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Belize Flag Coat of arms Motto: "Sub Umbra Floreo" (Latin)"Under the shade I flourish"Anthem: "Land of the Free" Location of Belize (dark green)in the AmericasCapitalBelmopan17°15′N 88°46′W / 17.250°N 88.767°W / 17.250; -88.767Largest cityBelize CityOfficial languagesEnglishRecognized languagesSpanishKriolMayan languagesMopanYucatecGermanGarifunaChineseHindustani [1]Ethnic groups (2010)[1][2][a]52.9% Mestizo25.9% Creole (Afrodescendant)11.3% Maya6.1% Garifuna4.8% European3.9% East Indian1.0% Chinese1.2% Other0.3% UnknownReligion (2010[1][2])63.8% Christianity25.5% No religion10.1% Others0.6% UndeclaredDemonym(s)BelizeanGovernmentUnitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy• Monarch Charles III• Governor-General Froyla Tzalam• Prime Minister Johnny Briceño LegislatureNational Assembly• Upper houseSenate• Lower houseHouse of RepresentativesIndependence from the United Kingdom• Self-governance January 1964• Independence 21 September 1981• Republic 21 September 2021 Area• Total22,966 km2 (8,867 sq mi)[3] (147th)• Water (%)0.8Population• 2020 estimate419,199[4] (176th)• 2010 census324,528[5]• Density17.79/km2 (46.1/sq mi) (169th)GDP (PPP)2019 estimate• Total$3.484 billion[6]• Per capita$9,576[6]GDP (nominal)2019 estimate• Total$1.987 billion[6]• Per capita$4,890[6]Gini (2013)53.1[7]highHDI (2019) 0.716[8]high · 110thCurrencyBelize dollar (BZD)Time zoneUTC-6 (CST (GMT-6)[9])Date formatdd/mm/yyyyDriving siderightCalling code+501ISO 3166 codeBZInternet TLD.bz Belize (/bəˈliːz/ (listen)) is a country in Central America. It used to be called British Honduras, but changed its name in 1973. Long before that it was part of the Mayan Empire. Belize is the only English-speaking country in Central America. Some people in Belize speak Spanish or Kriol, but English is the official language and the most commonly spoken. This is because Belize is a former colony of the United Kingdom, while its neighbors were once colonies of Spain. Many people speak two languages.[10][11] Belize is a melting pot of cultures. More than three hundred and thirty thousand (374,681 (2017))[12] people live in Belize. Kriols make up about 21% of the Belizean people. Three Maya groups now live in the country: the Yucatec, the Mopan, and Kekchi.[13] The Garinagu are a mix of African, Arawak, and Carib ancestry. There are also Mestizos. Belmopan, which is near the centre of the country, is its capital. The first capital was Belize City. Other towns and cities include Belize City, Corozal Town, Orange Walk Town, Punta Gorda, Santa Elena/San Ignacio (known as the twin town) and San Pedro Town. Belize is on the coast of the Caribbean Sea. There are about 450 islands. The largest island, Ambergris Caye, is forty kilometres long. Many other islands are very small. In the water around the islands are coral reefs. The temperature along the coast is hot all year round. It typically ranges from 21 °C to 32 °C. Sometimes hurricanes hit, causing great damage. A beach on Half Moon Caye, one of Belize's many islands. Belize is on the Caribbean coast of northern Central America. It shares a border on the north with the Mexican state of Quintana Roo, on the west with the Guatemalan department of Petén, and on the south with the Guatemalan department of Izabal. To the east is the Caribbean Sea. The Belize Barrier Reef is along most of the 386 kilometres (240 mi) of predominantly marshy coastline. Belize have the second largest living barrier reef in the world.[14] The area of the country totals 22,960 square kilometres (8,865 sq mi). There are many lagoons along the coasts and in the northern part of the country. This makes the actual land area smaller at 21,400 square kilometres (8,263 sq mi). The Hondo and the Sarstoon River make the northern and southern border. The north of Belize is mostly flat, swampy coastal plains. In some places it is heavily forested. The south has the low mountain range of the Maya Mountains. The highest point in Belize is Doyle's Delight at 1,124 m (3,688 ft).[15] The Caribbean coast is lined with a coral reef and about 450 islets and islands.The islands are locally called cayes (pronounced "keys"). Three of only four coral atolls in the Western Hemisphere are off the coast of Belize. Over 60% of Belize's land surface is covered by forest.[16] 20% is covered by cultivated land (agriculture) and human settlements.[17] There are also important mangrove ecosystems across Belize's landscape.[18][19] Districts of Belize Belize is divided into 6 districts. The districts are shown below with their areas (in km2) and number of people at the 2010 Census: Belize District 4,204 – 89,247 Cayo District 5,338 – 73,202 Corozal District 1,860 – 40,324 Orange Walk District 4,737 – 45,419 Stann Creek District 2,176 – 32,166 Toledo District 4,649 – 30,538 Total areas and number of people 22,964 – 312,971 These districts are further divided into 31 constituencies. The largest communities as of 2017 are: No. Name Population Latitude/Longitude 1 Belize City, Belize 61,461 17.5 / -88.198 2 San Ignacio, Cayo 16,812 17.159 / -89.07 3 Orange Walk, Orange Walk 15,298 18.081 / -88.563 4 Belmopan, Cayo 13,381 17.25 / -88.767 5 Dangriga, Stann Creek 10,750 16.97 / -88.233 6 Corozal, Corozal 9,871 18.394 / -88.388 7 San Pedro Town, Belize 8,418 17.916 / -87.966 8 Benque Viejo el Carmen, Cayo 7,092 17.075 / -89.139 9 Punta Gorda, Toledo 5,205 16.098 / -88.81 10 Placencia, Stann Creek 4,300 16.514 / -88.366 11 Shipyard, Orange Walk 3,522 17.894 / -88.655 12 Valley of Peace, Cayo 1,809 17.335 / -88.835 The Belize Defence Force (BDF) is the military. It is responsible for protecting Belize. In 1997, the regular army had over 900 people, the reserve army 381, the air wing 45 and the maritime wing 36. This amounts to an overall strength of about 1400.[20] In 2005, the maritime wing became part of the Belizean Coast Guard.[21] In the same year, the government spent $1.2 million on the military. This is 1.87% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).[12] After Belize became independent in 1981 the United Kingdom kept some military in the country to protect it from invasion by Guatemala. The main British force left in 1994. This was three years after Guatemala said Belize was independent. The United Kingdom still keeps some military people in the country.[20] In 2011 the base was only 10 soldiers due to British budget cuts. They hope to reopen the base later.[22] Belizean cuisine is inspired by British, Mexican and Western Caribbean cooking. Since Belize is a melting pot of culture, it has adopted dishes from many different countries. The basic ingredients are rice and beans. These are often eaten with chicken, pork, veal, fish or vegetables. Coconut milk and fried plantains are added to the dishes to create a truly tropical taste. Exotic ingredients include armadillo meat, venison, iguana, iguana egg, and fried paca. Conch soup is a traditional dish. It has a characteristic taste and thick consistency due to added okra, potatoes, yams, cassava flour and a touch of toasted habanero. Belizean food is almost always served alongside white rice in coconut milk. The most common dishes that you will encounter in Belize are the following: Mestizo- Tamales, Relleno, Escabeche, Empanades and many other corn food. Creole- The famous Rice and Beans, sere, and other dishes with may include cassava and yam. The major sports in Belize are football, basketball, volleyball and cycling. There are smaller followings of boat racing, track & field, softball and cricket. Fishing is also popular in areas of Belize. The Cross Country Cycling Classic is one of the most important Belize sports events. This one-day sports event is meant for amateur cyclists but has also gained a worldwide popularity. On Easter day, citizens of Dangriga participate in a yearly fishing tournament. First, second, and third prize are awarded based on a scoring combination of size, species, and number. The tournament is broadcast over local radio stations. Prize money is awarded to the winners. Belize's National Basketball Team is the only National Team to have major victories internationally. A black orchid The black orchid (Encyclia Cochleatum) is the National Flower of Belize. This orchid grows on trees in damp areas, and flowers nearly all year round. Its clustered bulblike stems vary in size up to six inches long and carry two or three leaves. The black orchid flower has greenish-yellow petals and sepals with purple blotches near the base. The "lip" (one petal of special construction, which is the flower's showiest) is shaped like a valve of a clamshell (hence the name Encyclia Cochleatum) and is deep purple-brown, almost black, with conspicuous radiating purple veins. Mahogany loggers, around 1930 The National Tree of Belize is the Mahogany Tree (Swietenia macrophylla), one of the magnificent giants of the Belize rain forest. It rises straight and tall to over a hundred feet. In the early months of the year, when the leaves fall and new red-brown growth appears, the tree can be seen from a great distance. The tree puts out a many small whitish flowers. The flowers blossom into dark fruits, which are pear-shaped capsules about six inches long. The mahogany tree matures in 60 to 80 years. The Keel Billed Toucan The Keel Billed Toucan (Ramphastos sulfuratus) is the National Bird of Belize.[23] It is noted for its great, canoe-shaped bill and its brightly coloured green, blue, red and orange feathers. There are toucans in open areas of the country with large trees. It is mostly black with bright yellow cheeks and chest, red under the tail and a distinctive white patch at the base of the tail. They make a monotonous frog-like croak. Toucans like fruits. They eat by cutting with the serrated edge of their bills. The Tapir or Mountain Cow (Tapirello Bairdii) is the largest land mammal of the American tropics. The tapir is a stoutly built animal with short legs, about the size of a donkey and weighs up to 600 pounds. Its general color is dusty brown with a white fringe around the eyes and lips, white tipped ears and occasional white patches of fur on the throat and chest. In spite of its local name, the tapir is not a cow. It is closely related to the horse and is also kin to the rhinoceros. The tapir is a vegetarian. It spends much of its time in water or mud shallows, and is a strong swimmer. The National Animal is protected under the law thus the hunting of the tapir is illegal. Tapir (Mountain Cow) Belize at the Olympics Belize national football team List of rivers of Belize ↑ 1.0 1.1 1.2 "Belize Population and Housing Census 2010: Country Report" (PDF). Statistical Institute of Belize. 2013. Archived from the original (PDF) on 2018-11-13. Retrieved 2021-01-14. ↑ 2.0 2.1 "Belize, People and Society, The World Factbook". CIA. 14 August 2019. Archived from the original on 13 May 2013. Retrieved 4 April 2012. ↑ "Belize, Geography, The World Factbook". CIA. 14 August 2019. Archived from the original on 13 May 2013. Retrieved 4 April 2012. ↑ "Population and Population Density 2010, Postcensal estimates". Statistical Institute of Belize. Retrieved 18 August 2019. ↑ "Belize Population and Housing Census 2010: Country Report" (PDF). Statistical Institute of Belize. 2013. Archived from the original (PDF) on 27 January 2016. Retrieved 11 December 2014. ↑ 6.0 6.1 6.2 6.3 "Belize". International Monetary Fund. ↑ "Income Gini coefficient". 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Archived from the original on 2013-07-07. Retrieved 2013-08-02. Notes ↑ Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents were able to identify more than one ethnic origin. "Belize". The World Factbook. Central Intelligence Agency. Archived from the original on 13 May 2013. Retrieved 9 September 2008. Media related to Belize at Wikimedia Commons Belize travel guide from Wikivoyage Retrieved from " It may be the second-smallest country in Central America but Belize delivers across the board.Eco-adventures by the score, cultural heritage as diverse as the landscape, Maya temples that tower over modern human-made structures, hundreds of islands with talcum-white sands, the world’s second-largest barrier reef, made for diving...you get the idea.On the mainland, overgrown rainforests reveal hiking trails to double waterfalls. Complex cave systems run underground, while winding rivers are best enjoyed by inner tube. Then there’s the food: aromatic, franchise-free bites can be found on every other street corner, as is the inviting Belizean spirit.But where to start? Here’s everything you need to know about visiting Belize before you even set off. Barton Creek Cave, near San Ignacio, is an important Maya archaeological site. Paul Harding/Shutterstock 1. You’ll need at least seven days in BelizeBelize can feel like both the Caribbean and Central America all at once – and those two experiences can exist in a single vacation, as it’s easy to cross the entire country in a one-day road trip. Still, it’s better to do things the Belizean way: unhurried.Aim to spend at least a week here. Split your itinerary between Northern, Central and Southern Belize, and plan to stay at least three nights in each area. This allows enough time to enjoy your accommodation, visit the top-rated sights and recover in between.2. You probably won’t need a visaVerify whether you need an entry visa to Belize on the Immigration Department’s website, as a select few countries require one. Regardless, all visitors — even visa-free entrants — must apply for an extension to stay in the country longer than 30 days, depending on citizenship.3. Drive during the dayWith rental cars costing as little as US$50 per day, it’s a doddle navigating the five major highways of Belize.However, they’re dimly lit and the single-lane roads are often lined with “sleeping policemen,” a colloquial nickname for speed bumps. They’re often unpainted too, so it’s best to stick to driving in the daylight hours.4. Watch out for wildlife on the roadsGreen signs are directional, while yellow signs warn that wildlife could be crossing. Look out for tapir on the John Smith Airport Link Rd and coatimundis (diurnal mammals native to South America) on the scenic Hummingbird Highway. The valley along the Hummingbird Highway. JC Cuellar/Shutterstock 5. Try the street foodScooped from deep pots of fragrant stews, coconut milk-infused rice and beans are often served with caramelized fried plantain. A quasi-religious meal, everything is homemade and it's often considered impolite to leave food on your plate uneaten. Street food is relatively inexpensive here. Don't miss the gravy-filled meat pies mobile vendors balance on their bicycle handlebars or the "johnny cakes," coconut-based baked biscuits sliced and stuffed for long journeys.Locals cook a lot with masa (a dough of ground corn), transforming into deep-fried favorites like panades (crispy crescents of beans, cheese or hashed fish) and salbutes (open-faced rounds piled with shredded chicken and cabbage).Late-night grub is often meat-heavy street tacos, pupusas (a cornmeal cake stuffed with beans, cheese and fried pork), burritos, or a not-so-humble hotdog with bacon and caramelized onions. Any griddle on wheels will fill your stomach for BZ$10 (US$4.98).6. It’s OK to drink tap water in Belize but filtered water is the normWhile it’s OK to drink tap water in Belize, filtered water is the norm. It usually comes in small bottles or from a five-gallon water dispenser. Since Belize’s single-use plastic ban took effect in April 2019 (albeit excluding disposable water bottles), carrying a reusable water bottle is a good idea and appreciated. Hotels and resorts will often station dispensers near the front desk, while most restaurant staff will refill your bottle for free. Kayaking along coastal Belize. Stuart Westmorland/Getty Images 7. Time feels more like a suggestion in BelizeBelize offers a very slow, laid-back pace of life. That goes for everything from government offices (including immigration) to public transportation. Be flexible with your plans and be patient, even on the mainland.Public transportation overland and on water is less than a third of the cost of domestic airlines such as Maya Island Air and Tropic Air but, unsurprisingly, it will take you much longer to go the scenic route. Both the water taxis and bus routes are unlikely to leave on time, so account for 15 minutes of wiggle room.To avoid stopping for every roadside hitchhiker along the way when using the bus system, always choose the “Express” option if your final destination is advertised on the windshield.8. Be polite if you want to impress the localsLocals will greet one another and reciprocity is expected. Bidding a general “good morning” as you enter a room goes a long way, and a simple nod of acknowledgment is returned with a smile. Belizeans like to chat, so expect to make small talk while waiting in a queue.9. Petty crime is your main safety concern in BelizeLike any destination, it’s best not to make yourself a target for crimes of opportunity. Avoid isolated areas, don’t be flashy with money or jewelry, and don’t take public transport alone at night.Taxis are pricier but safer and easily recognizable with green license plates. Hotels will also usually have their own list of trusted drivers.In tourist zones, some vendors may be persistent, but a polite “No, thank you,” should do the trick. Crime in Belize is largely drug- or gang-related, more notably in select pockets of Belize City.Unless actively seeking them out, the average traveler naturally bypasses infamous hotspots entirely by sticking to designated tourism zones. Beyond signage, Tourism Police are omnipresent on foot, bicycle and ground patrols, but there’s still no better indicator of safety than your own gut. Ancient Maya mask temple located in the jungle of Belize. Johnny Habell/Shutterstock 10. Don’t forget to tipTourism has helped to instill a tipping culture in Belize, but it’s not an outright requirement. Some restaurants auto-charge up to a 20% sit-down service charge, so double-check receipts before (unnecessarily) adding more. A gratuity is expected in cash for servers, appreciated for tours and goes a long way for housekeeping, but it’s totally discretionary based on the service you experience. You can skip tipping elsewhere but taxis sometimes round up a fare as Belize has no fixed tariffs.If you’ve received great service, match the 12.5% General Sales Tax on the receipt. For an exceptional tour, a 20% tip is recommended.11. Pack some US dollarsYou won’t need to carry loads of cash, as there are plenty of point-of-sale machines and ATMs in the more popular destinations.US dollars are accepted across the country at a rate of two-to-one, though try to carry US$10 and US$20 notes as they are easier to make change. You’ll likely get smaller bills in Belize dollars back.12. Don’t fear the rainy seasonBelize’s rainy season (June–November) coincides with the Atlantic hurricane season. This means cheaper hotel rates, lower room occupancy, and better deals.Major attractions – like Maya sites, archaeological reserves, hiking trails and waterfalls – will all stay open during this period unless nature decides otherwise. All in all, it can be a good time to visit.Flooding risks tend to subside within 48 hours and the high winds are more of a risk to your driving than the downpours. Some hotels and restaurants will close during their slowest months, such as October, so check ahead. The popular Secret Beach area on Ambergris Caye, Belize. 13. Buy travel insuranceThis is always recommended, but especially so if you decide to visit during the rainy season. Buy travel insurance to protect your trip should a hurricane cut it short.14. Belize has decriminalized weed, but that does not mean it’s legalIn November 2017, Belize amended its Misuse of Drugs Act to decriminalize marijuana use on private property for adults in possession of up to 10g.However, be warned: selling, growing or smoking weed on public property remains a federal offense. Despite the impression given by some, it’s best not to buy or sell marijuana.15. The LGBTIQ+ community is generally acceptedIn 2016, Belize was the first former British colony in the Caribbean to overturn its anti-sodomy laws. Still, public displays of affection between same-sex couples may solicit stares here. The main tourism zones, such as Ambergris Caye, are the most LGBTIQ+-friendly.16. Solo women travelers are welcomedNo stranger to solo travelers or backpackers on a budget, Belize is also fairly safe for women traveling alone. Harassment will often come in the form of cat-calling, but nuisances tend to back off once if you stand your ground or ignore them outright. “No” is largely respected here, but sometimes you may have to say it loudly. Your Friend The Nomad contains affiliate links and is a member of the Amazon Services LLC Associates Program. If you make a purchase using one of these links, we may receive compensation at no extra cost to you. See our Privacy Policy for more information. Welcome to Belize, Central America’s only English-speaking country, home to over 200 tranquil Caribbean islands, 1,400 Mayan archaeological sites, an abundance of lush jungle, and some of the world’s best eco-resorts. If you’re planning your first trip to Belize, you’re in for a treat! Since I have family in Belize, I visit this gorgeous country frequently and created this Belize travel guide to help you plan the best possible trip. Keep reading for insider tips on the best areas to stay in Belize, the best things to do, how to get around the country, and everything else you need to know for your trip. Soon you’ll be dipping your toes in crystal clear Caribbean waters, climbing ancient Mayan pyramids, experiencing some of the world’s best snorkeling, and maybe even inner tubing beneath chandelier-like stalactites on a underground river! 🇧🇿 Note from the author: Did this article impact the way you planned your trip? Have any questions? Please comment at the end of the article! It helps this blog grow and helps me know what types of articles to write more. In this Belize travel guide, I’m sharing everything you need to know to plan your first trip to this special country! I share the best hotels, best things to do, and other essential Belize travel tips. Scroll through the find the most relevant information for where you’re at in the planning process and leave a comment if you have questions! 🙂 You can experience pristine Caribbean islands and lush jungle all in one trip — I share about this in my 10 day Belize itinerary 🇧🇿 Belize is an English-speaking country, so it’s very easy to navigate ✈ Belize feels much less touristy than most destinations in Mexico and the Caribbean, and you also don’t have to worry about getting scammed the way you do in more popular tourist destinations There are over a thousand Mayan ruins in Belize and it’s less than two hours away from Tikal, Guatemala, which was the ‘Paris’ of the Mayan world You can climb to the top of most of the Mayan temples in Belize (unlike in Mexico) Belize also offers a variety of unique jungle adventures like cave tubing and the ATM Cave tour Belize is home to some of the most tranquil jungle lodges I’ve ever stayed at, including plenty of budget-friendly options Think an eco-lodge in the middle of nowhere with a private waterfall! (Read my guide on Where to Stay in Belize) Belize has some of the best snorkeling and diving in the world along the Belize Barrier Reef You can also swim with nurse sharks and sting rays year round, and spot a diversity of other marine life like manatees, sea turtles, and dolphins On the mainland, you’ll have the chance to see rare tropical birds macaws and toucans, plus howler monkeys, spider monkeys, coati (pizote) and more 🙂 Belize is home to thousands of caves, many of which you can explore on a guided tour. Cave tubing, kayaking, and spelunking are popular. The most famous cave is Actun Tunichil Muknal Cave where you can see the remains of ancient Mayans in their final resting place. 🙂 Belize borders Mexico and Guatemala. And you can cross the border into Mexico and Guatemala, though you need special paperwork if you’re crossing with a rental car. 🇧🇿 English is the official language of Belize. This is because Belize was a British colony until 1981. 🇧🇿 You can use US dollars. The Belizean dollar is fixed to the US dollar ($2 BZE = $1 USD) and every business accepts USD and BZE. Just be sure you know which currency price is in so you don’t overpay! 🙂 You can stay in Belize for 30 days max. Belize’s tourist visa lasts 30 days, after that you have to pay $200 BZE for a 30 day extension, or exit and reenter the country (ie on a day trip to Tikal, Guatemala!) 🙂 Some roads in Belize are really bad. Others are freshly paved. Just drive carefully and expect potholes on older roads! 🙂 Tap water is (usually) safe to drink. Unlike in nearby Mexico, you can almost always drink tap water in Belize. There are, of course, always exceptions, so if you’re uncertain, just ask your hotel staff! 🇧🇿 Belize has several distinct cultural groups, including Mestizos, Garifuna, Mayans, Mennonites, Creoles, among others. 🙂 Belize is a small country and has the smallest population in Central America. It feels small, too! If you travel around the country, you’ll see the same tourists in different areas as your itineraries overlap. 🙂 Public transportation options are limited (and busses are slow). Unless you’re an extreme budget traveler, I recommend renting a car or hiring a driver on the mainland. Avoid staying in Belize City. Some areas are unsafe and there really isn’t much to do here. Head to Mountain Pine Ridge for cooler temperatures. This gorgeous secluded forest reserve near San Ignacio always has cooler temperatures because it’s at a higher elevation. Since my sister-in-law and several other relatives live in Belize full-time, I have some unique insights into what Belize weather is really like throughout her year. December through May is Belize’s dry season. The weather is perfect with no hurricanes and less rain compared to other times of the year. The average temperatures range from 70-86° Fahrenheit. December through March marks the high season for tourism, and since it’s the most popular time to visit there are more tourists and hotels can be a little more pricey compared to the offseason. That said, I’ve spent a good amount of time in Belize during these months and never felt like it was too crowded! Most people avoid Belize during the rainy season (June through November) but you still get a lot of sun throughout these months, particularly in summer. Rain showers usually only last an hour or two, and then the sky clears up. That said, Belize’s rainy season does coincide with hurricane season in the Caribbean. Although it’s rare for a hurricane to hit Belize, visiting during this time can be risky. I was in Belize when Hurricane Lisa hit in November 2022. I was staying with family inland and all we experienced was a big windstorm and the internet going out for a day. It didn’t affect our trip much, but there was damage and flooding across the country that really impacted locals. If you want to experience both the tranquility of Belize’s Caribbean islands and the adventures of Belize’s mainland, spend at least a week in Belize. In my opinion, 10 days in Belize is the perfect amount of time, with half of your time spent exploring the mainland and the other half spent slowing down on one of the islands. You can also easily enjoy several weeks in Belize, there is enough to explore without getting bored! If you’re short on time and only have five days or less in Belize, I would recommend choosing between the mainland and the islands—both are lovely, but you won’t have enough time to experience both on a shorter trip. : Photo of Matachica Beach Resort by Megan Blay Belize has some of the best eco-resorts, hotels, and B&Bs that I’ve ever stayed at! Since I’ve spent so much time in Belize, I’ve stayed at many of these places and can wholeheartedly recommend them—I hope you enjoy them as much as I did! As I’ve already mentioned, my recommended Belize itinerary includes some time adventuring around the mainland, followed by a few days relaxing on one of the islands. Consider staying at 2-3 different places in Belize, maybe more if you have a longer trip! Read my guide to the best areas in Belize for more details. : Swimming at the Rio On Pools, Jaguar Creek photo by Megan Blay, Blue Creek photo by Megan Blay ✳ Gaia Riverlodge (Mountain Pine Ridge): Boho luxury resort on a cliffside overlooking the Five Sisters’ Waterfall. Highlights include yoga in a cave, being served tropical drinks while you sunbathe beside a waterfall, and cliffside dining. Check prices. Sleeping Giant Rainforest Lodge (Hummingbird Highway): This award-winning resort is so beautiful, it feels like a botanical garden! So much so that it’s where one of my dear friends got engaged. There are several great restaurants and a pool, and several scenic viewpoints. Check prices. Hamanasi Adventure & Dive Resort (Hopkins): My favorite beach stay in Belize! This incredible regenerative resort was ranked #1 resort in Belize in 2024. It has some of the best service I’ve experienced anywhere, and they specialize in diving and snorkeling tours. Read my review of Hamanasi. ✈ Black Orchid Resort (Near Belize City): Serene jungle resort only 20 minutes away from the Belize international airport. The resort is right on the Belize River with a beautiful pool and excellent restaurant. If you don’t want to travel far from the airport but still want to feel like you’re in the jungle, this is the place to go! Check prices. Copal Tree Lodge (Near Punta Gorda): This luxury resort in southern Belize is an incredible off-the-beaten path place to stay in Belize. The spacious suites are nestled in the jungle, with a beautiful pool overlooking the river below. There is an excellent onsite restaurant and distillery, plus plenty of adventurous activities like zip lining, snorkeling, and chocolate-making. It’s also close to Punta Gorda, Belize’s southernmost town, which has a ferry to Livingston, Guatemala! Check prices. Best budget-friendly options: Kane Villas, Jaguar Creek, Maya Beach Hotel, Tropical Education Center, Palmento Grove. : The pool at Weezie’s, walking on a dock on Caye Caulker, and an overwater bungalow at Thatch Caye Resort Weezie’s (Caye Caulker): Probably the most luxurious hotel on the main island of Caye Caulker, Weezie’s has a gorgeous property on a quieter part of the island with a large private dock and waterfront area, and beautiful pool. Check prices. El Ben Cabañas (Caye Caulker): Situated on the more secluded North Side of Caye Caulker, I love the feel of El Ben Cabañas, with gorgeous high-end thatched-roof cabanas, incredible service, a pool, and picturesque setting on the turquoise blue Caribbean. Check prices. Thatch Caye Resort (Thatch Caye): Overwater bungalows on a secluded Caribbean island! This private island exudes pure luxury and is my top recommendation (if you can afford it). They offer all-inclusive stays with kayaking, snorkeling, diving, and a great restaurant. Check prices. Matachica Beach Resort (Ambergris Caye): A friendly boho luxury resort secluded on a Caribbean beach north of San Pedro. Matachica is my sister-in-law’s favorite resort in Belize (she lives in Belize), she says ‘it’s the type of place you never want to leave’. Check prices. PUR Boutique Resort (Ambergris Caye): One of Belize’s only adults-only hotels, with six luxury cabanas, a swim-up bar, and onsite taco bar. It’s highly-rated and close to San Pedro town but still secluded. Check prices. Best budget-friendly options: Tobacco Caye Overwater Bungalows, Colinda Cabanas, Belize Budget Suites, Bella’s Backpackers Hostel. Public transportation options are limited in Belize (and very slow), so I recommend renting a car if you’re spending any time on the mainland. I always check DiscoverCars for a comparison of local and international car rental companies, but I typically end up renting with Crystal Car Rental, a great local rental company located right at the Belize Airport. They are one of the few rental companies in Belize that will help you get all the right paperwork to cross the border into Guatemala, and they also offer shuttles to/from the ferry terminal. Driving in Belize: Some of Belize’s roads are full of potholes, while others are smoothly paved. Just be prepared for a mix of good and bad roads, and avoid driving somewhere new after dark. Shuttle: I recommend reserving a shuttle rather than trying to take a taxi. A few shuttle options: $70 shuttle from the airport to San Ignacio and $16 shuttle from the airport to the water taxi. Tours: Guided tours are a great way to explore Belize’s attractions (Maya ruins, cave tubing, etc) with roundtrip transportation from your hotel. In my experience, Viator has the best variety of tours in Belize. Flights: You can fly from Belize City to Hopkins and Placencia. Flying is more expensive than driving, but you save time! Chicken Bus: Belize’s old school busses that only cost a few dollars. Expect a cramped full bus with no AC and lots of stops. There are two main ways to get to Belize’s main islands: flying or taking the water taxi (ferry). If you wanted to, you could also reserve a private water taxi. The water taxi (ferry) ride takes about 45 minutes and costs $21 per person. Meanwhile, the plane ride only takes about 10 minutes (not including time spent in the airport) and costs around $90 on Tropic Air or Maya Island Air. There are two water taxi companies, San Pedro Belize Express and Caribbean Sprinter. San Pedro Express sails more often, so it’s typically the more popular choice. If you take the ferry, you don’t need to book in advance, just show up and pay for your ticket onsite. The water taxi to San Pedro ride takes about an hour and a half and costs $31 per person. Meanwhile, the plane ride only takes about 15 minutes (not including time spent in the airport) and costs around $90 on Tropic Air or Maya Island Air. There are two water taxi companies, San Pedro Belize Express and Caribbean Sprinter. San Pedro Express sails more often, so it’s typically the more popular choice. If you take the ferry, you don’t need to book in advance, just show up and pay for your ticket onsite. Caye Caulker is a small island, and it’s quite walkable and a great place to ride a bike! There are no motor vehicles on the island beside golf carts. If you want, you can rent a golf cart, but keep in mind that it’s tricky to find parking sometimes. You can also take a golf cart taxi if needed — I recommend reaching out to your hotel to reserve a ride from the water taxi when you arrive with all your luggage! Ambergris Caye is large and spread out, so I highly recommend renting a golf cart if you want to explore the island. If you’re staying in a walkable area of San Pedro you may not need a golf cart, but you will need one if you want to visit Secret Beach! ATM Cave Photo via MayaWalk Tours Some people travel all the way to Belize to go on a tour of Actun Tunichil Muknal Cave (ATM Cave) where you can see the skeletal remains of human sacrifice victims in their final resting place! ☠️ This unique experience involves an Indiana-Jones-style adventure up a river through the cave until you reach the gorgeous cathedral room, where you’ll find skeletons and hundreds of pieces of Mayan pottery. Only 125 people are allowed in the ATM Cave each day, and you can only visit with a tour guide. I went on this tour with MayaWalk and had the most amazing guide, Hugh. He went above and beyond to make sure we were taken care of, equipped, and safe. He also shared about the cultural circumstances that led the Mayans to resort to human sacrifice in caves this like one. Did you know that the Belize Barrier Reef system is the second largest in the world?! Only after the Great Barrier Reef, of course! Belize has the best snorkeling I’ve ever experienced with vibrant coral, sea turtles, tons of friendly stingrays, lobsters, manatees, octopus, gentle nurse sharks, and over 500 species of fish! Hol Chan Marine Reserve near Caye Caulker and Ambergris is one of the most popular areas to snorkel, but my favorite area was around South Water Caye on a snorkel tour from Hopkins. Keep in mind that you almost always need to go on a snorkel tour, since the barrier reef is a bit offshore. Cave tubing is the perfect combo of adventure and relaxation, and it’s something that you can really only do in Belize! You inner tube along an underground river that flows through a cave, lit only by your headlamp, which helps you spot gorgeous stalactites hanging like chandeliers above you. There are several places you can go cave tubing in Belize. The two most common spots are St. Herman’s Cave on the Hummingbird Highway and Nohoch Che’en Caves Branch Archaeological Reserve near Belmopan. My recommendation is St. Herman’s Cave since it’s right off the Hummingbird Highway (Belize’s most scenic drive). It’s easy to get to and there is a lot more to do nearby including swimming in the Blue Hole cenote, hiking to the Billy Barquedier Waterfall, and more. You’ll save money if you yourself to St. Herman’s Cave and meet your guide there, but you’ll need to make a reservation in advance. That said, the more popular option is to book a cave tubing combo tour from San Ignacio or Belize City, most of which usually include a stop at Mayan ruins as well. Belize is sometimes referred to as the ‘Heart of the Maya’ because it is home to over 1,400 recorded Mayan sites—and the highest concentration of Mayan ruins in Central America. So visiting Mayan ruins in Belize is a must, but the question is, which ruins? I’ve visited the majority of Belize’s popular Mayan sites (and several lesser known ones) and my two favorites are Xunantunich and Lamanai. Xunantunich is only 20 minute away from San Ignacio, and it’s a must if you’re staying in the area. The intricate designs carved into the main temple are stunning, and you can climb to the top for panoramic views of the jungle. And getting to Xunantunich is part of the fun, you have to cross a river on a hand-cranked ferry—it only take a minute or two and is such a unique experience! If you don’t have a rental car, you can take this day trip from San Ignacio, which includes round-trip transport and a guided tour of the archaeological site. Meanwhile, Lamanai is a little more difficult to get to, but again, the journey is part of the fun because the best way to Lamanai is via a scenic river cruise! You depart from Orange Walk in Northern Belize and jet along the New River, which is lined with tropical foliage. Then you arrive at an ancient Mayan city that is now inhabited by howler monkeys. This Lamanai day trip from Belize City is my recommendation. Belize’s Hummingbird Highway is the most scenic drive in the country. This lush jungle highway gently winds through the Maya Mountains, connecting Belize’s capital city, Belmopan, with the gorgeous Caribbean ocean. With such beautiful landscapes and a handful of attractions situated right along the edge of the road, a drive down the Hummingbird Highway is worth taking, even if you don’t need to. You can easily visit on a day trip from Hopkins, San Ignacio, Belize City, or even Placencia. My favorite things to do on the Hummingbird Highway include the short hike to the Billy Barquedier Waterfall, exploring St. Herman’s Cave, hot sauce tasting at the Marie Sharp’s factory, driving up to the scenic overlook at Sleeping Giant Lodge, and chocolate tasting at Lamanai Chocolate Co. The Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve is one of my favorite places in Belize, with gorgeous waterfalls, swimming holes, and enchanting caves. Since it is situated at a higher elevation, Mountain Pine Ridge is always a little cooler than the rest of the country, so you can escape from the heat for the day! My favorite things to do in Mountain Pine Ridge include swimming in the Rio On Pools, exploring the gigantic Rio

imported, Belize's fisheries, agricultural businesses, shrimp farming and exports of bananas, sugar, fruit and lobster continue to drive the nation's economy. Government is working assiduously to attract manufacturing enterprises by offering incentives to start-ups. Government priorities include lowering both high energy and labor costs so the dollar stretches further for Belizean citizens.The symbiotic relationship between tourism and governmentBecause tourism is estimated to provide approximately 1 in 7 Belize jobs and contributes around 22-percent of the nation's gross national product, a symbiotic relationship between the industry and government is critical. Belize has made major commitments to sustainability and conservation, but increased tourism numbers can also impact ecosystems.Add the nation's vulnerability when it comes to changing weather patterns that can impact everything from temperatures to the state of natural tourist attractions being assaulted by any number of threats. In sum, it's easy to understand why consensus is so critical to future growth. This juggling act is a sensitive topic in a nation that has a poverty-stricken populace to care for amid efforts to attract tourists, retirees, and investors.Belize Culture and HistoryBelize has a very unique history, being the only country in Central America where English is the official language.Approximately 3000 years ago, the original Maya culture began moving into the area now known as Belize, establishing an extensive trading network that would flourish until approximately the year 1200 A.D., building the enormous stone cities of Cahal Pech, Caracol, and Altun Ha.Initially passed over by European conquerors due to a lack of gold and other precious mineral resources, the first European settlement was founded in 1638 by English sailors who survived a shipwreck. Thriving in the mild climate of Belize, more English settlers began arriving in the area, and the country became a base for English privateers and pirates who would sally forth to harvest the rich plunder of Spanish galleons.Although sporadic Spanish settlements attempted to take root in Belize, the country fell under complete British domination in 1798 after a British fleet won a decisive naval battle against the Spanish in the waters off of St. George's Caye. In 1840, the British government formally seized control of the country, naming it the Colony of British Honduras. Taking advantage of the American Civil War, the British annexed Belize in 1862, making it a crown colony. In the latter half of the 19th century, many Mayan tribes, Mestizos and Mennonite people emigrated to Belize to escape unrest in neighboring Mexico.In 1931, a combination of fallout from the Great Depression in the United States and a devastating hurricane strike that completely demolished the capital of Belize City drastically altered the political landscape in Belize, with British overseers taking the opportunity to vastly increase their control of the colony. This prompted many native Belizeans to begin organizing politically, forcing Britain to recognize that Belize wanted full independence in 1961.Due to a long-standing border dispute with neighboring Guatemala, it took another 12 years before Belize was assured of sovereignty, formally changing their name to Belize from the long-standing colonial name of "British Honduras". However, it was not until 1981 that Belize became fully independent.Today, most Belizeans are Roman Catholic, but because of the long influence of the British Empire, there are many Protestants and Anglicans found in the country. Due to their unique history, many Maya and Garifuna peoples practice a unique blend of Christianity with traditional spiritual practices.By law, the official language in Belize is English, used nationwide for all government business and in schools. However, the main language spoken by most Belizeans is a Creole variant of English with heavy borrowings from Spanish and Mayan tongues. In the north and west of Belize, many communities speak Spanish, while other population groups continue to speak their native languages of Arabic, German, or Chinese. Many Mayan communities still speak dialects of the original Maya tongue.Belizean cuisine has a strong Caribbean influence, with many spicy Creole staples like rice and beans blending harmoniously with native Maya delicacies like fried paca (jungle rat). Not to be outdone, traditional English favorites like corned beef and beans on toast still have their place, appearing on menus alongside Mexican classics such as tamales, escabeche (onion soup), and empanadas. Small "pancakes" made from fried dough known as "fry jacks" are commonly eaten for breakfast, while lunch might consist of meat pies or rice and beans. Dinner might be sere (fried fish with either coconut or banana) or tamales, polished off with local rum or the national brew, Beliken Beer.While food and drink varies from region to region, tropical staples such as coconut, banana, and spicy hot peppers are popular nationwide, with chicken or pork being the preferred meat of most Belizeans.Belize Early InhabitantsThe history of the Maya is integral to the history of Belize. Belize is located in one of the most important strongholds of this ancient civilization. That legacy can be seen today in the many well-preserved Maya ruins that are present in Belize. The best-known are those at Xunantunich, Cahal Pech, Caracol, and Lamanai.Who Were the Maya? The Maya civilization began around 2600 BC and lasted almost 2000 years. The Maya established numerous city-states in what we now call Mesoamerica, most of Guatemala and Belize, and parts of El Salvador and Honduras.The Maya were the most advanced civilization of their time. Even today, people who explore Maya ruins are astonished at the construction and engineering skills they used to build their temples, pyramids, and cities. Maya architecture was far more complex and developed than that of the ancient Egyptians. Visiting these ruins today gives you a small glimpse into the detailed mathematical and engineering knowledge that they had.Maya temples and palaces were built in ways that allowed them to view and study the constellation. They were fascinated by astronomy and show an advanced knowledge of it in their writing and architecture.Mathematicians, Engineers and Farmers Architecture and astronomy were not the only areas where the Maya excelled. Their language is considered the most sophisticated and advanced language in all of early America. The Maya improved the mathematical and calendar systems that were in place at the time. They invented the concept of "zero," which allowed for more advanced mathematical calculations.The Maya used advanced farming techniques, including underground water storage, irrigation canals, raised plots and terracing. The Maya grew corn, cacao, maize, squash, beans, cassava, and other crops.They developed strong economies based on trading partnerships with other cultures and tribes in the region. Their social and economic structure was varied and it included the nobility, priests, merchants, skilled craftsmen, and laborers. However, the Maya did not use money, but they often used jade, seashells and copper bells as trading items.Maya Religion The Maya believed in many different gods. Religion was an important part of their lives. They also believed that every living thing was imbued with a sacred essence.To the Maya, caves were the most spiritual places because they were portals to the underworld which they called "Xibalba". The Maya used caves to bury their dead and conduct their most sacred rituals. Today, explorers and archeologists in Mesoamerica are still finding important artifacts in these caves.The End of the Maya Empire The powerful city-states of the Maya empire began to fail sometime around 900 AD. The reasons for this are unclear, but many historians believe that a combination of prolonged draught, deforestation and wars was to blame. When the Europeans conquered the region, they did their best to wipe out all traces of the Maya civilization. However, many of them retreated to the highlands of Guatemala, Mexico, and Belize.The Maya Today The powerful empire may have faded into history, but the Maya have survived. Today, thousands of people in countries like Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize speak one of the many Mayan languages.The modern Maya people have preserved the religion, customs, and traditions of their great civilization. You can learn more about Maya history by visiting the many Maya ruins and caves in Belize.Belizean CuisineFoods in BelizeWhile Belizean cuisine is not well-known outside the country, visitors to the country rave about the delicious mix of culinary influences and fresh, local ingredients that make Belizean fare so delicious. A true melting pot society, Belize borrows from its native Creole, Mestizo, Caribbean, Garifuna, Maya, and British populations to offer tasty treats for every palate.The country's offshore coral reefs and islands make Belize a seafood lover's paradise where lobster, lionfish, grouper, snapper, barracuda, conch, and shrimp are served up in a mouthwatering array of styles. Not to be outdone, the mainland adds tender chicken, pork, and beef with an exotic blend of spices to create hearty dishes that can be enjoyed any time of the day.And with its warm climate and fertile soils, Belize produces an abundance of oranges, coconuts, bananas, plantains, cashews, and cacao (the main ingredient of chocolate) that add fresh flavor to any dish. Fresh fruit also makes for refreshing beverages to slake your thirst on a hot day or added to rum cocktails for a burst of flavor.No matter what your dietary preferences, one thing is for sure: nobody ever goes hungry in Belize!Here are 13 of the tastiest dishes you can try in Belize:TamalesThere are strong Mexican influences in Belizean cuisine and one of the tastiest treats you can try are the local varieties of tamales. Instead of corn husks, Belizean tamales are made using plantain leaves and filled with an assortment of meats, cheese, and vegetables.ChimoleKnow locally as a "black dinner" due to its appearance, chimole is a hearty chicken stew with lots of flavorful spices and black achiote paste (from the same plant that produces annatto seeds) and served with boiled eggs and tortillas.Johnny CakesOne of the most popular types of bread in Belize, johnny cakes are small biscuits made with flour and coconut milk which are then filled with eggs, beans, and cheese. Usually eaten for breakfast, johnny cakes are sometimes filled with chicken and eaten for lunch or dinner.Grilled LobsterFisherman in Belize have been bringing in spiny lobster (similar to the Atlantic lobster most popular in Canada and the U.S.) for centuries. All along the coast, you can enjoy lobster grilled outdoors and served with lemon garlic butter.Boil UpsA Creole staple (called "bile up" in Kriol), boil ups are a hearty choice for lunch or dinner. Boil ups vary by region and the cook's preference, but generally involve vegetables, fish, eggs, seafood, and anything else lying around the kitchen being boiled with chicken stock and then served with dumplings.Conch FrittersThe crustacean most famous for its elegantly fluted shell, the meat of the conch is rough chopped and mixed with hot peppers, flour, and garlic and then formed into patties and fried. Pairs wonderfully with locally made Marie Sharp's hot sauce.Fry JacksLooking something like a big, inflated donut, fry jacks are a breakfast staple in Belize and eaten with eggs and refried beans. For lunch, try stuffed fried jacks filled with chicken, eggs, beans, and/or ham.CevicheLooking something like a chunky salsa, Belizean ceviche is a bit different from the classic Peruvian recipe. A mix of white fish, octopus, shrimp, or conch mixed with lime juice, hot peppers, cucumber, onions and tomatoes, ceviche is a refreshing treat on a hot day.Grilled FishWith hundreds of offshore islands and 200 miles of coastline along the Caribbean, it's no surprise that Belizeans know how to prepare fish. Try snapper, lionfish, grouper, or barracuda along with a side of coleslaw and rice and beans for a delicious lunch or dinner.Meat PiesA British classic, meat pies in Belize are small, flaky pastries filled with minced beef and a savory gravy sauce. Often served with Marie Sharp's hot sauce, meat pies are a great street snack to ward off hunger in the afternoon.SalbutesOne of the most popular street foods in Belize, salbutes are fried tortillas stuffed with a savory blend of tomatoes, chicken, avocados, and cabbage. For extra heat, top with Marie Sharp's hot sauce.Cochinita pibilA dish that has been enjoyed for thousands of years by the Maya, cochinita pibil is marinated, slow-cooked pork that is served with homemade corn tortillas.Rice and BeansOne of the all-time classic Caribbean dishes, rice and beans hold a special place in every Belizean's heart. Simple enough for everyday fare, beans and rice are the perfect accompaniment to a rainbow of other flavors both sweet and hot, making it the perfect introduction to Belizean cuisine.SaveSaveSaveSaveSaveBelizean Folklore: The Legends of BelizeOne of the best ways to get to know a local culture is through their folk tales, legends, and myths. Belize, with its unique blend of different cultures, has a truly colorful folklore history replete with many tall tales. Below are three different stories culled from Belize's rich folklore:Tata DuendeFrom a local term meaning "Gradfather Demon", Tata Duende is a wizened old man who is very short, has backwards feet, and has just four fingers on each hand. Tata Duende always wears a tall hat and is used as a bogeyman in Belize, a figure to scare misbehaving children with threats of being kidnapped and taken into the jungle to be lost forever.In Belize, Tata Duende is also a scapegoat, blamed for crop failures and other mishaps. He's also a bit of a mischievous figure, occasionally pulling odd pranks like braiding horse's hair in knots that can never be untied and have to be cut out.SisemiteSometimes known as Sisimito, the creature is Belize's local version of Big Foot or the Sasquatch. Usually described as a male creature, Sisemite is supposed to live in the extensive cave network in Belize and survives on consuming raw meat from jungle animals that he hunts. Unique to this version of Big Foot, Sisimito is commonly rumored to have a fondness for human women, kidnapping them and taking them to his cave lair, which he then impregnates to create new Sisimitos.Sisemite is most commonly seen along river banks at dusk. Traditionally, women were warned to finish up their laundry duties at the riverside in order to avoid falling into Sisimito's clutches.La LloronaFrom a Spanish word meaning "The Crying Woman", La Llorona is described as being a svelte, tall and very beautiful woman with very long black hair. Her face is always shrouded although it is believed to be misshapen and ugly.Different areas of Belize have different origin stories for La Llorona. One such tale is that her mission is to lure children into the jungle, tricking them until they get lost and can never find their way back home again. The legend states that she originally was a normal woman whose children got lost in the jungle and so now she exacts her revenge on other children in an attempt to quench her grief.Another tale involving La Llorona depicts her as a siren, luring healthy young men into the jungle after they've had a few drinks at the bar. Parents would counsel their sons never to stay out too late drinking for fear that La Llorona would lure them to their doom. Once they've followed her deep in the forest, La Llorona reveals her hideous visage, followed by a loud piercing scream. The benighted victim would then die immediately or be severely weakened and suffer from strange debilitating illnesses for weeks.Belize LanguagesLanguages of BelizeDue to the long centuries of British colonial rule, Belize is the only country in Central America where English is the official language. Taught in schools and used for all legal and judicial proceedings, English is the primary language used in English, although there are several other languages which are important.Standard English and Belizean CreoleSpelled either as Creole or Kriol, the most common language spoken at home by people in Belize is an English-based creole tongue. More than just a dialect or regionalism, a creole is a language that is primarily based on one language (in Belize's case, English) but has a substantial etymology based on other languages.Approximately 44% of people in Belize speak Kriol while 63% speak standard English. Because most Creole speakers also are fluent in standard English, it is difficult to separate those who speak Kriol in some circumstances but use standard English in other circumstances.Other European LanguagesApproximately half of all people in Belize self-identify as being of Hispanic, Latino, or Mestizo (Spanish for "mixed") heritage. Over Belize's long history, a number of immigrants from neighboring Spanish-speaking countries including Mexico and Guatemala have become integral members of Belizean society. It is estimated that roughly 30% of people in Belize speak Spanish, and Spanish is taught in many primary schools in areas of the country where English is not spoken at home.Many people in Belize refer to "Kitchen Spanish", a simplified version of Spanish that has a lot of elements borrowed from Kriol, most common in towns in the north of Belize like Corozal Town.Approximately 3.2% of the population of Belize speak German, particularly an older dialect or version known as Plattdeutsch due to the number of people of Mennonite faith who emigrated to Belize to escape religious persecution in Europe.GarifunaApproximately 3% of the people in Belize speak Garifuna, a language which has been recognized by the United Nations as being an oral and intangible heritage of humanity.Indigenous LanguagesBelize was once the heartland of the ancient Maya Empire, and today in Belize there are several surviving dialects of the original Maya tongue.SaveSaveSaveSaveBelize is the true definition of a melting pot, a land where many different cultures have blended together to form the special laid-back identity of a Belizean. With an open-minded attitude towards interracial unions, several distinct cultures still exist in Belize today, a mix of Creoles, European Mennonites, East Indians, Chinese, Garifuna, Maya, and Mestizo peoples. Despite their very unique origins, today these traditions and cultures have blended together in Belize to create a harmonious society.Today, the Creole population makes up approximately 2/5ths of Belize's population, forming one of the largest ethnic group in the nation. Completely different than the Creoles of Louisiana or elsewhere, Belizean Creoles are descendants of African slaves imported during the colonial era and Europeans.The highest density of Creoles today center around Belize City in the center of the country, although they also live in the other five districts of the country. Most people in Belize speak Creole, a unique local variant of English, although standard English is the official language. Famous for their love of rice and beans dishes, Creole cooking has become a staple of Belize cuisine throughout the country.The Mestizos, named for a Spanish word meaning "mixed", are the other dominant population group found in Belize today. Descended from a mix of Spanish and ethnic Mayans who fled southern Mexico about 100 years ago, Mestizos today are predominant in the north of Belize, including Corozal, Orange Walk, and Cayo Districts. Most Mestizos speak Spanish at home, but are able to converse in Belizean Creole/English when interacting with outsiders.The Mestizos peoples added their own unique contribution to Belizean cuisine in the form of tamales, garnaches, escabeches, and panades.Descended from the ancient Mayan imperialists who once ruled the land now known as Belize, approximately 10% of the country today consider themselves ethnic Maya. Found especially in the northern districts of Orange Walk and Corozal, the Maya today are proud of their rich heritage. A sub-group of Maya, known as the Mopan Maya, emigrated to the country in the 1880s, especially around the area of San Antonio Village in Toledo. In the south of Belize, another sub-group of Maya, known as the Kekchi Maya, emigrated from Guatemala in the 1870s, and today are found in the southern districts of Toledo and Stann Hope Creek in Belize.With approximately 8% of the population, the Garifuna have a unique history. The Garifanu culture was first developed on the small Caribbean island of St. Vincent, where the descendants of African slaves intermarried with indigenous people. In 1832, the British government forced them to leave en masse, which is when they fled by canoe overseas to the coast of Belize. Every year on November 19, the Garifuna people commemorate their arrival in Belize with the festival of Garifuna Settlement Day.The Garifuna have also added their own imprint on Belizean cuisine, bringing the dishes sere, hudut, and cassava bread with them, now staples nationwide in the country.A variety of other unique minority peoples can be found in Belize, including populations from East Indians, German Mennonites, Lebanese, Chinese, and expats from North America.Belizeans from East India were first introduced to the country during the colonial era, brought from India to work on the sugar plantations. Found today primarily in Toledo District, they added a rich patois of Indian dishes and culture to Belize.Also found in Belize are Arab peoples, predominantly from Lebanon, with others originally from Palestine and Syria. First arriving about 100 years ago to form mercantile enterprises, they remain a distinct feature in both Belize and Cayo Districts.Although relatively few in number, another distinct segment of Belizean society consists of immigrants from China, who first began arriving over a century ago to engage in trade, and today many local businesses in Belize are owned and operated by people of Chinese origin, especially concentrated in and around Belize City.The German Mennonites form a very unique pocket of distinct culture, having first come to Belize about 70 years ago when they fled ongoing unrest in neighboring Mexico. Still speaking their own archaic dialect of German, this religious community is centered around villages in Toledo, Cayo, and Orange Walk Districts. Similar to the Amish, they preserve the old ways of dress and custom, and are today still mostly engaged in farming and traditional crafts like furniture making.The smallest, but fastest growing, distinct community in Belize are the number of expats, mostly retired people from the United States and Canada. Drawn to the warm weather, use of English as the official language, and accommodating immigration laws, they add their own unique contributions to Belizean society. Found mostly in and around Belize City, a growing expat community is also beginning to form in the north of the country near the border with Mexico.Healthcare in BelizeOne of the most important factors to consider when visiting or moving to another country is the quality and nature of the health care available at your destination. Belize is a small country with a strong commitment to developing and improving infrastructure, including health care.If you are coming to Belize, here is what you need to know about health care in the country:Public Health Care in BelizeMuch like the rest of the world, the government of Belize provides free and low-cost health care to everyone. The government of Belize operates a nationwide network of clinics and hospitals. Surgeries and more in-depth procedures can be very affordable at government hospitals, but the overall service may be less than what you're used to. That being said, the Karl Heusner Hospital in Belize City has a full complement of services and specialists.Public health care is perfectly suitable for treating minor ailments and illnesses. The price for services ranges from free to very affordable, even for non-citizens. Waiting lines are rare, and in-patient hospital stays begin at an average of $15 a day. Pharmacies (drug stores) are found in all major towns and cities that can supply prescription medications, often at a far better price than in the United States.The down side to using public health care in Belize include: sharing rooms, providing your own toiletries, and the lack of options for more advanced surgical interventions and treatment procedures.Private Health Care in BelizeThere are a number of privately-operated clinics and hospitals throughout the country that serve as a viable alternative to the public facilities. Belize Medical Associates, a private hospital in Belize City, offers advanced health care on par with anything found in more advanced countries. Another popular private option is the network of clinics run by Belize Healthcare Partners.For long-term treatment of chronic issues or for very advanced surgical intervention, many visitors choose to fly to the United States for treatment. International evacuation coverage can be added to most health insurance policies, allowing for emergency transportation to North America.It is important to note that foreign embassies in Belize cannot recommend individual physicians or health care treatment facilities. Foreign embassies can, however, arrange for emergency medical treatment in your home country in special cases.Mexico is a Health Care Option for BelizeansBelizeans also have easy access to world class health care facilities located across the border in the Mexican cities of Cancun, Chetumal, Merida, and Playa del Carmen.Time in BelizeBecause Belize does not change its clock seasonally to adjust for Daylight Savings Time, it can be difficult to calculate the current time in Belize off the top of your head.Officially, Belize is in the Central American Time Zone. During the summer months when the most of the United States is on Daylight Savings Time, the time in Belize mirrors that of the Mountain Time Zone. In other words, the time in Belize is the same time as in Denver.During the winter months, however, when most of the United States is on standard time, the time in Belize mirrors that of the Central Time zone. In other words, the time in Belize is the same time as in Chicago.Daylight Savings Time runs from approximately March to the end of October or beginning of November. Therefore, from March-November, the time in Belize is the same time as in Denver. And from November-March, the time in Belize is the same time as in Chicago.If you're familiar with Greenwich Mean Time, sometimes known as UTC (Coordinated Universal Time), Belize is permanently six hours behind GMT. Therefore, when it is 6:00 PM in GMT, it is noon in Belize.To easily find out the current time in Belize, visit your favorite search engine and type "Time in Belize".The economy of Belize continues to revolve around a number of key sectors, and GDP growth in the country is affected significantly by output in these areas, most notably agriculture. This makes the country's economic performance particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in world commodity markets. Tourism, crude oil exports and International Business are also major contributors to the Belize economy, with tourists coming to Belize being the country's main foreign exchange earner.The immediate economic forecasts for Belize are relatively healthy, with growth for 2018 estimated at 2.1%. with agricultural output expected to rise alongside a growth in inbound tourism.It is estimated that agriculture accounts for just under 10% of Belize's GDP, and the country has a number of significant exports. Sugar and timber have always been staples, but the agriculture sector has undergone diversification and now bananas, citrus fruits and fish products are also important export products.Agricultural exports do, however, tend to be subject to fluctuations in global commodity markets, a problem that Belize has been subject to even before independence and as far back as the 18th century (when it was still known as British Honduras) when the mahogany trade was already one of Belize's primary exports. Forestry continues to this day to be a strong economic performer, although predominantly in the realm of preserving the country's many forest reserves as eco-tourism destinations.Since 1990 and the enactment of the International Business Companies Act, Belize has become a center for international financial transactions and offshore investment and banking. A Belize International Business Company is able to be organised in a more flexible way than is permitted in most other jurisdictions, and provides more privacy for shareholders and directors, who cannot be identified from public records. In addition, offshore companies registered in Belize are exempt from paying income tax.Another way in which Belize has carved out a niche for itself in the global economy is in the e-gaming licensing industry (visit top5casinosites.co.uk to see major online casinos that are operating under a Belize e-gaming license). The Computer Wagering Licensing Act (1995), which was introduced in May 1996, enables gambling companies licensed in Belize to provide casino games and sports betting services for players who are based outside of the country. A number of major international gambling brands are therefore licensed to operate from Belize and this function continues to make an important contribution to the services economy.Online gambling regulation has, however, become a much more competitive industry, particularly as a number of major countries, most notably the UK, have now introduced their own online gambling licensing and regulatory authorities. Nevertheless, the industry is still strong on Belize and there is potential for it to diversify and remain a key player by becoming a licensing authority for crypto-currency casino and sports betting based on blockchain technology.Crude oils sales also play a role in the economy of Belize and, although prices are subject to great worldwide volatility, it has been an area in which there has been recent growth, with exports up $1.9 million in January 2018 compared with the same time in 2017, despite no change in production levels.However, the exploration and development of oil fields is not straightforward in Belize, and so there would need to be a significant uptick in the price of crude for it to be worthwhile for oil companies to make further major investments in the country in the immediate future.Tourism currently makes a direct contribution of just under 20% to Belize's GDP, while the total contribution is over 45%. Around 13% of the country's population is directly employed in the tourism industry and so its importance cannot be overstated. It is also shown that tourism has a positive effect on a number of other key economic sectors, notably the agricultural, international business and construction industries.Ecotourism in particular is a growing sector, with the authorities increasing the number and range of protected natural and historical attractions in a bid to capture an ever-greater share of this burgeoning international market.Places like the Great Blue Hole, Thousand Foot Falls, Caye Caulker, the Belize Barrier Reef and countless other natural and archaeological sites attract visitors from around the world, and numbers are only likely to increase as the economy becomes more tourism driven and the government and authorities become more proactive in promoting this specific sector of the tourist industry.Belize CurrencyThe Currency in BelizeThe money used in Belize is called the Belize dollar, often abbreviated as BZD. The official exchange rate is permanently set at 2 BZD to 1 US dollar, although some banks provide a slightly different rate.Many visitors from the United States to Belize choose not to exchange money at all as the US dollar is accepted and warmly welcomed everywhere. The Belize dollar is only valid currency inside the borders of Belize, and it can be difficult to exchange it outside the country except at border towns in Mexico and Guatemala.Cash is the most popular form of payment in Belize, although major hotels, resorts, lodges, and restaurants do accept credit cards, primarily Visa. Only a limited number of businesses accept MasterCard, American Express, or Discover.Declaration of FundsThe law in Belize stipulates that every visitor entering the country must declare any cash or financial instruments totaling more than $5,000 in US currency or its value equivalent. If visitors enter with more than $5,000 and fail to declare it, the penalty is three times the undeclared amount.Belizean Bank NotesBelizean bank notes are world renowned for their beauty and colorful designs. All bank notes are printed by the British firm De La Rue, Limited. As a former British colony and current member of the Commonwealth, Belize has Queen Elizabeth II as its head of state. As such, all bank notes in Belize depict the official portrait of the queen on one side. The obverse of Belizean bank notes depict indigenous wildlife species as well as notable architectural landmarks such as bridges, buildings, or ancient Maya temples.Belizean law prohibits its citizens from holding bank accounts in US currency. For Belizeans wishing to travel or in need of US currency for business purposes, they must make a special application to the Central Bank of Belize. However, Belizean passport holders who do not reside in the country are exempt from these restrictions but must declare any money or financial instruments with a value equal to or in excess of $5,000 in US dollars or their equivalent.For visitors entering Belize via the land crossings in Mexico or Belize, the safest way to acquire local currency is at a bank. Unofficial money changers should be avoided at all times. Inside of Belize, banks can convert Belizean currency to US dollars, Canadian dollars, British pound sterling, or the Euro and vice versa.Belize WeatherBelize is typically hot and humid day and night year-round. Temperatures vary by only about 4°C between the coolest part of the year (December to March) and the hottest (May to September). The daily temperature range is around 10°C from the hottest part of the day to the coolest part of the night. In the uplands (Mountain Pine Ridge and the Maya Mountains) you can expect temperatures to fall by about 3°C for every 1000ft rise in altitude, making things noticeably more comfortable.Belize has distinct wet and dry seasons. The wet season runs from mid-May to November in the south and from mid-June to November in the north. November to February is a transitional period, with the year's coolest temperatures and a limited amount of rain. The true dry season is February to April. There's quite a large difference in rainfall between the north of the country (around 1500mm or 60in a year) and the south (about 4000mm or 160in). In the north and center of the country, there's a dip in rainfall in August, between peaks in July and September.In Belize, the high season for tourists corresponds roughly with the dry season: December to May. The shoulder months – especially December – receive a fair amount of rain, but not enough to scare away the multitudes of travelers who want to spend their holidays in the tropics. Most hotels and resorts are more expensive during this period (high-season rates are quoted throughout this book).The biggest influx of tourists comes between December 15 and January 15, and during the weeks around Easter. Some hotels and resorts, especially top-end accommodations, charge extra-high prices during these peak periods. If you're using top-end or some midrange accommodations, you'll certainly save money by avoiding these seasons.The rainy season runs from June to November. The early months, especially May and June, are actually a wonderful time to travel to Belize: you can avoid the tourist bustle and lodging is slightly cheaper. The only ownside is that it's outside the lobster season, so you'll have to forego at least one local specialty. Rivers start to swell and dirt roads get muddy. Some more remote roads may not be accessible to public transportation. With too much rain, some of the caves such as Actun Tunichil Muknal are dangerous and therefore closed to the public. Southern Belize is especially precarious during the rainy season; this relatively remote region receives two to three times as much rain as the rest of the country.The overall climate of Belize can be described as sub-tropical. The humidity while high is seldom oppressive and is most noticeable along the coast. The mean annual humidity is 83%, but on many days the humidity disappears with the cooling sea breezes. The Belize coastal area is exposed to southeast tradewinds averaging 10-13 knots, which can attain an uncanny consistency during the month of July.Temperatures in Belize range from 50°F to 95°F with an annual mean of 79°F. November to January are traditionally the coolest months with a 75°F average, and May to September are the warmest, with an average of 81°F.Location is a big factor for temperature as Cayo to the west can be several degrees colder than the coast. During November at night, temperatures can fall to a crisp 46°F in Cayo. In the mountains, the coldest days and nights might are relatively cold, and blankets will definitely be needed at night. However, the mean annual temperatures on in the mountains is a very comfortable 72°F.A Comprehensive Belize Safety GuideGenerally, Belize is a very safe and peaceful country where tens of thousands of tourists visit every year without incident. But as in all countries, it's always a good idea to use common sense and take normal precautions so that you too can experience a safe and enjoyable vacation.Belize is largely a very rural country, but its formal capital and largest municipality, Belize City, has a few urban issues found in cities all across the world. Tourists should stick to public areas, avoiding low-income neighborhoods. At nighttime, lighting can be inadequate in some areas, so traveling by taxi is always recommended even for short distances in urban areas. Some areas of Belize City have experienced gang activity, but these are far away from popular tourist attractions like the historic downtown district, the Fort George Tourism Village, and the Baron Bliss Lighthouse.Many tourists experience problems due to excessive drunkenness, which can exacerbate tensions and invite trouble. Likewise, flashing large amounts of cash is not recommended. Should an incident occur, tourists should never attempt to use violence, remembering that material items can always be replaced. Cash is widely accepted in Belize, but all major hotels, restaurants, resorts, and lodges accept credit cards, particularly Visa but also MasterCard, Discover, and American Express to a lesser extent.All legal and licensed taxis in Belize bear a green license plate. Never accept a ride from someone with a vehicle without this distinctive license plate. Registered taxis will also display a sticker listing the co-op to which they belong, something you should note down in case you accidentally forget your belongings in a taxi.It is generally recommended that visitors not travel on the roads of Belize at nighttime. Inadequate lighting, animals in the roadway, pedestrians, and poor road conditions make traveling at night hazardous. If you are renting a vehicle, make sure you park it in a secured location overnight. During the day, park it in a well-lit public area and lock up any valuables in the trunk.The climate in Belize is quite warm, so visitors are strongly urged to stay hydrated. Although the tap water is safe to drink, bottled water is sold everywhere across the country. Visitors with sensitive skin are strongly urged to use hats, sunglasses, and sunscreen to prevent getting sunburned.If you do encounter a problem, immediately contact the police or the manager of your hotel. The emergency number in Belize is 911, just as in the United States.Marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, and other narcotics are illegal in Belize. Visitors in possession of these substances can face serious jail time. Prostitution and other paid sexual services are also illegal. Public consumption of alcohol in a glass bottle is prohibited, but plastic cups and aluminum cans are permitted.Any cash or financial instruments that have a total value in excess of $10,000 must be declared to a customs agent upon entering the country. Failure to do so will result in steep fines.There are no mandatory vaccines that are required to visit Belize, but you should always check the Center for Disease Control for detailed recommendations if you are pregnant, suffer from a compromised immune system, or have an ongoing medical issue.Statistics about incidences like armed robberies and murder can be a little misleading when it comes to Belize. Belize is a largely rural country and almost all incidences of violent crime are restricted to Belize City, the nation's largest municipality. Almost all of these crimes involve local gang feuds and tourists are very rarely targeted. .Due to historical disputes stemming from the colonial era, the occasional flare-up of violence on the border between Belize and Guatemala has been documented. These incidents usually involve the confrontations between governmental forces and rarely involve tourists or civilians. Visitors crossing from Belize into Guatemala are advised to stick to common transportation routes and travel in the daytime only.With hundreds of thousands of foreign tourists entering the country every year, there is always a small chance that a visitor may become the victim of a minor crime like pickpocketing, purse snatching or burglary. Visitors are advised to never confront or resist a criminal and to immediately report all such incidences to the police.As a tropical country, Belize is more prone to contagious diseases. Mosquito-born illnesses like dengue fever occasionally experience sporadic outbreaks. Visitors to Belize are advised to use insect repellant when outdoors and to stay in facilities protected with mosquito screens and nets at night. There have been only a few isolated cases of the Zika virus in Belize, an illness primarily transmitted by mosquitos.Due to poor infrastructure, road accidents can pose a risk to anyone traveling in Belize, especially on rural roads. Public buses and some taxis are often in poor condition and may lack critical safety equipment. Visitors are advised to travel with modern vehicles only. By law, all registered taxis in Belize have to display a green license plate.Some water taxis are poorly maintained and do not have sufficient safety equipment. Some boat captains may sail in bad weather or with too many passengers on board. Visitors are advised to sail only in calm weather aboard modern vessels containing a full range of safety gear. All boat captains and dive tour operators are required to be licensed by the government of Belize. Visitors are encouraged to verify licenses, references and equipment before boarding any boat.Belize has a vast network of roadways, thoroughfares, and streets that measure over 1,900 miles (3,000 kilometers) long. Currently, only approximately 350 miles (570 kilometers) are paved, but several gravel and dirt roadways are currently being upgraded.Even the biggest "highways" in Belize are two-lane roadways. Principle arteries include:The Philip Goldson Highway, commonly known as the Northern Highway, connects Belize City to points north, including Corozal Town and the Mexican border at Chetumal. This highway measures 95 miles (153 km) long and is completely paved.The George Price Highway, commonly known as the Western Highway, connects Belize City to points west, including Belmopan, San Ignacio, and the Guatemalan border at Benque Viejo del Carmen/Melchor de Mencos. This highway measures 81 miles (130 km) long and is completely paved.The Hummingbird Highway connects Belmopan in central Belize to Dangriga on the southeastern coast. This highway measures 55 miles (89 km) long and is completely paved.The Southern Highway begins at the southern terminus of the Hummingbird Highway in Dangriga and connects to points south, including Punta Gorda and ancient Maya sites like Nim Li Punit and Lubantuun. The Southern Highway measures 97 miles (156 km) long and is completely paved.The Coastal Highway, sometimes known as the Manatee Highway, is currently a deeply rutted, gravel roadway that is almost impossible to traverse even in good weather without a four-wheel drive vehicle. Measuring just 30 miles long (48 km), the Coastal Highway connects an area west of Belize City to just north of Dangriga. The Coastal Highway is scheduled to be upgraded and paved in the next few years.Almost all other roadways in Belize, with the exception of downtown Belize City, are usually unpaved and can be very difficult to traverse without a four-wheel drive vehicle. Many secondary roads and bridges can become impassable following inclement weather.Driving is on the right side of the road with speed limits of 55 miles per hour (90 km/hour) outside residential areas and no more than 40 miles per hour (65 km/h) within towns and villages. All signs are in English, and all distances are displayed in miles.Belize's location at the north of Central America makes it an easy destination to get to from anywhere in the world.For North Americans, the main carriers are Delta, SouthWest, TACA, United and American Airlines. Unless you live in Houston, Miami, New York or Atlanta, expect to have to transfer at one of these major cities. Occasionally you may be able to catch a connection in either Los Angeles or Chicago.Unfortunately, because of how large North America is, the time to your destination varies greatly depending on where you're located. While a direct flight out of Miami is only 2.5 hours, Toronto travelers can expect a four to five hour trip with WestJet which operates seasonally from November to April every year. Even so, no matter where you depart from or who you depart with, you'll always end up at the Phillip Goldson International Airport in Belize City.Should you want a cheaper way to travel that takes a bit longer, nothing beats going by land. Try Mexico's ADO bus line, taking visitors to Belize City from Cancun and Playa del Carmen. There are also the Guatemalan Linea Dorada buses that travel from Flores, Peten and Guatemala City to Melchor de Menchos, a small Guatemalan town on the border of Belize.Travel within Belize is a Breeze!If you've ever been to a foreign country and had a tough time getting around after you arrive, Belize requests the pleasure of your company. In-country travel is so easy and effortless, we call it breezy. Approximately the same size as the state of Vermont, Belize is small enough to make sure you see everything you wish to see, because instead of traveling to and from attractions and sites, you can spend all of your time "being there." The following ground and air options should cover all of your in-country needs, and unlike other Caribbean destinations, you can travel seamlessly from place to place by bus without ever having to share the ride with noisy crowds and squawking chickens!Come and go when you please by renting a car while you're in Belize; especially if you are skilled at map reading and have a good sense of direction. That said, frequent Belize visitors rarely take this option because they know that their resort hosts specialize in getting guests where they want to go, so you can avoid car rental fees and driving strange roads. That stated, if you are the independent sort and require a car, choose between two recommended resources: Untame Belize www.untamebelize.com (phone: 011-501-630-7870) and Barefoot Rentals and Services (011-501- 629-9602) to get the best rates during your stay. Use BELIZEHUB coupon to get a discount.Whether you're in a rush to get from place to place or love flying, two Belize airliners service a limited number of cities and offer convenience and time savings. There are plenty of north-south routes ready to deliver you to these small airports expeditiously: Ambergris Caye, Belize International, Belize Municipal, Big Creek, Caye Caulker, Caye Chapel, Corozal, Dangriga, Placencia and Punta Gorda. Down the line, things will get even easier once Ambergris Caye's little runway turns into an international airport. Service from Belize is fairly inexpensive at around $68 USD one way. Your in-country carrier options are Maya-Island Air www.mayaregional.com (Belize: 011-501-223-1140; USA: 1-800-225-6732) and Tropic Air www.tropicair.com; (Belize: 011-501-226-2012; USA: 1-800-422-3435).Belize bus fares and schedules change frequently to service busy routes, but what never changes is the fact that you won't find a more affordable way to get around! This is the primary transportation method for people throughout the nation, and at any given time, eight bus lines service residents and tourists alike. Your resort host will be a font of information if you need bus service to get where you're going, but is a terrific resource for getting information on bus times, locations and fares.As you can imagine, taxis are easy to find in this thriving tourist mecca, so if you prefer not to go by bus and don't mind paying more, taxis could become your favorite form of travel while you're in Belize. Drivers eager to help offer helpful information in hopes their tips increase, but if you're already paying a premium price to travel long distances (Belize City to San Ignacio, for example, could set you back $125 USD!), you can probably afford to tip generously. While the government posts

a good party? Stick around Dangriga Town, the capital of the Stann Creek District, where festivals and celebrations are frequent and ongoing. Some are traditional affairs showcasing the Garifuna people who settled in Belize a century ago. Take drumming lessons or spot an impromptu dance party. In this area of Belize, nobody needs an excuse to express their joy.4. You'll have plenty of Mayan ruins to choose from in Belize, but if you don't get your fill, it's just a short drive to Tikal in Guatemala. Will you need to cross that border when so many ballparks, palaces, stele and temples built by former residents exist? No way. Maya centers like Xunantunich, Caracol, Altun Ha and Lubaantun showcase both buildings and objects d'art, carvings, paintings, jade, pottery, vessels, ritual objects and enough folklore to keep you happy as you (and your imagination) wander places that time seems to have forgotten.5. If you can only see one Mayan site during your visit, make it Actun Tunichil Muknal (ATM), a cave that requires stamina to reach it. After being driven to the ATM Cave, you must hike through the jungle and slog through water to access chamber after chamber of limestone caverns (lit only by beacons affixed to hard hats). Your walk ends at the biggest surprise of all, The Cathedral. This ceremonial chamber is filled with remnants of rituals performed here: a crystal-encrusted skeleton, human bones, altars, pottery and artifacts. You must be accompanied by a licensed guide since this fragile cave is protected by laws, rules and regulations. Even cameras are prohibited.6. There's no sign that reads "Welcome to Hiker Heaven" at Belize's international airport, but there should be. Giving in to your inner trekker not only gets you up close and personal with the plants, creatures, jungles, flowers and forests of Belize, but you'll get a lesson in ecological responsibility as well. Whether your taste runs to guided walks, mountain trails or you're up for wandering on your own with map in hand, trails and paths are marked, so rest assured, you won't get too lost. Don't want to hike? Get yourself some wheels. If your lodging doesn't loan bikes to guests, there's likely a rental resource nearby, so you've no excuse to skip exercising when you visit.7. Go up a creek with a paddle, down a river or do both courtesy of Belize's network of rivers that connect so efficiently, Belize commerce once relied completely on these waterways. The largest among them are the Mopan and Macal Rivers that flow into the Belize River; you can canoe, sail or kayak these waters so ask your resort host to fix you up. Alternately, take a fishing cruise on the New River, Sarstoon or Temash. Adventure-seekers will find whitewater challenges in some places while those seeking a slow and easy cruise won't miss a photo opportunity along these jungle-edged waters.8. The Museum of Belize is headquartered in Belize City at the junction of Gabourel and Hutson Streets. It's a nostalgic remnant of Colonial British architecture with a fascinating history. Built originally to house prisoners in the 1800s, the museum was fully-functional as late as 1993, at which point, it was restored and turned into a museum. You'll still see cells, graffiti, chains and balls, but they're used as decoration to enhance permanent exhibits that include romantic aspects of Belize's history: Maya artifacts, treasures left behind by buccaneers and pirates and a history of Belize's labour movement.9. Commune with the animals housed at the Belize Zoo; they're all treated like honoured guests rather than caged specimens clinging to iron bars. Designed to emulate natural habitats, the zoo is is home to a jungle of native plants, trees and flowers so more than 150 animals indigenous to Belize feel right at home here. This special population is composed of rehabilitated and orphaned animals in addition to those born here at the zoo. Located west of Belize City, the Zoo is across the road from the Tropical Education Center. It's worth the drive to visit both.10. Go big or go home! Far be it from us to remind you that life awaits back home, but you can't leave Belize until you see the stars in the nation's constellation: Ambergris Caye, Caye Caulker and the Placencia Peninsula, known as the Big Three. Each area has a flavour and vibe that distinguishes it from the others. You will want for nothing when you divide your time between them, because merchants and residents alike adore tourists. Expect gourmet dining, ethnic eateries, attractions and a collection of lodgings that is so extensive, if you can't find the accommodation you crave at each location, it might not exist.Belize National SymbolsBelize only gained complete independence in 1981, but this young country is rich with powerful national symbols. Perhaps the best known is the national flag, the only one of its kind to depict human beings. Belize also has several national symbols of wildlife due to the country's highly diverse ecosystem and lush natural habitats. Below are the national symbols of Belize:Belize National Tree The national tree of Belize is the mahogany (Latin name: Swietenia macrophilia). Not only are mahogany trees resplendent in their own right, often soaring more than 100 feet into the sky, but their straight trunks and rich grain interiors were what attracted a motley crew of English seamen and former pirates to settle in the country. Because these English settlers coalesced in the coastal areas, they became known as Baymen and played an important role in Belize's history. Mahogany trees propagate by growing small pear-shaped fruits (that are inedible for people) once a year. When the fruits mature, they split into five parts, each part containing a seed with a "wing" that allows it to be carried away by the wind. Left untouched, a mahogany tree will reach its full maturity in around 70 to 80 years. Today, mahogany logging is strictly regulated by law.Belize National Flower The national flower of Belize is the black orchid (Latin name: Encyclia cohleatum). Several hundred different species of orchids flourish in Belize and primarily grow on the limbs of trees. The "black" orchid is actually a flower with green/yellow petals and a central petal with deep purple or brown colors. Black orchids can grow up to six inches (15 cm) high and have two or three yellow/green leaves. Their Latin name means "clamshell" because their biggest petal (the "black" one) looks like the inside of a clamshell.Belize National Bird The national bird of Belize is the keel-billed toucan (Latin name: Ramphastos solfurantus). Toucans are some of the most iconic birds in the world, and the keel-billed is notable for having bright yellow chest feathers and a huge beak with neon green and red colors. Toucans measure around 20 inches (50 cm) long and are excellent fliers. They primarily consist on fruit and prefer to nest in the side of trees, using their big beaks to enlarge existing holes. Toucans emit a continuous "croaking" sound that is very similar to the sound that frogs make. Toucans usually lay between two and four eggs that are then protected and incubated by both parents for six to seven weeks.Belize National Animal Baird's Tapir, often known locally as a "Mountain Cow" (Latin name: Tapirello Bairdii) is the largest indigenous land animal in Belize. Tapirs are not related to cows in any way but are vegetarian grazers who must spend almost all of their waking hours eating. Baird's Tapirs are primarily nocturnal animals and are rarely spotted during the day. Baird's tapirs are approximately the same size as a donkey but can weigh up to 600 pounds (270 kg) or more. Baird's tapirs are extremely good swimmers and spend most of their time in and around water and mud shallows. Baird's Tapirs have a dark brown coat with small white accents, particularly around the face. Baird's tapirs are named for Spencer Fullerton Baird, an American naturalist who documented the animals in 1843. In Spanish, they are often called "dantas."The Coat of ArmsThe Belize coat of arms is used on the national flag as well as official documents. The outer part of the coat of arms is a ring or wreath of 25 two-lobed green leaves (for a total of 50 leaves) from an unspecified plant. Inside the wreath in the lower part of the center is the national motto, Sub Umbra Florero, which is Latin for "In the shade, I flourish." Prominently displayed in the coat of arms are two shirtless, shoeless men wearing white trousers. The man on the right is of darker complexion and is holding a paddle in his right hand which rests on his left shoulder. The man on the left is of lighter complexion and is holding an ax in his right hand which is resting on his left shoulder. Originally, the two men were meant to be European and African, but the current version of the flag is now meant to depict two persons of color from the Creole and Mestizo cultures respectively. Between the two men is a shield divided into three segments. The bottom segment has a light blue background and features a sailing ship on a dark blue sea. The upper left segment has a white background and shows a beating ax crossed with a paddle. The upper right segment has a yellow background and features an ax crossed with a two-person handsaw. These four tools represent the logging industry. In the center of the ring but behind the shield is a fully mature mahogany tree.Belize National Flag The Belize flag consists of a royal blue field with one thin red stripe on the top and one thin red stripe at the bottom. In the center of the flag, the coat of arms is prominently displayed. The blue and white colors on the flag represent the two political parties present in Belize when the country gained independence, the People's United Party (PUP) and the United Democratic Party (UDP). The red stripes were added in 1981 to make the flag more inclusive.Internet Access In BelizeOnce an expensive service only available in limited urban areas, internet is now widely available throughout Belize for very affordable prices.All top resorts, restaurants, lodges, and hotels offer high-speed wireless internet for customers. For residents, internet service is available from DigiCell, BTL, and Smart, including monthly subscriptions and affordable pre-paid cards that work all across the country.Many retirees choose to get a DSL (sometimes called ADSL) line in their homes. Functioning much like a traditional home telephone line, DSL cable gives retirees access to high-speed broadband internet so that they can enjoy stock trading, chatting with friends and family, streaming movies, and managing businesses. Both DigiCell and Smart offer several tiers of service, including unlimited internet starting at just 55 Belizean dollars (US $27.50) per month in select locations.The national telephone company, Belize Telemedia Limited, also offers high-speed broadband internet via DSL cable in select locations starting at just 39 Belizean dollars (US $19.50) per month.Wireless internet is also available from both DigiCell and Smart, including pre-paid bundles and monthly subscriptions suitable for cell phones, tablets, and personal computers. Both DigiCell and Smart also offer "combo" plans that include unlimited text messages, internet data usage, and minutes for voice calls. There is also the option of using a MiFi device (wireless router) that allows you to easily connect all of your devices to the internet anywhere in the country, including the offshore islands.Another choice for customers is satellite internet that provides connectivity in even the remotest rural areas. Several companies, including American and Canadian ones, offer satellite access, although it is not cheap. Be careful when choosing a satellite internet provider as some companies operate without paying the required taxes and access fees to the government of Belize.Formerly, the government charged exorbitant prices for all access points to the internet as well as blocking Skype and other VOIP services. This is no longer true. Unfortunately, a lot of articles on the internet contain outdated and misleading information. Today, retirees can enjoy free wireless access from numerous hotspots throughout the country or pay for reliable, high-speed internet from local providers. Get a copy of The Ultimate Belize Bucket List! Written by Larry Waight, a local with more than twenty years of experience in the travel industry, the book is packed with tips, information, and recommendations about all of the best things to see and do in Belize. These rankings are informed by Tripadvisor data—we consider traveller reviews, ratings, number of page views, and user location. Learn how recommendations for the rest of the page are selectedHalf Day Snorkeling Tour Caye CaulkerFrom quick jaunts to full-day outings.Cockscomb Wildlife Sanctuary Cave tubing from San IgnacioHorseback Riding in HopkinsCockscomb Wildlife Sanctuary Cockscomb Wildlife Sanctuary Zipline & River Tubing, BelizeCrystal Cave tubing, Pools & Zip-Lines ATV Excursions – Jungle RideJungle Jeep Adventure from Belize CityCave tubing from San Ignacio*Likely to sell out: Based on Viator's booking data and information from the provider from the past 30 days, it seems likely this experience will sell out through Viator, a Tripadvisor company. FlyAwayTuffRegion of Waterloo, Canada21 contributionsGreat hotel! best location! great room. Love the island, wonderfully relaxing. Water is warm, crystal clear, great to swim in. The Meso American reef is a short boat ride. worth it!This review is the subjective opinion of a Tripadvisor member and not of Tripadvisor LLC. Tripadvisor performs checks on reviews.Swim with an entire aquariumAmazing opportunity to swim with so many animals. We saw a loggerhead turtle, eagle rays, snapper, jack, angel fish, nurse sharks… so many other animals!Review of: Hol Chan Marine ReserveThis review is the subjective opinion of a Tripadvisor member and not of Tripadvisor LLC. Tripadvisor performs checks on reviews.We did this tour with MayaWalks. Our guide Richard was super knowledgeable and helpful. The tour itself is fascinating as you got an insight into the way of the Maya. We learned so much. Special shout out to MayaWalks as they were excellent as a tour company.Review of: Atm Cave (actun Tunichil Muknal)This review is the subjective opinion of a Tripadvisor member and not of Tripadvisor LLC. Tripadvisor performs checks on reviews.Theresa CA fun afternoon with breathtaking views at the top!We had a great afternoon climbing the ruins! You pull over to the side of the road at the "entrance" which is a break in the roadside stands and wait for the hand crank ferry to cross. They'll guide you on (passengers have to get out and ride standing). This in itself is an experience! Before you cross the ferry you can hire a guide but we didn't feel it was necessary. Once you cross the river you drive a short ways to the parking lot and the pay the 12.50US per person entrance fee. We were worried about the heat in the afternoon but there is shade and lots of wind at the top and passing clouds. We wandered around and climbed the structures. They're labeled but they don't have descriptions or explanations. A guide would explain and give context or you could look up on your own. We really liked going at our own pace since we had so many other tours planned in Belize. We climbed up the tallest and it is a breathtaking view! We've only been to Tulum before which is gorgeous but getting to climb on these was just amazing! After we were planning to go to Cahal Pech in town but our kids had enough so we skipped. We spent an hour ish here.This review is the subjective opinion of a Tripadvisor member and not of Tripadvisor LLC. Tripadvisor performs checks on reviews.WTH9New Jersey590 contributionsSaw this awesome site both above and below. Did a 3 tank scuba dive which included 2 sites on the Lighthouse reef. Blue hole was actually a very cool dive. Initially I only booked it to be able to access the 2 reef dives and it turned out to be awesome inside the Blue Hole. Dropped down to about 140ft saw a few sharks and swam around the cave inside. Lighthouse reef was also excellent, very colorful and full of marine life. Worth every penny. Flight with Maya air was not great, Tropic air seems to be the better airline for the island. However it is still incredible to see from above. Must see/do in the area.Review of: Great Blue HoleThis review is the subjective opinion of a Tripadvisor member and not of Tripadvisor LLC. Tripadvisor performs checks on reviews.travelsonitsstomachWashington, DC159 contributionsWe have snorkeled all over the world. In this site, you will find dozens of sting rays and nurse sharks coming at you from all directions. Some of the Carribean rays are huge (but not as big as the ones in the Caymans). You can stand on the sand bar but have to be careful you are not stepping on a ray.Review of: Shark Ray AlleyThis review is the subjective opinion of a Tripadvisor member and not of Tripadvisor LLC. Tripadvisor performs checks on reviews.Stephanie WVernon, Connecticut, United States22 contributionsWe had a great time at this small and mighty zoo. The jaguars are absolutely beautiful. We did the tapir and jaguar encounters and they were incredible. Our keeper Jahira was very knowledgeable and answered all of our questions. They also have a cute gift shop and cafe!Review of: The Belize ZooThis review is the subjective opinion of a Tripadvisor member and not of Tripadvisor LLC. Tripadvisor performs checks on reviews.ckflentjeMinneapolis, MN25 contributionsDIY Tour of Caracol Mayan RuinsWe rented an AWD (Jeep Cherokee) from Crystal Car Rental at the airport and stayed in San Ignacio. The drive to Caracol from San Ignacio took about 1 hour and 50 minutes. No 4X4 is needed. There was no place on the drive where you need high clearance.Before arriving we did some research on Caracol, so we did not need to hire a guide or tour operator. The site did have a small visitor center with some information.On the way back, we stopped at Rio Frio Caves and Pools, which was nice after spending the day in low 90 degree heat.Review of: The Maya Ruins of CaracolThis review is the subjective opinion of a Tripadvisor member and not of Tripadvisor LLC. Tripadvisor performs checks on reviews.mantruNottingham, UK50 contributionsGood vibe and nice to chill outWe initially weren't too bothered about visiting Secret Beach as thought it might be a bit loud and trashy but we decided to venture there as the weather was really windy on the other side of the caye and we were advised it would be better there. We had a golf cart for a couple of days and it was a bit of a novelty driving it around so we were happy to make the long and bumpy journey there.We went to Pirates beach bar (literally the first bar you come to) as didn't think we would stay long but ended up being there all day! We had beds right at the waters edge and also spent time on the table&benches in the water. There was a nice vibe and it was a great spot for people watching. Service was a bit relaxed (we ordered a beer that never came) but the staff were all very friendly.The next day was still windy and we couldn't do the trip we had planned so we headed back to Secret Beach again as had enjoyed it so much! We headed to the area to the left this time and had another enjoyable day at the Swing bar, the sun beds and tables here were a bit tired and shabby but the swings were a lot of fun and provided lots of Instagram worthy pics!Two days there were definitely enough for us as we like to be more active and get out to do trips but really glad that we did check it out and spend time there. We stopped at The Truck Stop and Stella's on the way back which were also both great.This review is the subjective opinion of a Tripadvisor member and not of Tripadvisor LLC. Tripadvisor performs checks on reviews.Simon ZLakewood, CO4 contributionsA Must-Visit in San Ignacio!We loved visiting the Green Iguana Project—such a cool and meaningful experience. Our guide, Jorge, was fantastic. He was super knowledgeable, passionate about the project, and made the whole tour fun and engaging.It's amazing to see the work they're doing to protect and reintroduce these beautiful creatures. You get to learn a lot, interact with the iguanas, and really understand why this conservation effort matters.If you're in San Ignacio, definitely make time to visit and support this important project. It's worth it!Review of: Green Iguana Conservation ProjectThis review is the subjective opinion of a Tripadvisor member and not of Tripadvisor LLC. Tripadvisor performs checks on reviews.lawgodNortheast, US80 contributionsGreat ruins - very accessible to town and fun for kids.Very unique Inca ruins, wonderfully preserved. It is wooded so it is shaded from the sun and heat. And they permit you to climb on the ruins including to the altar on top of one of the pyramids. The museum isn't that great and we didn't have a guide, but you were still able to get a good feel of the place from the map. Wasn't crowded and didn't feel touristy unlike so many ruins in the area. Small but big enough especially if you have kids in tow. Take a photo of the map so then you can explore the nooks and crannies including the ball courts around the periphery.This review is the subjective opinion of a Tripadvisor member and not of Tripadvisor LLC. Tripadvisor performs checks on reviews.hascarrotsTel Aviv, Israel21 contributionsThe drive was challengingAn amazing place, but be prepared for a long, slow, bumpy, dirt road. Leave plenty of time. You don't need 4WD, but the car will need to be able to handle a bumpy dirt road.Review of: Cockscomb Basin Wildlife PreserveThis review is the subjective opinion of a Tripadvisor member and not of Tripadvisor LLC. Tripadvisor performs checks on reviews.These questions and answers were created by AI, using the most common questions travellers ask in the forums.What are the transportation options within Belize?According to forum posts, local flights via Tropic Air or Maya Island Air are available for intercity travel within Belize, particularly from Belize City to the cayes like Ambergris Caye and Caye Caulker. Additionally, multiple shuttle services are mentioned, such as Discounted Belize Shuttles and Tours, William's Belize Shuttle, and Teddy Bear Shuttle, among others, which can be booked for various routes across the country.Travelers have called out that public buses are a viable option for traveling between major cities and towns on the mainland. These buses are described as old school buses without air conditioning but are cost-effective. Taxis are also available for shorter distances within cities and towns.Some users noted that water taxis are necessary for getting to and from the cayes. Private transfer services are also frequently used for more comfortable long-distance travel within Belize and can be arranged in advance, with several operators offering this service.For some specific routes like Belize City to Manta Island, return boat transfers are included in the accommodation package, highlighting that some resorts offer their own dedicated transportation solutions.This summary was generated by AI from Tripadvisor forum posts. What should I know about visiting the ATM Cave in Belize?According to forum posts, Pacz Tours is highly recommended for the ATM Cave tour. Travelers have called out their good experiences with the company, noting the organization and the inclusion of meals such as rum punch and a vegetarian option post-tour.Some travelers said that the ATM Cave tour is an all-day event and it's advisable to book early, especially during busy times, as the number of visitors per day is limited to preserve the site. It's important to note that no personal items, including cameras and phones, are allowed in the cave, which ensures the preservation of the natural environment.For many users, the physical demands of the tour are significant, involving climbing, crawling, and swimming. Appropriate attire includes sturdy water shoes and comfortable clothing that can get wet. Glasses can be worn with a securing strap, as head immersion in water is minimal.The packed lunch provided during the tour is typically local cuisine, such as Belizean rice and beans with chicken, and is enjoyed in a remote dining area near the cave for logistical reasons.This summary was generated by AI from Tripadvisor forum posts. What are the best accommodation options in Belize?According to forum posts, travelers seeking a blend of privacy and convenience prefer locations like Ambergris Caye and Placencia. Ambergris Caye offers proximity to nightlife and restaurants, while Placencia is noted for quieter, more laid-back experiences closer to nature. Both locations are recommended for their access to beaches and local amenities.Some travelers have expressed a preference for smaller, boutique-style hotels or private cabanas over large resorts to enhance the intimacy of their stay. Options like Ocean Breeze Resort and Caribbean Beach Cabanas in Placencia are highlighted for their excellent location, on-site amenities like pools and bars, and proximity to local dining and shopping.For budget considerations, forum users have discussed accommodations with room rates around or under $200 per night. However, prices can vary, especially when additional amenities or proximity to popular areas are factored in. Travelers often weigh the benefits of slightly higher costs against the convenience and quality of the accommodation.This summary was generated by AI from Tripadvisor forum posts. What are the ADO bus routes between Belize and Cancun?According to forum posts, the direct ADO bus route between Cancun and Belize City was discontinued following the COVID-19 pandemic and has not resumed. Travelers seeking to journey between these locations by bus must use alternative routes involving transfers.Some travelers mentioned that you can take an ADO bus from Cancun to Chetumal and then transfer to a Belizean bus to complete the trip to Belize City. This route involves multiple changes and border crossings, which may extend travel time significantly.As of the latest updates in 2023, the ADO route from Belize City to Cancun has resumed with a departure at 7:00 PM daily from the Belize City bus terminal. The route includes stops at several locations such as Orange Walk and Corozal before reaching Cancun.This summary was generated by AI from Tripadvisor forum posts. What are some family-friendly activities in Belize?According to forum posts, families with young children can enjoy activities like beach days where toddlers might play with just a bucket and a shovel. For those seeking a more structured experience, the glass-bottom boat tours allow children to view marine life and coral formations safely from the boat.Some travelers said that excursions such as the Monkey River safari boat tour and visits to local waterfalls are suitable for families with young children. These activities provide a gentle adventure into the natural habitats of Belize without the rigor of more intensive jungle treks.Travelers have called out specific activities that are both fun and educational for children, such as chocolate making and tasting sessions, interacting with butterflies and iguanas, and hearing howler monkeys. These activities are engaging for children and provide a learning experience tied to the local culture and wildlife of Belize.For many users, visiting smaller Mayan sites like Cahal Pech in San Ignacio has been recommended as these locations are easily accessible and allow for some safe exploration without the challenges of climbing large structures.This summary was generated by AI from Tripadvisor forum posts. Where can I experience wildlife in Belize?According to forum posts, Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary is frequently recommended for wildlife viewing in Belize. Travelers have suggested visiting at different times, such as early morning or night, to increase the chances of sighting various species. The Belize Zoo is also highly recommended as a place to see a variety of animals in one location.Some travelers mentioned the Community Baboon Sanctuary for viewing baboons, although sightings are not guaranteed. For those interested in bird watching, Crooked Tree is suggested, especially for a relaxed pace and activities like lagoon boat tours and village walking tours.Forum users have recommended Chan Chich Lodge for a more immersive wildlife experience, particularly for bird watchers and hikers. La Milpa and Hill Bank eco-lodges are also mentioned as good options for experiencing wildlife, particularly for those on a budget. These lodges are part of the Programme for Belize and offer a chance to see diverse birdlife and other forest animals.This summary was generated by AI from Tripadvisor forum posts. What are the highlights of visiting Placencia?According to forum posts, Placencia is favored for its large beaches, with some travelers specifically highlighting the swimmability of the area. Water activities such as snorkeling, kayaking, and relaxing by the sea are popular, with specific mentions of enjoying the serene beach environment.Travelers have called out various adventure activities near Placencia. These include visiting the Cockscomb Wildlife Sanctuary and the Monkey River Tour. Other recommended excursions include zip lining, waterfall rappelling at Bocawina, and exploring nearby Maya sites, providing a mix of adrenaline-pumping activities and cultural exploration.For many users, the local culture is a highlight with opportunities to engage in Garifuna drumming sessions and visit a cacao farm for a chocolate-making tour. Day trips to places like Silk Cayes for snorkeling and the Jaguar Preserve for hikes are also highly recommended, enhancing the Placencia experience with diverse and enriching local interactions.This summary was generated by AI from Tripadvisor forum posts. How do I choose a tour provider in Belize?According to forum posts, selecting a reputable tour provider in Belize often depends on the specific experiences or areas you want to explore. Some travelers recommended Katie Valks Belize Trips for comprehensive planning, while others suggested St. Leonards Tours for private experiences. Additionally, Edgar from Wilderbelize was noted for providing great experiences.For many users, the quality of the guide is crucial. In Belize, tour guides must be licensed and undergo training, which means most are well-equipped to provide informative tours. However, some travelers have suggested that the quality can vary significantly, so it's worth seeking out guides who come highly recommended through reviews or personal testimonials.Some travelers said that while most tours offer similar itineraries, especially to popular destinations like Tikal and ATM Cave, the guides' knowledge and delivery can greatly enhance the experience. It was advised to read reviews and consider paying a premium for more experienced guides to ensure a more enjoyable and informative trip.This summary was generated by AI from Tripadvisor forum posts. Tripadvisor is not responsible for these answers or any opinions in them. Please read full forum posts for more details and information.The above attraction descriptions were created by AI, using information and phrases commonly found in reviews users submitted to Tripadvisor. Tripadvisor did not create and is not responsible for any of the above attraction descriptions. Please read full traveller reviews for more details and information.Reviews are the subjective opinion of Tripadvisor members and not of Tripadvisor LLC. Tripadvisor performs checks on reviews as part of our industry-leading trust & safety standards. Read our transparency report to learn more. Geography & Travel Countries of the World Belize, country located on the northeast coast of Central America. Belize, which was known as British Honduras until 1973, was the last British colony on the American mainland. Its prolonged path to independence was marked by a unique international campaign (even while it was still a British colony) against the irredentist claims of its neighbour Guatemala. Belize achieved independence on September 21, 1981, but it has retained its historical link with the United Kingdom through membership in the Commonwealth.Belize is often thought of as a Caribbean country in Central America because it has a history similar to that of English-speaking Caribbean nations. Indeed, Belize's institutions and official language reflect its history as a British colony. However, its culture is more typical of that of other Central American countries. Belize's small population is ethnically diverse and includes a large proportion of immigrants. Since the 1970s, migration has shifted Belize's ethnic composition from a predominantly Creole (mixed African and British descent) population to one in which mestizos (in Belize, people of mixed Mayan and Spanish ancestry) make up half of the total inhabitants. Belize has one of the most stable and democratic political systems in Central America. After its original capital, Belize City, was ravaged by a hurricane in 1961, a new capital, Belmopan, was built inland, about 50 miles (80 km) west of Belize City, which remains the country's commercial and cultural centre as well as its most populous city. Audio File: National anthem of Belize Head Of Government: Prime Minister: John Briceño Capital: Belmopan Population: (2025 est.) 417,300 Head Of State: British Monarch: King Charles III, represented by Governor-General: Froyla Tzalam Form Of Government: constitutional monarchy with two legislative houses (Senate [121, 2]; House of Representatives [312]) Official Language: English Official Religion: none Official Name: Belize Total Area (Sq Km): 22,965 Total Area (Sq Mi): 8,867 Monetary Unit: Belize dollar (BZ$) Population Rank: (2025) 178 Population Projection 2030: 491,000 Density: Persons Per Sq Mi: (2025) 47.1 Density: Persons Per Sq Km: (2025) 18.2 Urban-Rural Population: Urban: (2022) 44.6% Rural: (2022) 55.4% Life Expectancy At Birth : Male: (2022) 74.2 years Female: (2022) 77.5 years Literacy: Percentage Of Population Age 15 And Over Literate: Male: (2015) 90% Female: (2015) 92% Gni (U.S.$ '000,000): (2023) 2,955 Gni Per Capita (U.S.$): (2023) 7,190 The name Belize is traditionally believed to have been derived from the Spanish pronunciation of the last name of Peter Wallace, a Scottish buccaneer who may have begun a settlement at the mouth of the Belize River about 1638. It is also possible that the name evolved from the Mayan word belix ("muddy water") or belikin ("land facing the sea"). Situated south of the Yucatán Peninsula, Belize is a land of mountains, swamps, and tropical jungle. It is bounded by Mexico to the north, Guatemala to the west and south, and the Caribbean Sea to the east. The country has a 174-mile (280-km) coastline. Maya MountainsMaya Mountains, southern Belize.The southern half of the country is dominated by the rugged Maya Mountains, a plateau of igneous rock cut by erosion into hills and valleys that stretch in a southwesterly to northeasterly direction. The Cockscomb Range, a spur of the Maya Mountains, runs toward the sea and rises to Doyle's Delight. The northern half of the country consists of limestone lowlands and swamps less than 200 feet (60 metres) above sea level. Which Country Is Larger By Area? Quiz The lowlands are drained by the navigable Belize River (on which stands Belize City), the New River, and the Hondo River (which forms the northern frontier with Mexico). Both the New and the Hondo rivers drain into Chetumal Bay to the north. South of Belize City the coastal plain is crossed by short river valleys. Along the coast is the Belize Barrier Reef, the second largest barrier reef in the world, which is fringed by dozens of small islands called cays. The reef reserve system was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1996. Belize's most fertile soils are the limestone soils found in the northern half of the country and in the coastal plain and river valleys in the south. Last updated on December 18th, 2024 at 08:22 pmPhysical Map of Belize showing its coast with the Caribbean Sea, the Belize Barrier Reef, cayes (islands), atolls and borders with Mexico to the north and and Guatemala to the west and south.Belize (/bəˈliːz/ is a Caribbean and Central American country on the north-eastern coast of Central America. It is bordered by Mexico to the north, the Caribbean Sea to the east, and Guatemala to the west and south. It also shares a sea boundary with Honduras to the southeast. It has an area of 8,867 sq mi (22,970 square kilometres) and a population of 441,471 (2022 estimate). Its mainland is 180 miles long (290 km) and 68 mi wide (110 km). It is the least populated and least densely populated country in Central America. Its population growth rate of 1.89% per year (2019 estimate) is the second-highest in the region and one of the highest in the Western Hemisphere. Its capital is Belmopan, and its largest city is Belize City. Belize is often thought of as a Caribbean country in Central America because it has a history similar to that of English-speaking Caribbean nations. Belize's institutions and official language reflect its history as a British colony.Capital: BelmopanArea: 22,966 sq kmPopulation: 441,471Language: English, Belizean Creole, plus Spanish, Mayan, German, Garifuna, ChineseLife expectancy: 71 years (men) 77 years (women)The currency of Belize is the dollar (ISO code BZD), divided into 100 cents.The Belizean dollar — sometimes written as "BZ$" or just as a dollar sign: "$" — has been fixed to the US dollar (USD) at a 2:1 ratio since 1978 (i.e. BZ$2 = US$1).Because of this consistent exchange rate, US dollars are widely accepted, but you should be careful to clarify which "dollars" you're talking about when negotiating prices. It's often better to assume Belize dollars because many merchants will jump on your uncertainty and attempt to double their price by saying, "No, in US dollars". Change can also be given in US dollars or a combination of US and Belizean dollar bills and coins. Belize dollars come in denominations of BZ$2, 5, 10, 20, 50, and 100. B$1 and smaller amounts are coins. The 25-cent coin is often called a "shilling."All visitors are required to have sufficient funds, US$75 per day, and documents required for their next destination.If entering by land from Mexico, you will be charged a fee of M$533 (Mexican pesos) (as of May 2018) by Mexican immigration unless you can show proof that you paid the immigration fee when you entered Mexico. Your FMM tourist card is not enough. If you crossed at a land border, you'll need the actual receipt from when you paid the fee. If you reached Mexico via a commercial flight, you've may have already paid the fee with your airfare, but the border guards here do not care. You might be able to convince them if you have a print-out of an itemized receipt from the airline showing that this specific fee was included.The Prime Minister if Belize Juan (John) Antonio BriceñoHead of state: King Charles III is the head of state, represented by a governor generalPrime minister: Juan (Johnny) Antonio BriceñoOn 11 November 2020, the People's United Party (PUP), led by Johnny Briceño, defeated the United Democratic Party (UDP) for the first time since 2003, having won 26 seats out of 31 to form a government.In 2008, Guatemala and Belize held referendums in which voters in both countries decided to submit the issue of their historic border dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). As of June 2022, both countries confirmed that they had submitted their initial briefs to ICJ for consideration.Government: Type: Parliamentary democracy. Independence: 21 September 1981 from the UK. Constitution: 21 September 1981. Geography: Location: Central America, bordering the Caribbean Sea, between Guatemala and Mexico. Terrain: plain coastline covered with mangrove swamps, low mountains in interior, highest point Doyle's Delight (1124 m).Belize's climate is subtropical and characterized by a dry season that lasts from late February to May, and a wet season that occurs from June to November. The wet season is interrupted by a dry period in August to September. The mean temperature in Belize City is 74°F (23°C) in December and 84°F (29°C) in July. The amount of rainfall varies across the country, with Corozal receiving around 50 inches (1,270 mm) of rain annually, Punta Gorda in the south receiving 175 inches (4,445 mm), and Belize City receiving approximately 75 inches (1,900 mm) of rain per year. There are, however, significant variations in rainfall from year to year throughout the country. The trade winds blow onshore for most of the year, while northerly winds bring cooler and drier air from September to December. From July to November, hurricanes (tropical cyclones) pose a threat. A hurricane in 2000 caused severe damage to Belize's infrastructure and displaced tens of thousands of Belizeans.Belize is located to the south of the Yucatán Peninsula, and it is a country of mountains, swamps, and tropical jungle. It shares borders with Mexico to the north, Guatemala to the west and south, and the Caribbean Sea to the east. The coastline of Belize stretches 174 miles (280 km).In Belize, the southern portion of the country is primarily characterized by the Maya Mountains, which are rugged and dominate the landscape. The Maya Mountains are a plateau made of igneous rock that has been eroded over time, creating hills and valleys that run in a southwesterly to northeasterly direction. The Cockscomb Range is a spur of the Maya Mountains that extends towards the sea and includes Doyle's Delight, which is the highest point in Belize. On the other hand, the northern half of the country consists of limestone lowlands and swamps that are less than 200 feet (60 meters) above sea level.The lowlands in Belize are drained by several rivers, including the Belize River, which flows through Belize City, the New River, and the Hondo River that forms the country's northern border with Mexico. Both the New and the Hondo rivers eventually drain into Chetumal Bay to the north. To the south of Belize City, the coastal plain is intersected by short river valleys. The Belize Barrier Reef is located along the coast and is the second-largest barrier reef system in the world. It is fringed by numerous small islands called cays. The reef reserve system was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1996. The most fertile soils in Belize are limestone soils, which are primarily found in the northern half of the country and in the coastal plain and river valleys in the south.In the land of Belize, ancestry flows like a river, with every drop from immigrant heritage. Mestizos, born from Mayan and Spanish union, form the largest body, numbering half the population and residing in the interior's solitude. The Maya, rooted in Yucatec, Mopán, and Kekchí, make their presence felt, numbering a tenth of the land. Like a mosaic of cultures, Belize is a beautiful blend of diversity.People: Nationality: Noun and adjective–Belizean(s). GNI per capita PPP: $ 7 635 (year) Ethnic groups: Mestizo, Creole, Ketchi, Yucatec and Mopan Mayas, Garifuna and East Indian. Religions: Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, other Protestant, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist.Languages: English (official), Creole, Spanish, Garifuna, Mayan.Xunantunich Maya site in western Belize is one of many relics of the ancient Maya civilisation. and one one of the main tourism attractions.Belize's population is estimated to be 441,471 in 2022. Belize's total fertility rate in 2009 was 3.6 children per woman. Its birth rate was 22.9 births/1,000 population (2018 estimate), and the death rate was 4.2 deaths/1,000 population (2018 estimate). A substantial ethnic-demographic shift has been occurring since 1980 when the Creole/Mestizo ratio shifted from 58/38 to currently 26/53, due to many Creoles moving to the US and a rising Mestizo birth rate and migration from El Salvador.Literacy: 76%.Natural resources: Arable land, timber, seafood, minerals.Agriculture Products: Sugar, citrus fruits and juices, bananas, mangoes, papayas, honey, corn, beans, rice, cattle (12.7% of GDP).Industries: Garment production, food processing, tourism, construction.Exports partners: UK 30.8%, USA 18.7%, Nigeria 6.7%, Trinidad and Tobago 4.8%, Ireland 4.2%, Jamaica 4.2% (2015)Imports partners: USA 26.6%, Mexico 11.7%, Cuba 10.2%, Guatemala 9%, China 7.5%, Trinidad and Tobago 5.6% (2015)16th-19th centuries – The Spanish arrive; Spanish rule ends in 1862 when Belize is formally declared a British crown colony and named British Honduras.1954 – Constitutional reforms give Belize limited autonomy; general elections won by People's United Party (PUP), led by George Price.1964 – New constitution gives Belize full autonomy and introduces universal adult suffrage and a two-chamber parliament. In 1973, the country changes its name from British Honduras to Belize.1981 – Belize becomes independent with George Price as prime minister, but Guatemala refuses to recognise it. About 1,500 British troops remain to defend the country against Guatemalan territorial claims. Guatemala recognises Belize's independence in 1992 although the territorial conflict remains.2002 – Belize, Guatemala agree on a draft settlement to their long-standing border dispute at talks brokered by the Organisation of American States (OAS). The deal, which proposed referendums in both countries, is rejected by Guatemala in 2003.2005 – Rioting breaks out in the capital during a wave of anti-government protests.2011 – Belize is added to US blacklist of countries considered to be major producers or transit routes for illegal drugs.2008 – Guatemala and Belize hold referendums and submit the border dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for arbitration.2022 – Both countries submit their initial briefs on the border dispute to ICJ for consideration.Maya culture festival at Lubaantun Maya pyramid southern Belize.Destination Belize, a country on the eastern coast of northern Central America, bordering the Caribbean Sea in east. It was known as British Honduras until 1973. Belize was granted independence on 21 September 1981, it is since then a Commonwealth realm, with King Charles III as its monarch and head of state.Border countries are Guatemala and Mexico, and it shares maritime borders with Honduras.Territorial disputes between the UK and Guatemala delayed the independence of Belize until 1981. Guatemala refused to recognize the new nation until 1992.border countries: Guatemala, Mexico. Related country: United Kingdom.Government of Belize Official Belize government site.Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Belize Official site of the ministry.Diplomatic MissionsEmbassy of