

# Utila

**FACTS OF LIFE** Flip-flop quotient: 🍻🍻🍻 ▶ Expats to locals: 5:100 ▶ Houses available from \$175,000 ▶ Population of main town, East Harbour: 2,000 ▶ Languages spoken: Spanish and English ▶ Percent who speak English: 75 ▶ Get there from U.S. via Roatán, Honduras. Utila is a 15-minute flight from Roatán. ▶ Closest hospital: Roatán ▶ Price of a Salva Vida beer: from \$0.75 ▶ Ease of immigration: easy with capital investment ▶ 411: [letsgohonduras.com](http://letsgohonduras.com)



**UTILA, BAY ISLANDS, HONDURAS** ▶ **The vibe** What year is it? A quarter the size of better-known sister island Roatán, Utila is long and low-slung with wooded hills framed by white sands. It is a place that truly seems lost in time. Its culture blends aspects of Spanish, English and Garifuna in a tropical, affordable paradise two hours from Miami. “We made a trip to Utila three years ago and found an island that was truly ‘old’ Caribbean,” says Dallas attorney Trey Branham, who is currently preparing land to build a home on the island. “My wife and I have been to a lot of places in the world, and few of them are as laid-back as Utila. Add to that some of the best diving in the Caribbean and still very af-

fordable prices, and you have an ideal place.” ▶ **Escape-to-paradise factors** “You can swim 20 yards off the end of our dock and dive a reef wall that is between 140 and 200 feet deep,” Branham says. Live the life Jimmy Buffett croons about in “Margaritaville” on Utila. Strum your guitar on your front-porch swing as you watch the sun set over the Caribbean. ▶ **A perfect afternoon** Underwater! Utila lies at the southern end of the largest barrier reef system in the Western Hemisphere. Landlubbers can linger at La Piccola-Kate’s Italian Restaurant in East Harbour and order its homemade pasta or sip gin-and-tonics in the tiny bar beneath the *mamey zapote* tree at the Colibri Hill Resort in Sandy Bay. ▶ **After living there for a year, what’s your best discovery?** “If you listen carefully,” says Branham, “you’ll hear this lovely English accent.” That’s because many of the residents are descendants of the British citizens who came to Utila from the Cayman Islands after the Brits abolished slavery. ▶ **Parties worth going to** Attend the island’s annual Carnival (July) and the Sun Jam music festival on Water Cay (August); frequent the over-water Tranquila bar at sunset. ▶ **Try it before you buy it** Scope out the island from The Boat House, an over-the-water house in a neighborhood known as The Point. Rates from \$135 per night with a four-night minimum stay. [destinationutila.com/boathouse.html](http://destinationutila.com/boathouse.html) — JY

## WHAT TO BUY

**Starting:** A fixer upper: A 900-square-foot, one-bedroom wood-framer on a beach with access to a community dock on a third-acre lot; boat access only; \$175,000. [utilarealty.net](http://utilarealty.net)

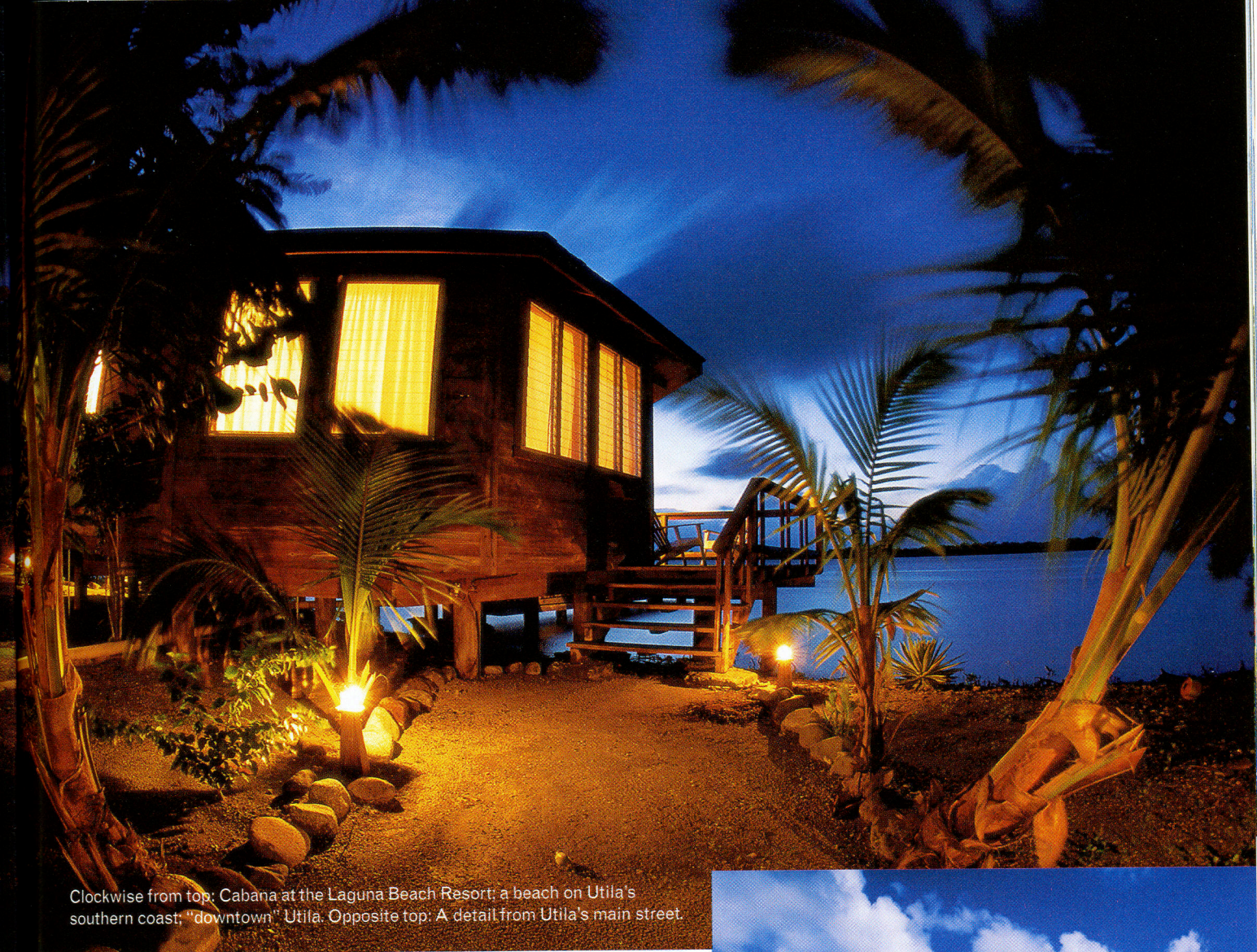
**Mid-range:** Two-bedroom beach bungalow with loft; more than 2,000 square feet with 105 feet of beach frontage; boat access only (shown below); \$250,000. [utilarealty.net](http://utilarealty.net)

**Dream house:** Er, an entire island, that is. The nearly 1.5-acre Diamond Caye may need some infrastructure, but there’s a starter kit in place: a *palapa* and cistern. It’s a 20-minute boat ride from the southwest coast of Utila; \$650,000. [utilarealty.net](http://utilarealty.net)

**Ease of buying a home:** Due to murky land titling, it’s highly advisable to hire a Honduran lawyer to guide you through the process. A number of U.S. companies now offer title insurance for the Bay Islands. Homes (or land) with boat-only access are generally much cheaper than comparable property with road access, says Gary Howorka of Utila Realty.







Clockwise from top: Cabana at the Laguna Beach Resort; a beach on Utila's southern coast; "downtown" Utila. Opposite top: A detail from Utila's main street.

