

The azure waters offer a remarkable experience for the first time snorkeler or avid scuba diver. The Belize Barrier Reef stretches for 185 miles (298km) along the length of the country. The beauty of this natural wonder is recognized locally and internationally with seven marine reserves having World Heritage status. With so much to choose from, it is no wonder that snorkelers, divers, sport fishermen and marine biologists come to Belize and return often. Come and see what

#### **ECOTOURISM**

Whether seeking extreme adventures or a yoga retreat, travelling as a couple, with family or even solo, the level of adventure and degree of comfort can be customized. Each region of Belize offers unique examples of globally acclaimed biological diversity.

#### MAYA

Belize has hundreds of Maya sites, ranging from small mounds to internationally acclaimed pyramids, from city complexes to sacrificial cave systems. Experience one or try many. They are all so very different.

#### ROMANCE

Belize combines the perfect elements to create a romantic getaway, wedding or honeymoon of your dreams. Intimate or extravagant, you are only limited by your imagination.



115 Barrack Road P.O. Box 2480 Belize City, Belize Tel: (+501) 223.0669 Email: info@belizehotels.org HOTEL ASSOCIATION WWW.belizehotels.org

#### **BELIZE CITY & NORTHERN BELIZE QUICK FACTS**



Country Size: 8,867 square miles, including 266 square miles of offshore cayes.

Climate: The climate is subtropical with prevailing winds from the Caribbean Sea. The annual temperature averages 27° Celsius or 80° Fahrenheit.

**Government:** An independent country since 1981, with a democratically elected parliamentary government, Belize is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations.

**Population:** The population of approximately 370,000 is made up of diverse ethnicities including Creole, Garifuna, Mestizo, Spanish, Maya, English, Mennonite, Lebanese, Chinese and East Indian.

Languages: The official language is English; however, other languages, including Kriol and Spanish are widely spoken. Other languages include Maya (Mopan, Kekchi and Yucatec), Garifuna, German (spoken by Mennonites) and Mandarin.

Time Zone: Belize's time zone is GMT-6 (US Central Standard Time). Daylight saving is not observed.

**Currency:** The Belize dollar has a fixed exchange rate to the US dollar (BZ\$2=US\$1). Other currencies such pounds and euros can be exchanged at most banks. ATMs are available in major towns and cities. American Express, Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted. Be sure to notify your bank or credit card provider of travel plans in advance.

**Clothing:** Light cotton clothing is recommended during the day, with a light jacket or long-sleeved shirt for cool evenings. For jungle locations and trekking, long pants, long-sleeved shirts and hiking boots are recommended, as are binoculars, insect repellent, sunscreen, and hats. Cuisine: Restaurant choices, at hotels as well as in towns and villages, include an eclectic combination of local and international cuisine. Tasty local favorites include rice and beans, fish simmered in coconut milk, spicy chicken escabeche with fresh corn tortillas and refreshing tropical fruit.

Water: Tap water in Belize is treated and fit to drink; however, bottled water is readily available.

Passport and Visas: All visitors require a valid passport with proof of a return ticket. Many visitors do not require visas for stays less than 30 days. A notarized permission letter from parent/s not traveling with their child/children is required and will be requested at your departure point. Contact the Belize Embassy in Washington DC, Belize High Commission in London, or the Belize Consulate in Canada for more information. For a complete and current listing of countries that enjoy visa-free travel to Belize, visit www.mfa.gov.bz

**Departure Fees:** Airport departure fees are included in most airline tickets. Please check with your individual airline for more information. Exit fees at the borders with Mexico and Guatemala are US\$20 per person.

Taxes: Hotel Room Tax is 9%. General Sales Tax (GST) is 12.5% on most goods and services.

**Tipping:** 10-20% is the standard gratuity for most restaurants and tour guides. Establishments may add a service charge.

Mobile Phones: Cellular coverage is widespread and there are two providers. SIM cards may be bought at the International Airport. If you wish to roam, be sure to check your home carrier's plans; roaming fees can be costly. Wifi is available extensively.

**Safety:** Basic safety tips should be followed wherever you go in the world. Ask your hotel manager or local guide for specific safety advice for local areas.

**Health Services:** There are three hospitals in Belize City; one public and two private. Several private doctors are also available. The district towns and larger villages also have hospitals or clinics. It is recommended that all international travelers purchase medical insurance prior to traveling.



Belize City and Northern Belize offer spectacular treasures to discover. Experience the amazing Maya archaeological sites: Lamanai, set alongside the New River Lagoon, or Cerros perched above the azure waters of Corozal Bay. Many animals, including jaguars, crocodiles and storks, inhabit the river banks and lush forests of northern Belize, and the country is a birdwatcher's paradise, with over 570 recorded species.

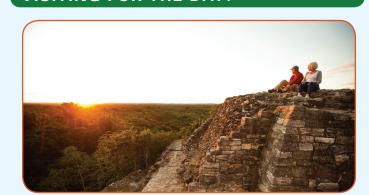
Tour Belize City, the commercial hub, and view stunning historical artifacts at the Belize Museum, visit the old downtown area, the historic St. Johns Anglican Cathedral, and the House of Culture

#### **WESTERN BELIZE**



Ecotourism adventures abound in Cayo, which is also the gateway into Belize from Guatemala. The lively towns of San Ignacio and Santa Elena and the quiet border town of Benque Viejo del Carmen provide a glimpse into the lives of the friendly residents. Numerous accommodation options from which to base your explorations range from luxurious jungle lodges to local bed and breakfasts. Adventures include horseback riding, canoeing, exploring underground rivers, hiking, cave tubing, ziplining, mountain biking and birding. The region offers an unsurpassed combination of nature reserves, national parks, Belize's largest Maya sites and Central America's largest cave systems

# **VISITING FOR THE DAY?**



If you are only staying a few hours take a day tour. Visit Altun Ha Maya site, or explore the ancient Maya city of Lamanai, cruising along the New River and spotting exotic wildlife as you make your way toward the awe-inspiring archaeological site. Go cave tubing and ziplining, two of the most popular activities people from all over the world come to experience in Belize. Hike through the lush jungle of the foothills of the Maya Mountains to see the flora and fauna, or float on tubes through a large cave system past the stalagmite and stalactite formations; then get your adrenaline pumping on a seven-line zipline adventure.

Try snorkeling at the famous Shark Ray Alley and Coral Gardens sites; you will swim in pristine waters with nurse sharks and sting rays and be dazzled by coral formations teeming with marine life.

### **SOUTHERN BELIZE**



The picturesque Hummingbird Highway snakes across the Maya Mountains leading visitors from Belmopan, the capital of Belize, to the towns of Dangriga, Hopkins, Placencia and Punta Gorda. The vibrant local cultures of the Maya and the Garifuna are alive with rich traditions in this part of Belize. This is also home to the world's first Jaguar Reserve, the intricate Maya architecture of Lubantuun and over five offshore marine protected areas.

Dangriga is a great choice for experiencing the music, art and rich traditional Garifuna way of life before exploring the islands offshore. The quiet fishing village of Hopkins further down the coast offers sandy beaches and a range of visitor services. Placencia has become a thriving tourism center as a quaint seaside village with a local flair, while the peninsula offers modern resorts, vacation rentals and condominiums. Punta Gorda is the gateway to lush rainforest, Maya villages, waterfalls, rivers, Maya sites, extensive cave systems, and numerous national parks and protected areas teeming with wildlife.

#### **CAYES & ATOLLS**



Over 450 exquisite small islands, locally known as cayes dot the turquoise waters off the length of Belize's coast. Three atolls sit outside the magnificent Belize Barrier Reef, which is the second largest reef system in the world. The azure waters offer a truly remarkable experience for the first-time snorkeler or the avid scuba diver. Caye Caulker, the epitome of the "laid back island" lifestyle, has brightly-colored wooden houses interspersed with shops, restaurants and small hotels. The larger islands in the north support charming towns, while elsewhere on the Barrier Reef, smaller, private islands provide exclusive getaways. The town of San Pedro on Ambergris Caye offers an eclectic choice of accommodation and a wide variety of sophisticated international cuisine in beachside restaurants. Traditional Belizean food can also be savoured at charming local restaurants. Top activities include exploring Bacalar Chico National Park and snorkeling at Hol Chan Marine Reserve and Shark Ray Alley.

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