, West and mid island. People say that anything east of French Harbour is the East side, anything west of Coxen Hole is the West side and the rest is considered mid island, give or take. Statistics say that 85% of visitors to Roatan go to the West side, which would include Sandy Bay, West End and the West Bay area and all surrounding areas such as Lighthouse Estates, Turtle Crossing and the Turrets.

Traditionally, the East side offers beautiful spacious properties with some having boat access only. Until recently there haven't been a lot of developments toward the East side, though there are some exceptions.

Parrot Tree Plantation (facing the south shore) being one of the major developments on the island. Parrot Tree was first started in the mid 1990s and continues to be a major contender in the development scenario.

The Oceano Village (also on the south shore) is coming along nicely nowadays, having gotten under way again with a new management, marketing and sales team in place. Pristine Bay, promises to bring to Roatan it's very first 18-hole golf course with a soft opening due in December, 2009. This would change the demographics of the island. The golf course is being designed by the very famous Pete Dye, known to be among the top designers in the world. So, you can see by this that the East side of the island is undergoing change. It has been said that if Camp Bay had a paved road leading up to it, that it would be the West Bay of the East side of the island. Time will tell.

Mid island developments include Palmetto Bay Plantation, Las Palmas and Mar Bella. Palmetto has been around since 1997 and

offers a unique rustic approach to Bali Style beach front homes with full amenities. Mar Bella is a newer development on a spotless white sandy beach that at times seems as if it were a painting instead of a real beach. Las Palmas faces the South shore and has been in existence for many years.

Heading further west finds Blue Harbor which promises to be a sound contender for potential investment. Once into Sandy Bay you find Lawson Rock. This to my way of thinking is Sandy Bay's answer to one of the more upscale developments on the island. Over one hundred acres of pristine view lots with both hillside and ocean front lots and homes and all the infrastructure is in place. West End doesn't have much in terms of successful developments as of yet, but just on the other side of West End heading towards West Bay is Keyhole Bay (south shore), which is an exceptionally first-rate development offering a variety of listings from lots, to homes and condos. A little further down the West Bay road lies Infinity Bay which is located on West Bay beach and is currently in their final stages of completion and is another good option for investment consideration.

It should be noted that most, if not all of these developments and their developers have done an exemplary job of being environmentally conscientious and aware of their impact on the island - a very important aspect of development here on Roatan.

I'm sure I've left out some of the developments here on Roatan and this was certainly not intentional. The most likely scenario is that eventually all of the developments will get a mention in this column.

Suffice to say that overall, there is a lot of change happening on Roatan currently and the island is growing in leaps and bounds. Some of us will welcome the changes and some of us will wish for the "good old days." But one thing is certain; change is here and here to stay.

If you want to email me with your comments, suggestions or critiques, please feel free to do so. I can be reached at mark@roatan-life.com.

NATIONAL



Copan Update

— Howard Rosenzweig —

Road Maintenance Needed — Now!

The topic of the road maintenance in Honduras has been much in the news. La Prensa has featured of late, large two page spreads detailing the deteriorated state of many of the country's roads. In addition to the requisite and customary potholes, which range from small soup bowl sized holes which are no more than a nuisance - to holes, so deep and wide as to cause any driver who is unlucky enough to fall into one, to yell a stream of four-letter expletives so foul and harsh, as to scare the other passengers half to death - not to mention the potential damage caused to the undercarriage of the vehicle unfortunate enough to fall into one of these monsters. Over the past three years or so, road maintenance has suffered as precious resources have been channeled elsewhere. In addition, the annual rains have played havoc with road infrastructure, washing away sections of roadway, causing landslides, increasing the size and frequency of potholes, damaging support structures of bridges, etc. All agree that it will take a large investment to get the roads back in shape, money which at this point in time is simply not available. This is unfortunate for those of us who remember Honduras' golden time of just a few years back, when the country enjoyed the reputation of having the best road system in Central America. What a difference just a few years make.

Hondurans Love Their Cellphones

More Hondurans than ever now have telephone, thanks to the market penetration of cell phones over the course of the past couple of years. Currently, 75 of 100 Hondurans have a cell phone. Honduras, with a population of just over 7 million, has 5,823,915 cell lines. There are currently three operators in the country, Claro, Tigo and Digicel, the newest player to enter the market. Not long ago, finding a phone required blocks of walking to find a pulperia with a sign which read "Se alquila telefono" - 'Phone for Rent.' Back in the day, it was virtually impossible to request a land line from

the national phone company, street pay phones basically did not exist, so you had two options: walk the street in search of the closest telephone for rent or hop a bus or taxi down to the Hondutel (the national phone company) office and use their bank of phones to make a call. This often required a complex procedure of paying a deposit at the cashier window, then a trip to the operators window where the operator would place the call for you, then an additional trip to the phone booth located a few steps away, then after the call, a trip back to the cashier to get what remained back from your deposit, or pay any additional amount required if your call went over. At times this process was quite straightforward and quick - but often there were huge lines of people seeking to make calls - as hardly anyone had landlines and cell phones weren't even a blip on the horizon yet. Today cell phones are as ubiquitous as tortillas and rich, poor, rural, urban, young and old carry cellphones.

Tela Bay Project Taking Shape; Tourism Updates

The Tela Bay tourism project is still plowing ahead. Infrastructure being built by the Ministry of Tourism will be completed in 2009. The \$15 million worth of infrastructure to be completed includes 7 kilometers of paved road, bridges, drainage, drinking water and sewage. The plan for Tela Bay includes 3,000 luxury hotel rooms that could lure 60,000 visitors per year. Each hotel will require an investment of some \$30 - 35 million. In addition the project, which has a build out period of 15 years, will include 250 condominiums, a pro golf course as well as commercial areas and the requisite bells and whistles expected in a world class resort.

According to the Ministry of Tourism, 2008 was a good year for Honduran tourism: \$620 million entered the country from tourism, 13.8% more than previous year. For 2009, the Ministry is offering some downright optimistic projections - especially when one takes into account the brewing, worldwide economic storm - projecting an increase of 7% and income of \$664 million. It will be very interesting to see how this year plays

out in terms of Honduran tourism. Personally, I'd be happier than a college student in a brew pub, if in the least, tourism this year keeps pace with last year's numbers - time will tell.

According to government figures, the tourism industry in Honduras generates 155,000 direct jobs, 60% of which are held by women. If one includes indirect jobs created by tourism, the sector is easily the largest in the country in terms of the number of direct and indirect jobs generated. In terms of numbers of visitors, there were 1.5 million visitors in total, of which in 2008 there were 879,000 tourists, 430,000 cruise ship passengers and 258,000 day visitors. In 2008 there were a total of 1.3 million visitors, 831,000 tourists, 297,000 cruise ship passengers and 207,000 day visitors. 2007 saw some \$545 million entering the country from tourism which increased to \$620 million in 2008.

The annual high season in Copan and Honduras in general is now in uber-overdrive. Starting in December and running through Easter Week is the heart and soul of the busy tourism period. As temperatures dip to frighteningly frigid levels in Europe, Canada and the U.S., warmth starved trekkers from the great white north descend on Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean. In Copan for example, the average year round temperature according to Dr. Bill Fash, a Harvard archeologist who has spent many years living in Copan, is a downright balmy 78 F - pretty comfy if you ask me - and the reason I created the tag line "Copan Ruinas...where it's spring-time ... all the time."

Copan Updates

Copan's Municipal Building is undergoing major renovations lately. The conference center, located in the Muni Building and home base for the Project Honduras Conference drawing 250 attendees each year, is undergoing a total reconstruction. As well, Copan's historic municipal market has just had a facelift and at least from the exterior, looks to be just about ready to open to vendors and the public. The temporary location for the market is in the old elementary school, located on Central Park. Word around town is that when

the market moves out of the school building, the school building will be totally renovated and turned into a world class archeology museum. This new museum will complement Copan's already broad offering of museums with the Maya Sculpture Museum, the Village Archeology Museum and the Casa K'inich museum which is located in the newly refurbished Cuartel Viejo. The Cuartel project by the way, which was recently completed, took a decaying and crumbling historic structure and transformed it into an attractive and potentially innovative tourist destination. As of now, the only tenant in the Cuartel is the Casa K'inich Museum, which is operated by the Copan Association. The building also has a couple of multi-use spaces which would be perfect for the sale of light, typical Honduran snacks, perhaps a local museum dedicated to the history of the village of Copan Ruinas, an art gallery, etc ... the possibilities are endless and the Cuartel has the possibility to become a major draw for tourists. All that's required is a healthy dose of imagination, a little seed money and a desire on the part of the private and government sectors to make the Cuartel into a major attraction. Will it happen? Only time will tell.

Howard and his wife Angela are the proprietors of Casa de Cafe, a bed and breakfast in Copan Ruinas as well as the Casa del Angel hotel across the street.

Visit the websites at
www.casadecafecopan.com and
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NATIONAL

Change...it all comes
down to education!

I travel to Comayagua regularly lately for work, and driving there has provided plenty of material for new stories. Here is one. I've visited Comayagua quite a few times over the last decade, and I must say that it has become a very nice city to visit. The center of town is beautiful, new boulevards have been built, new shopping centers have appeared and lots of new restaurants have opened.

We all know that it was the capital of Honduras at one time, and who knows if it will be the capital again if plans for the new international airport really materialize. Was it changed from Comayagua to Tegucigalpa because the President in those days had a girlfriend in Tegucigalpa? Or is it just one of those legends you never know whether to believe, like the one about the war between Nicaragua and Honduras that started due to a soccer game?

It's hard to find out the truth sometimes, but at least it provides some laughs and laughing is good for your health, which brings me back to my original point. Driving from Tegucigalpa to Comayagua is certainly not good for your health, at least not for mine. I admit that I am not a slow driver and maybe sometimes I drive faster than allowed, but only when I have a good view of the road itself and the sides of the road. But besides your

car getting totaled in one of those many holes in the road, forcing you to drive as if you're practicing for a slalom ski race, I've had to avoid at least four buses, trucks or other vehicles coming by the pair out of the corners straight toward me. So after driving these 80 kilometers, I've educated myself in a new science, remembering the most dangerous curves and memorizing where to swerve to avoid a head-on collision.

Driving up there is no fun at all and it certainly doesn't make me laugh - it makes me aggressive, using all kinds of swear words not normally found in my vocabulary, raising a finger to those who appear in front of me in those corners, making my blood pressure go up together with my adrenaline levels. Luckily, there are more drivers like me, getting totally upset with these 'kamikaze drivers,' as I call them.

I don't like to think I'm the only idiot who has a complete identity change as soon as I step behind the wheel. But in order to avoid permanent health damage, I made a change. I try to go with plenty of time to get there safely, put on my favorite music and sing along the whole time and let all the idiots pass me by. I keep a good distance from trying to pass when the view is zero. Because when they end up in a head-on collision, they'll bounce back on me. I figured out that it

would be senseless to wait for all those who clearly don't know the rules of the road to be educated in order to change.

After surviving the drive there and a day of work, I sometimes stay overnight in Comayagua, because I do not like to drive back home in the dark. So I started looking for a decent hotel at a fair price, because I didn't want to spend my day's earnings just because it's too dangerous to drive home late. I've tried four so far, all mid-priced. What an experience - not because of swear words, anger or adrenaline rushes - but because of how difficult it is to find nice staff, clean rooms, decent food and a comfortable bed.

In the first three I found one or two of those things, but not one had them all. In the first, I had a room with two windows facing the corridor where all the other guests passed by, so I had to keep the curtains and windows closed to have some privacy. And, being in the middle of the hotel I heard noise all night from upstairs, downstairs and next door.

The so-called 'gym' consisted of exactly five machines, none of which actually worked. On the bright side, the pool looked okay and the food was excellent. They served me all kinds of things on my plate I didn't ask for, but they kindly scraped those off my plate and the rest was delicious.

The second had just a small window about two meters off the floor, with no curtain, providing windows from a nearby roof a direct view of my bed.

It felt like somebody was watching me all night long, which was kind of creepy. A waitress in the restaurant couldn't say anything more than "Uuh," "What?" and "We don't have it," in Spanish. So, I didn't take the risk to order the only plate they could serve me from a menu with at least 30 choices and chose to go to one of the steakhouses. After a wonderful meal, I got lost on all the dark, one-way streets in the center of town. After driving around in circles for a while, I luckily made it safely back to my hotel.

The week after, I went to the third, with a sign outside saying something like "Your home away from home," which had nothing to do at all with my home. Their swimming pool was built in the middle of the parking lot, and neither the room nor the sheets really looked clean. They had a scary-looking electrical shower head and no restaurant to be found. I did find a Chinese restaurant close by and had a great meal.

Last week I found my hotel, on the main road, no circling around anymore on dark, one-way streets. Food options were available everywhere, right next door and across

the street, even steak restaurants close by. It's brand new and the restaurant has yet to be opened. I had some difficulties drying my hair as there are no mirrors close to the outlets, but it's nice to have a window with a view, no noisy neighbors, nice staff, clean rooms, and a (non-electric) showerhead with good water pressure - both hot and cold. I love the brand new beds and crisp sheets, too.

So I decided to make this my future favorite and will wait patiently for them to finish the interior design of the rooms, open the restaurant and see if I, in fact, found that hotel with all the things I want. The other hotels should seriously consider educating their staff on what makes guests happy: clean rooms, good food and good service, and a working gym if it's advertised. I am sure Comayagua is going to attract lots of tourists when people discover the beautiful the architecture in all the churches and plazas, and there is that new airport to consider. With the financial crisis around the corner, they'll have to do more than before to attract that tourist money - a nice town with an airport isn't enough.

To be continued....

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INTERNATIONAL

FARC terrorist campaign may intensify

James W. Bodden

Honduras This Week

Embattled and cornered in rugged mountainous terrain, Colombia's major insurgent group, FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), dispatches secretive communiqués and issues bizarre orders to their forces, evidencing the decline of this once feared narco-guerrilla outfit.

Fresh off a week of unilateral releases of high profile hostages, including four members of the security services and two captive members of the country's political class, FARC's series of demonstrations of goodwill were nullified by the renewal of an urban bombing campaign and guerrilla attacks across Colombia.

In the city of Cali the office of police headquarters was partially torn apart by a heavy explosion and a Bogota Blockbuster franchise was bombed, killing two innocent bystanders. The rural province of Cauca was set ablaze with violence when Colombian soldiers patrolling the area were ambushed by a barrage of grenade and automatic-rifle fire, the narco-guerrilla's attack caused six military casualties.

In a reckless attempt to fight state infiltration of their ranks and supporters, FARC irregular fighters are accused of massacring members of the aboriginal Awa community in Narino province. Both Human Rights Watch and the state government of Narino have blamed the organization for orchestrating the deaths of multiple families of the native Awa community. The Governor of Narina, Navarro Wolff, declared to the local newspaper 'El Pais', "The guerrillas took several families, recriminating them for their supposed collaboration with the army. A young man was able to escape and told how he had been tied. Later, they tortured him, they beat him and they killed eight with a knife."

Weakened, forced into a position where they had to release hostages unilaterally, without an exchange of



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jailed insurgents, the rebel forces have decided on a strategy of reasserting their relevance by means of detonations and low level attacks.

Analysts have concluded that maintaining a sophisticated kidnapping operation may be turning too expensive and logistically unsupportable for an organization with diminished manpower and territorial control. Colombian security services have reported that FARC is increasing its extortion racket to supplement their funds and compensate for financial losses elsewhere.

The high members of FARC's Secretariat also evidence their growing disadvantage in their fifty year long battle with the central government, as mass desertions and political pressure are moving them to make concessions and even force the separation of romantic couples within their ranks. Colombia's Liberal Senator and mediator, Piedad Cordoba, has expressed that in her latest communications with head of the FARC Secretariat, Alfonso Cano, the organization has dropped its key demand for the creation of a Demilitarized Zone to hold negotiations for a prisoner for hostage exchange. This demand was a

key stumbling block between the government and the narco-insurgent's negotiations. FARC's military commander, Jorge Briceño, alias 'Mono-Jojoy', is reported to have forbidden guerrillas to serve in the same military units as their lovers or significant others, claiming that these romances are creating conditions that contribute to the massive desertion rate of the rebel group. 'Mono Jojoy' is reported by intelligence sources as stating, "To the comrades, much discipline to observe the norms and ensure they are complied... If the problems are couples, we must split them apart."

Intelligence analysts and military sources fear that a bloody wave of bombings may be inevitable as the narco-guerrilla outfit desperately attempts to redefine its role in the Colombian conflict. It is reported that military intelligence forces have already intercepted a FARC communiqué indicating their intentions to increase violent attacks; analyst's asses that the most likely tactical option will be urban bombings, as acts of terrorism carry a lesser risk and financial cost than direct military engagement.

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New Townhouse located in an exclusive closed neighborhood. House has three bedrooms, three bathrooms, dining room, living room, kitchen, small garden. Furnished: \$1,300 or Unfurnished: \$1,000.

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Colonia Lomas del Guijarro
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Rural Property,, lovely rustic house in safe countryside.

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Additions: Annex bedroom with complete bath, 3 storage rooms (bodegas). 1 Mt3 water cistern, 3M3 water tank, 2 septic tanks, roofed/fenced chicken coup, large garden, pulping and drying facilities for coffee.Ideal opportunity for converting into rural B&B retreat. Call 776 6326 or cellphone 98991770- Construction area: House: 116.26 m2; Services: 16.58 m2; Storage: 42.37 m2; Garage 25.20 m2: Total: 200.41

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Copan Ruinas, Property for Sale, apprx 2 acres, one of few large properties available within village boundaries, view of village and valley, mature trees, water, elect, telephone access, street access, located on road to Macaw Mtn Tropical Bird Park, 5 minutes to center of village,

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For sale in the North Coast of Honduras
•Porvenir, Atlantida, beach properties, 65.6 feet of beach front and 270.6 feet deep, total area 17,744.80 square feet, price \$2.80 per square feet.

•Triunfo de la Cruz, Tela, Atlantida, beach property, area: 5,820.36 square feet, 126 feet of beach front. Price \$130,000.

•East End, Guanaja, Bay Islands, 84.25 acres with approximately 2,788 feet of beach front. Coral reefs in front of property, \$60,000 per acre.

•Guanaja, Bay Islands, 10 acres with river, house, next to a hotel. Price: \$85,000 per acre.

•Tela, Atlantida, beach 100 meters away from beach, two story house, swimming pool, 3 bedrooms, price \$190,000.

•Piedra Pintada, La Ceiba, Atlantida, two beach houses with three bedrooms. Price: \$85,000.

•Piedra Pintada, La Ceiba, Atlantida, two properties of 32.8 x 65.6 feet of beach front. Price:\$16,000 per property.

•Granadita, La Ceiba, Atlantida, beach front house with two bedrooms, terrace, swimming pool, price: \$240,000.

•Balfate, Colon, 4 terrains of beach front of 65.6 x 65.6 feet, \$25,000 each one.

•Tela, Atlantida 68.8 acres in Tela, beach, mountain and plain terrain, 34.4 acres (plain) and 34.4 acres (mountains), excellent for building a hotel resort. Price \$58,140 per acre.

•Trujillo, Colon, 423.4468 acres of beach, rivers, mountain and plain terrain, appropriate for a tourist hotel resort, price: \$600,000 negotiable.

•La Ceiba, Atlantida, mountain property of 115.24 acres, beautiful view of the sea and city, has a river. Price \$220,000.

•Pollityle Bay, Roatan, Bay Islands, 10 acres with beach, plain terrain and mountains, 6 acres plain domain \$45,000 per acre and 4 acres with possession \$40,000 per acre.

•La Ceiba, Atantida, residential project Wendy, two brand new houses, three bedrooms, dining room, living room, kitchen, laundry room, ceramic floors, fine finishes, with garage \$55,000 without garage \$50,000. Close to the national university and airport Goloson. 10 minutes away from the city.

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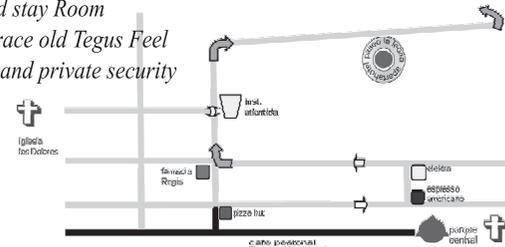
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