

TAGGA *plus*

sports  business  lifestyle

JUL/AUG/SEPT 2021

SIX ADVENTURES TO HAVE ON

ROTA



Q&A: Ron Snyder
Saipan's fastest man on two wheels
NMI Museum: Challenges, initiatives, plans

Anatomy of a newsmaker
Grow vegetables. Raise fish. Do both!
Inspiring future generations of female players

PARADISE AT OUR DOORSTEP

6 adventures to have on

Rota

The grass is always greener on the other side. This sentiment certainly rings true when describing Rota (Luta), our friendly neighboring island in the south. At a time when travel is still difficult due to the pandemic—and you’ve staycationed your heart out on Saipan—Rota feels greener, wilder, lusher, and downright adventurous.

With no restrictions on travel within the CNMI and just a quick and easy 30-minute flight from Saipan, Rota is the perfect destination to combat those pesky feelings of wanderlust. For nature lovers, it’s simply paradise. From the turtles sunbathing in the blue-green waters of Sasanhaya Bay to the red-footed boobies soaring along the sheer cliffs of the bird sanctuary, Rota offers peace and tranquility—and the perfect respite from normal life.

“Rota, in my opinion—and I’m sure many others will agree—is such a pristine and untouched part of the CNMI,” said Saipan resident Sharlene Sablan, who recently visited Rota on a work trip with her colleagues.

“On top of that, everyone is so welcoming,” Sablan said. “It feels like a home away from home. The people are known to be amazing hosts. The food is always good. The island is so lush and the wildlife seems to be thriving. It’s peaceful and beautiful. All of these things make it worth checking out.”

Rota possesses a unique character and charm that will win you over the moment you land, the Marianas Visitors Authority says. And they are certainly right. You won’t pass a car on the main road without receiving a friendly wave. The faded signs that welcome you upon arrival are right on point: “Nature’s Treasure Island.” Because, often, the only sounds you’ll hear are the breaking of the waves, the song of the fruit doves, or a coconut falling to the ground.

Not sure what to do once you’re there? Here are six adventures on Rota to help you unwind, reconnect with nature, and see just how green the other side can be. ➤

LINDSAY NASH
TAGA Plus Contributing Writer

1 Take a dip in the Swimming Hole

No trip to Rota is complete without a dip in the refreshing and scenic “Swimming Hole” near the Rota Resort & Country Club. Bring a beverage and soak in the cool clear water. Safety tip from the locals: it’s time to get out when the water covers all the sand in front of the swimming hole. Need help finding the place? It’s actually listed as “Swimming Hole” on Google Maps.



LINDSAY NASH

No trip to Rota is complete without a dip in the refreshing and scenic “Swimming Hole.” Here, a group from Saipan enjoy the popular spot.

2

See the sunset at Songsong Overlook

The village of Songsong on Rota is quite picturesque, but never more so at sunset from the easily accessible overlook above the town. It's an ideal spot to sit along the concrete wall next to the large white cross and watch the sun drop over the western harbor.



LINDSAY NASH

The Songsong Overlook is a beautiful spot to catch the sunset with a picturesque view of the village below.

3 Drive and picnic along Rota's "back-island road"

This narrow, four-wheel drive road hugs Rota's southeast coast and will impress you along every bend and curve. You can drive it any time, but consider packing a picnic and starting in the afternoon. The road begins around the Japanese cannon in the south and winds its way northeast through verdant tunnels of jungle and around the awe-inspiring Pona Point (where you can see turtles from the cliffs), by a monstrous-sized nunu (banyan) tree, and above the yawning Alaguan Bay. Stop often. Turn off your car and turn down the music. And just breathe in the beautiful sounds, smells, and feelings of nature.



Rota's back-island road is a scenic 4WD road with many beautiful ocean and jungle vistas along the way.

LINDSAY NASH

4 Go back in time

There is a lot of history on Rota and many interesting sites to see it. Start with the near-history and visit the old Japanese sugar mill in Songsong, where part of it still stands next to a pre-World War II railroad locomotive, the only one used for the sugar cane industry still in its traditional location. Then go back much further in time and visit the As Nieves Latte Stone Quarry, which consists of nine huge latte shafts and seven capstones. Another interesting site is the old German chapel, the only remaining structure on Rota dating from the German Period. Constructed in 1912, it's rectangular in shape and made of momposteria (coral rocks held in place by lime cement).

5 Go birding at Chenchun Bird Sanctuary

If birding sounds boring, this bird sanctuary is here to prove you wrong. This staggeringly beautiful spot atop the limestone cliffs over the Alaguan Bay offers—quite literally—a bird's eye view of the incredible variety of birds who call this area home. The pristine limestone forest below provides nesting areas for kingfishers, boobies, tropic birds, and even the endangered Marianas crow. Amble along the walkways above the sanctuary to watch the birds fly back and forth just below your feet.

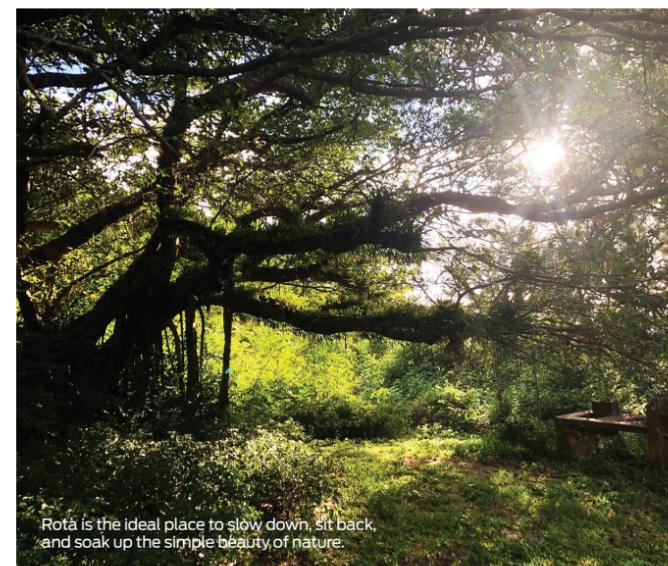


LINDSAY NASH

From the turtles sunbathing in Sasanhaya Bay to the red-footed boobies flying soaring in the bird sanctuary, Rota offers peace and tranquility—and the perfect respite from normal life.

6 Scuba dive in the turquoise waters

Rota, of course, offers more than land-based adventuring. If you'd like to explore the surrounding waters, Rota offers a variety of diving sites featuring wall dives, underwater wrecks, and coral formations. There are currently two dive shops, but both require advanced planning, especially during this slow travel season.



LINDSAY NASH

Rota is the ideal place to slow down, sit back, and soak up the simple beauty of nature.

As you can see, there is plenty to keep you busy on Rota. But, it's also a wonderful place to just slow down, sit back, and soak up the simple beauty of nature. Yes, you'll see just how green and lush this beautiful place is. But it'll also make you stop and appreciate all the good things in life, no matter on which side of the fence you reside.