

GIRLS WEEK · GUANAJA, HONDURAS · SUMMER 2027

# Ten girls arrive as strangers. They fly home a family.

You won't find this anywhere else. From singing on the dock to wrangling crabs in the jungle to diving into our emotions. This is a week to connect with like-minded girls and find home in the outdoors.

GIRLS WEEK 2027

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|---|---|
| June 5th to 12th | High School Girls |

## $4,500

guide tips and ferry included

10 students, 2 trip leaders. Fly into Roatán (RTB).

Not included: flights, and a Global Rescue membership, bought at registration.

## At a glance

PHYSICAL EFFORT

**Moderate**

Six hours on the water a day, plus a waterfall hike and soccer.

WADING OR BOAT

**Both**

Pangas every morning, and flats you can walk to from the lodge.

FLY FISHING EXPERIENCE

**Every level welcome**

From a first saltwater cast to permit on the brain. The guides work on everyone's cast all week.

CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

**Moderate**

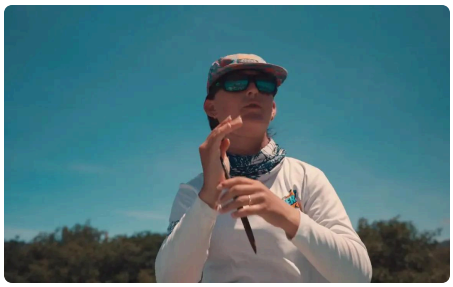
English-speaking town, dinners in the guides' homes, local girls in the group.

# Get to know the girls

Short films about three of the girls who've been part of Girls Week.



**Erika**: From Glam to Feral



**Alice**: The Key West Conch and Environmental Advocate



**Ellen**: Student to Trip Lead to Intern

# Why a week just for girls



Heather grew up fishing with her dad and loved it. As a teenager she drifted away from it anyway, because there was nobody her own age to fish with. A lot of girls lose the sport the same way. Girls Week puts ten girls who already love it in one place for a week, so they go home with friends to fish with.

The friendships hold. At one alum's wedding there were seven bridesmaids, and five of them met at Girls Week.

The week keeps going after it ends, too. Delaney came to Girls Week in Guanaja in 2019, came back as a student in the Bahamas in 2021, and returned as an intern and trip leader in 2024 and 2025.

Nobody needs to be an expert. Girls come from every level, from first saltwater cast to permit on the brain, and the one thing they share is that they want to be on the water.

> "Instead of being quiet I want to be loud. Instead of being small I want to be big and take up space in my surroundings. Instead of stepping back I want to step up."
>
> Mia Holmes, Girls Week student

## Seven days in Mangrove Bight



Ten students, two trip leaders, seven days, with the same lodge, guides and rhythm as every Guanaja week. Mornings on the flats. Afternoons split between conservation work and town. Evenings in a circle, then on the dock. Local girls from the island join the group, the way two local students join every Guanaja week.

Every day runs the same way: up at 6:30, breakfast together, six hours on the water, an afternoon project or cultural exchange, a gratitude circle, a free write, night fishing off the dock.

The circle is where the week turns. A girl who arrived worried she wouldn't fit in hears other girls say the same thing out loud. By Friday she's the one starting the conversation.

Trip leaders collect phones at their discretion, and they're only for music and photos. Parents get a message when everyone has arrived safely, and photos go up on Instagram every day.

> "Hearing what everyone else was going through just made me feel acknowledged and way less alone."
>
> Olivia, 17, Idaho

# The lodge

Fly Fish Guanaja sits by the marina in the middle of Mangrove Bight, a fishing town on Guanaja, one of the Bay Islands off the Caribbean coast of Honduras. Two or three students to an air-conditioned cabina. The lodge moms cook every meal and do the laundry. The reef is off the beach, there are flats you can walk to, and the whole town is five minutes away on foot.

# The island



A walk through town.

English is the first language and there's very little tourism, so for a week the girls are the town's guests.

Getting there: fly into Roatán, then a ferry, about two hours, to Guanaja.

> "It's a place where you experience every emotion, and you just want to encourage people to come and have fun."
>
> Katie, 16, Guanaja

# The fishery

A Caribbean flats fishery of hard sand, turtle grass and coral, guided by the Powery, Medina, and Jackson families. One leader for every few students. Over the week the group covers gear, knots, flies, casting and how to read a flat.

## 4 to 10 lb

### Bonefish

Big schools around the small islands to the south, big singles around the whole coast.

## 5 to 40 lb

### Tarpon

Big, small, we love them all. Big resident fish cruising across the flats and juvenile tarpon living in the nursery grounds around the corner from the lodge.

## 10 to 50

### Permit

Visible in a day with multiple shots. Permit are put on a pedestal for a reason. It doesn't always come together, but when it does, it is most likely the best fish of your life.

**Practice the cast before you come.** Tia flew in from Anchorage, Alaska, after casting on her road almost every day for weeks. On her second day on the water she and her roommate each caught a Grand Slam: a permit, a bonefish and a tarpon in one day. A confident cast buys a lot of extra shots.

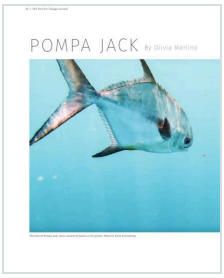
"A community of 11 girls was brought together because of a passion for fly fishing. However, this passion is no longer just a passion for us. It became a way to connect to a foreign community that somehow felt so much like home. It gave purpose to something that was a piece of our identities while benefitting everyone involved. Most notably, it became a mechanism for change. It created a space where fly fishing was a method to bridge race, religion, class, beliefs, political views, and more. Fishing is no longer just fishing. It's fishing to connect to each other and to the precious environments that provide us the backdrop to do so. Fishing now means to conserve our ecosystems, to never lose curiosity in the world, and to refuse to stop learning about each other and ourselves. Simply put, it's Fishing for Change."

Olivia Merlino, California

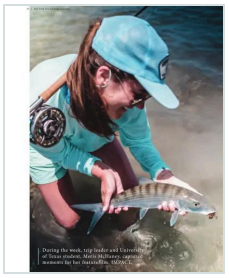
FROM THE FISH FOR CHANGE JOURNAL, ISSUE I

### Pompa Jack

Olivia Merlino's story of a permit and the first Girls Week, with photos by trip leader Meris McHaney.







## Your guides

The guides of Fly Fish Guanaja have fished these waters since they were kids. They teach casting, tying and the finer points of the flats, and by mid-week you'll have eaten dinner at their tables.



- **Rankin Coleman**Fly fishing guide
  Started out catching grunts and snapper with his grandfather. One of the longest casts on the island.



- **Deron Jackson**Fly fishing guide
  The lodge's go-to on the water and in the workshop. Calm and quiet on bonefish and permit.




- **Edwin Medina**Fly fishing guide
  From North East Bight, a village of about 30 people on Guanaja's north side. Trophy bonefish and permit are his specialty.



- **Bryan Medina**Fly fishing guide
  Quick to spot permit and tailing bonefish, and knows where the tarpon and snook hide. Island born, quick with a joke.



- **Patrick Ebanks**Fly fishing guide
  Started as the lodge's supply runner, then became its fly tier. His custom patterns have caught a lot of its fish.




- **Archie**Fly fishing guide
  His family set up the old lobster camp on Dayton Caye at the Faraway Cayes. As a boy he kept nets off its bonefish and permit.



- **Kendall Powery**Fly fishing guide
  Grew up on the water and guides nearly every day of the season.




- **Kevin Powery**Fly fishing guide
  Ellen's casting coach on her first day. Her words are just below.

"The first day on the water, Kevin spent hours helping me learn how to double haul. His eagerness, excitement, and passion for my success was demonstrated by every single guide I came across that week."

Ellen, 18, Colorado

# Off the water

Afternoons alternate between an environmental project and a cultural exchange. Ten service hours over the week, signed off for school.

### Mangrove project
With the Bay Islands Conservation Association. One Girls Week propagated more than 600 mangrove seeds. Planting the nursery for the fish they've been chasing is how a place becomes theirs to protect.

### Local girls
Students from Guanaja fish and live alongside the group. Sharing a boat with a girl who grew up on these flats means learning the island from someone their own age.

### Scavenger hunt
Small groups sent through town with questions to answer and activities to engage in, building understanding and buy-in to this place and the beautiful people who make up its community.

### Waterfall hike and soccer
Into the hills behind the lodge, then soccer at the canchita with the kids of Mangrove Bight until we've run out of energy for the day. Play is how the island kids go from hosts to friends.

### Closing celebration
The last night of the week, students, guides and the community celebrate together.

### Diving for lionfish
On the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef, spearing invasive lionfish with pole spears. They learn that looking after a reef sometimes means taking something out of it.

### Dinner in town
Small groups eat with the guides' families. A plate handed across someone else's kitchen table is the fastest way to see how differently people live.

### School projects
Cleanups and projects with the local elementary school. One year the girls helped the kids turn plastic bottles into small gardens to take home: useful work they could see finished before they left.

### Testimony night
An evening with the local church community, sharing stories.

### Group circle
Next to the sunset or under the shooting stars, we dive into conversations led with vulnerability about our experience and personal growth.



Mangrove propagules, ready for the nursery.

"I loved hearing about the other girls' stories and how they discovered Fish For Change."

Tia, Alaska

# Getting there and home

Students fly into Coxen Hole, Roatán (RTB). Trip leaders meet them the moment they walk out of customs. If flying alone is a worry, we can arrange a trip leader or another student to fly with yours from the States.

## Saturday arrival

1. Land in Roatán **before 2:00 pm**.
2. Trip leaders greet you at customs. A shuttle takes the group to the ferry dock.
3. Ferry, about two hours, to Guanaja.
4. Parents are messaged when everyone is at the lodge, usually between 4 and 6 pm.

## Saturday departure

1. Ferry leaves the lodge at **7:00 am**.
2. At the airport by 10:00 am at the latest. Trip leaders help everyone check in.
3. Students can reach home from the airport.
4. Book a flight that leaves Roatán **after 12:30 pm**.

"This is my first time traveling without my parents, and I have to do everything on my own, so I think I improved a lot in making decisions."

Ana, 14, Argentina (written in Spanish)

# Packing list

It's buggy on the island: being fully covered is the single most useful thing you can do. Fly rods can be carried on to Honduras but must be checked on the way home, so pack them in a suitcase that fits rods.

## Personal and clothing

- [ ] Passport, valid for six months past the trip
- [ ] Cash, about $200, for tips, merch and snacks
- [ ] Sunblock Stream2Sea
- [ ] Insect repellent Stream2Sea
- [ ] Toiletries
- [ ] Lightweight long sleeves Duck Camp
- [ ] Pants Duck Camp
- [ ] Sun hat Duck Camp
- [ ] Sun buff
- [ ] Sun gloves
- [ ] Rain jacket
- [ ] Wading boots
- [ ] Sandals and sneakers
- [ ] Bathing suit

Laundry is available at the lodge.

## Fishing

- [ ] Polarized sunglasses and cleaner
- [ ] Clippers Scientific Anglers
- [ ] Wading pack or dry bag Fishpond
- [ ] Hemostats
- [ ] Bonefish setup, 8 or 9 weight Orvis
- [ ] Permit setup, 9 or 10 weight Orvis
- [ ] Tarpon, snook and cuda setup, 10 or 11 weight Orvis
- [ ] Floating fly line Scientific Anglers
- [ ] Leaders tapering to 20, 16 and 12 Scientific Anglers
- [ ] Tippet: wire bite, 30, 20, 16 and 12 lb fluorocarbon Scientific Anglers

Short a rod or reel? Tell us before the trip and we'll sort it from the lodge's backups. Terminal tackle is the student's responsibility.

## Flies

- [ ] Permit: Kung Fu Crab, Avalon, Kathy's Fleeing Crab, Spawning Shrimp. Bead chain and lead eyes, hooks 4 and 6, in olive, tan and white EP Flies
- [ ] Bonefish: Crazy Charlie, Blind Charlie, Kwan, Bonefish Bitters, Spawning Shrimp, Sliders, Heavy Gotcha. Hooks 6 and 8, in olive, tan, white and pink, a few blind EP Flies
- [ ] Tarpon: 3 to 6 inch baitfish in white, yellow, silver, white and red, black and red, black and purple EP Flies
- [ ] Gummy Minnows, sizes 8 to 2. The secret weapon

Want to support an alum? Ask us and we'll point you to a former student who ties flies for trips.

## Pack for a purpose

Getting things to Guanaja isn't easy. Bring a few supplies from the community's request list and your bag does double duty. Ask for the list.

Brand links go to gear from companies Fish for Change works with. The Stream2Sea link is an affiliate link: Fish for Change earns a small commission when you buy through it.

# Scholarships for girls

A fifth of Fish for Change's scholarship money goes to girls, and there's now a fund just for them: women backing the next generation of girls on the water. Aid runs from $500 to a full ride and is decided on need and drive.

**Sep** — Financial aid applications open each September.

A cover letter (500 words minimum), a one-minute video, a letter of recommendation, the questions on the application, and your family's financial information. Allow about two hours. Nothing is shared outside the team.

**Feb** — Deadline is the last day of February.

Shortlisted candidates do a video interview with Fish for Change.

**Mar** — Decisions by early March.

Book flights, check your passport, practice your cast.

# Questions parents ask

### Who leads the week?

Heather Harkavy, Fish for Change's founder and executive director, runs the Guanaja program and leads the week on the island with Ellen Bogucki. Every trip leader is First Aid and CPR certified.

### How safe is this?

Every student has a Global Rescue membership for emergency rescue and medical evacuation, bought at registration. Trip leaders are First Aid and CPR certified, and several of our leaders hold Wilderness First Responder certification. There is an emergency action plan for the island and a direct line to the local clinic. More on how we keep students safe.

### How much fishing experience does my daughter need?

Any level is welcome, including none. We recommend practicing the cast before arrival, and over the week the team covers everything from knots to flies to reading the flats, with one leader for every few students.

### Can I reach her during the week?

There's no wifi at any location, on purpose: disconnect to reconnect. Trip leaders collect phones at their discretion, and they're only for music and photos. You get a message when the group arrives, a direct line to staff for updates, and photos on Instagram from that day.

### What if my daughter has never flown alone?

Most of them haven't. Trip leaders are waiting at the destination airport the moment students clear customs, and they help everyone check in for the flight home. If you'd like a travel companion, we can arrange for a trip leader or another student to fly with yours from the States.

### Where do they sleep and eat?

At the lodge, two or three students to an air-conditioned cabina, and everyone eats together. The lodge moms cook every meal and do the laundry.

### What if we don't have the right gear?

No problem. Every lodge has backup rods and reels. Terminal tackle is the student's responsibility. If you're short a rod or reel, tell us before the trip and we'll make sure it's there.

### Is there a cheaper way to do this?

Aid runs from $500 to a full ride, and students fund their trips in all sorts of ways. Financial aid applications open in September and close the last day of February. Here is the process.

### Do they get credit for the service work?

Ten volunteer hours per program. Bring the school's form or email it afterwards and we'll sign it.

### What is the drug and alcohol policy?

Zero tolerance. Students sign a form before the program and are sent home at their own cost if they break it.

**Can fly rods go in carry-on?**

To Honduras, yes, but they must be checked on the way home, so pack them in a suitcase that fits rods.

# A day in Guanaja

**6:30 am** — **Up at 6:30. Music, then the megaphone.**

Breakfast together, every day. We discuss our game plan for the day over pancakes and bacon. Then off to go have the best day ever, yet again!

**8:00 am** — **Six hours on the water.**

A different boat, guide and partner every morning. That is how you learn to read a flat, and how a group of strangers flies home a crew.

**2:00 pm** — **Mangroves one day. Town the next.**

Planting with the Bay Islands Conservation Association. You don't care about protecting a place you haven't experienced, so they experience it with their hands in the mud. Or a scavenger hunt: a hundred questions about the island, answered by asking the people who live on it.

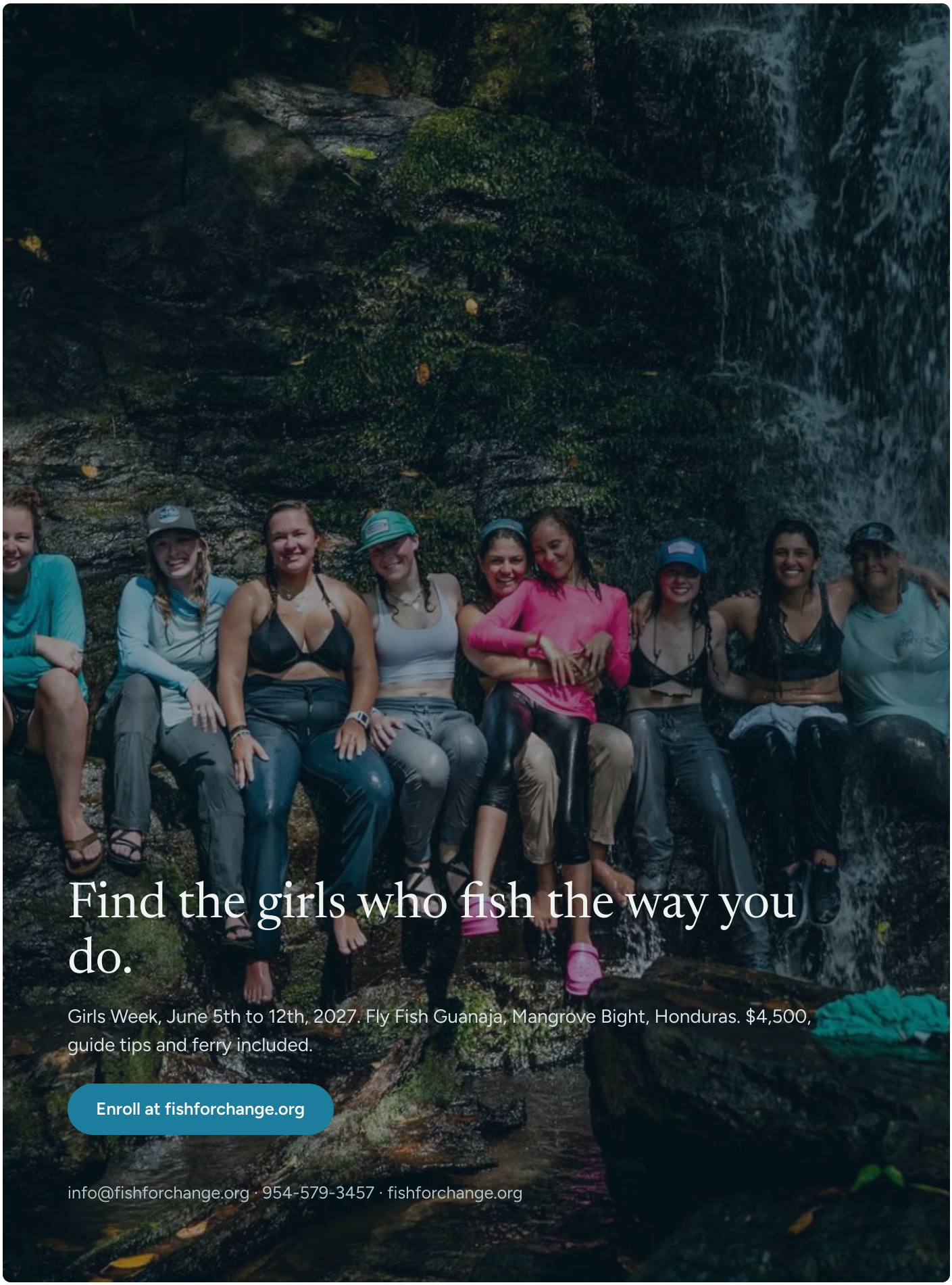
**6:30 pm** — **Dinner at a guide's table.**

Three or four students at a time, in the guide's home, with his family. There are a lot of ways to do life. The fastest way to learn that is to be handed a plate by someone who does it differently, and to help them clean up after.

**9:00 pm** — **Circle, free write, dock.**

One thing you're grateful for, out loud, to people you met on Saturday. Five minutes of writing that runs to fifteen. Kids who won't speak on Monday are leading the circle by Friday. Then night fishing under the dock lights.

> "If I had it my way, I would hope every young girl and youth would have this opportunity, because it was truly impactful and will always have a special place in my heart."
>
> Olivia, 17, Idaho


Find the girls who fish the way you do.
Girls Week, June 5th to 12th, 2027. Fly Fish Guanaja, Mangrove Bight, Honduras. $4,500, guide tips and ferry included.
Enroll at fishforchange.org
info@fishforchange.org · 954-579-3457 · fishforchange.org