



# My Beautiful Belize

TRAVEL PUBLICATION

FREE



Celebrating  
all of Belize!

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2017  
VOL. 05 #08



# From the Editor *Tamara Sniffin*

September celebrations are serious business in Belize! This year we will be kicking off the festivities with the 219<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of St. George's Caye on September 10<sup>th</sup>. The historic battle, fought off the coast of what is now Belize, lasted from 3<sup>rd</sup> September to 10, 1798, and took place between an invading force from Mexico, attempting to assert Spanish claims to the territory. A small force of resident woodcutters called Baymen, along with their black slaves, fought for their livelihood. After the final two and a half-hour battle, ravaged by sickness, the Spaniards withdrew and the British declared themselves winners.

The 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Belize's independence is celebrated on September 21<sup>st</sup>, and is by far the most reveled holiday of the year. Our young country is bursting with patriotism, and people of all ages celebrate this day in grand style! If you are visiting Belize during this time you must check out one of our "Jump Up" Independence Day Parades! The colors, costumes, music and dancing is the epitome of Belizean culture.

During this time of year our beautiful Belizean national anthem is stuck on replay in my head, and what I love so much about the song is the vivid imagery the words conjure. The history of Belize's struggles over the centuries is poetically recounted in this patriotic song, and the story unfolds around the beauty of Belize and pride we hold dear to our hearts.

We invite you to join us in celebrating the special September holidays of My Beautiful Belize!

## **Belize National Anthem**

O. Land of the Free by the Carib Sea,  
Our manhood we pledge to thy liberty!  
No tyrants here linger, despots must flee  
This tranquil haven of democracy  
The blood of our sires which hallows the sod,  
Brought freedom from slavery oppression's rod,  
By the might of truth and the grace of God,  
No longer shall we be hewers of wood.

Arise! ye sons of the Baymen's clan,  
Put on your armour, clear the land!  
Drive back the tyrants, let despots flee -  
Land of the Free by the Carib Sea!

Nature has blessed thee with wealth untold,  
O'er mountains and valleys where prairies roll;  
Our fathers, the Baymen, valiant and bold  
Drove back the invader; this heritage hold  
From proud Rio Hondo to old Sarstoon,  
Through coral isle, over blue lagoon;  
Keep watch with the angels, the stars and moon;  
For freedom comes tomorrow's noon.

## **Important Information**

**Belize Tourism Board** - 227-2419.

**Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA)** - 227-5717.

**Belize Hotel Association** - 223-0669, bha@btl.net

**San Pedro Tourist Guide Association** 226-2391.

**Dr. Otto Rodriguez San Pedro Polyclinic II:** 226-2536

**AA Meetings:** Monday – Saturday, 6PM, #5 Boca Del Rio. 226-2020. Every Tuesday & Friday, 12 noon at the Catholic parish hall. Front street, 630-0752.

**Al-Anon Meetings:** Wednesdays, 5:30PM, SP Catholic Church Hall. 608-3924 / islabon-itaalanon@yahoo.com

**Narcotics Anonymous:** By request at 623-0316.

**Emergency veterinarian care:** 610-3647

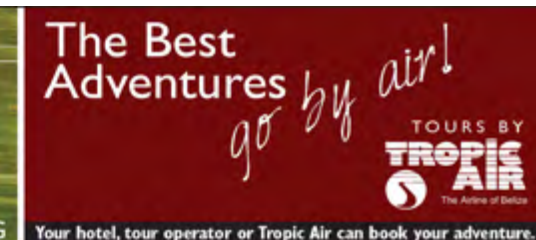
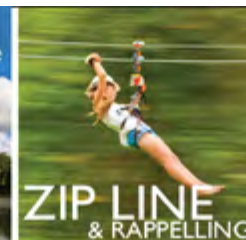
**American Crocodile Education Sanctuary/ACES** – Don't take matters into your own hands. Call 623-7920 for crocodile problems.

**Saga Society** A non-profit "humane society" to address the stray cat and dog population in San Pedro. Phone 226-3266.

**SP Town Library** - 206-2028.

**SP Post Office** - 206-2260.

**National Aids Commission Island Committee (NACIC)** - HIV Testing/ Treatment/Stigma and Discrimination and Pre and Post Test Counseling. 650-7021.



## **IN THIS ISSUE:**

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Yes, there's Pomp and Circumstance, but the jump-up, bacchanal and parades that accompany the Belize September Celebrations is like NO other in the world! P. 3

### **Our Father of Democracy - Philip S.W. Goldson:**

Politician, journalist, man of faith, family man, but most of all, a Belizean National Hero, Philip Stanley Wilberforce Goldson was a major player in Belize's struggle for democracy. P. 6

### **Do-Over - Can one really master Bocawina Falls:**

Maybe the third time will be the charm. Our Associate Editor once again attempts to rappel down a 100-foot waterfall. There was less bumping and sliding this time around. P. 11

### **Belizean Smiles:**

This bartender has won us over. P. 12

### **Saving the Hicatees:**

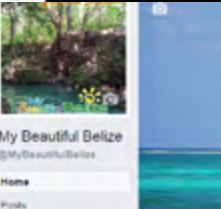
On the verge of extinction, these turtles need your help P. 12

### **Two sides to Halloween:**

Christianity gives Halloween major side-eye, but for many, it's just a fun time to be different. P. 14

## **We're Social! Follow Us:**

@mybeautifulbelize





# Celebrating Independence Day the Belizean Way

By Tamara Sniffin



Each year, 183 countries across the globe celebrate their own unique day of independence. For each country, their respective independence day commemorates the anniversary of their independence or statehood, usually after ceasing to be a group or part of another nation or state. Most countries observe their respective Independence Day as a national holiday, each reveling the occasion with rich, cultural diversity that is

uniquely their own. Should you be visiting a new land during such festivities, chances are you will experience ethnic merrymaking at its best. Belize is no different when it comes to Independence Day, and you are in for a real treat if you're here to celebrate our special day!

In 1862 Belize was a British Crown colony established as the British Honduras. In 1973 the territory's name was changed to Belize, and on September 21, 1981, Belize

gained independence from the United Kingdom. Unlike the United States, where independence from the UK has been celebrated since 1776, there remain many Belizeans who clearly recall the days 36 years ago when the "Queen Mum" still governed the land. Clearly the pride of achieving independence is alive and well with Belizeans, and their enthusiastic patriotism during this time of year is as young and vibrant as the country.

In the US, Independence Day on July 4<sup>th</sup> means patriotic rhetoric, apple pie, picnics, parades and fireworks. In Belize, September 21<sup>st</sup> celebrations also include pomp and circumstance, a 21-gun salute, special ceremonies, parades and fireworks, but wow, I'm willing to bet you've never seen anything as energetic as a Belizean Independence Day 'Jump Up' Parade before!

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# Belizean Independence Celebrations

Colorful floats, beautiful costumes, booming Soca music and spirited revelers dance through the streets of towns and villages across the country. There's no denying this is our favorite time of year, and the music and cheer in the air is infectious. Parties the night before, and throughout the day include live music, entertainment, great food and fun for everyone.

Belize City and Orange Walk Town are known for their massive carnival parades, but San Pedro Town puts on an impressive parade as well! No matter where you are staying while visiting Belize, chances are you are close enough to enjoy an Independence Day celebration!

For a complete schedule of official countrywide Independence Day events and related celebrations, kindly refer to our calendar of events on *Page 15!*



• Ashiatsu Poolside Massage  
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• Pilates Mat Classes  
• Wellness Retreats  
• SUP Beach Yoga  
• Aerial Yoga Arts  
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# Remembering Our Father of Democracy: Philip S.W. Goldson

By Janelle Cowo



He was a politician, a journalist, a man of faith, a family man, but most importantly, a National Hero. The legacy of Philip Stanley Wilberforce Goldson forms one of the pillars of Belizean history. Known as the Father of Democracy, Philip Goldson dedicated his life to making Belize a better place for all. Growing up, we learned much about Philip Goldson's contributions to society in grade school, but it's always exciting to revisit the knowledge!

He was born on July 25, 1923 in the former capital, Belize City, to Florence Matilda Goldson and Peter Edward Goldson during the colonial era, when Belize was known as the British Honduras. He became a leading figure during the Nationalist Movement, and was in National Government between 1950 and 2001. Goldson never faltered in his work towards

improving his country, and today he is best known for his position in defense of Belize's sovereignty with respect to the unfounded Guatemalan territorial claim.

On July 25, 2017, Philip Goldson would have celebrated his 94th birthday. Wanting to rekindle my admiration for this proud Belizean icon, I made the trek to the capital, the Garden City of Belmopan, to visit Goldson's old family home.

Now renovated as the Goldson House for Democracy and Patriotism, this quaint little orange home on 82 Orange Street is a wealth of knowledge of Belize's past. Walking past the gate and through the front door was exciting... after all, I was entering the actual home where Goldson and his family resided for many years before his death.

What Philip Goldson actually did

for Belize is amazing. At the beginning of his career from 1941 to 1947, Goldson worked in the British Honduras Civil Service. During this time, he ventured into journalism, writing short stories for British Broadcasting Company in London. Through his work as a journalist, Goldson began to realize the struggles of Belizean laborers, which led him to start trade unionism and become the National Organizer of The General Workers Union in 1949. He later became its General Secretary.

From there on, Goldson went on to form the People's United Party (PUP) along with John Smith, Leigh Richardson and George Cadle Price. From 1950 to 1956, Philip Goldson played a key role in the party's efforts for the country to obtain self-governance and eventually independence from Great Britain.

Because of disagreements and conflict of principle, Goldson, Leigh Richardson and others resigned from the PUP in 1956, forming the Honduras Independence Party. On July 1, 1958 the new Party joined with the National Party to form the National Independence Party, with Goldson acting as the Party Secretary. In 1973 the National Independence Party merged with two other oppositions groups, the People's Development Movement and the Liberal Party to form the United Democratic Party. There were new challenges, new jobs to be done, and new campaigns to plan!

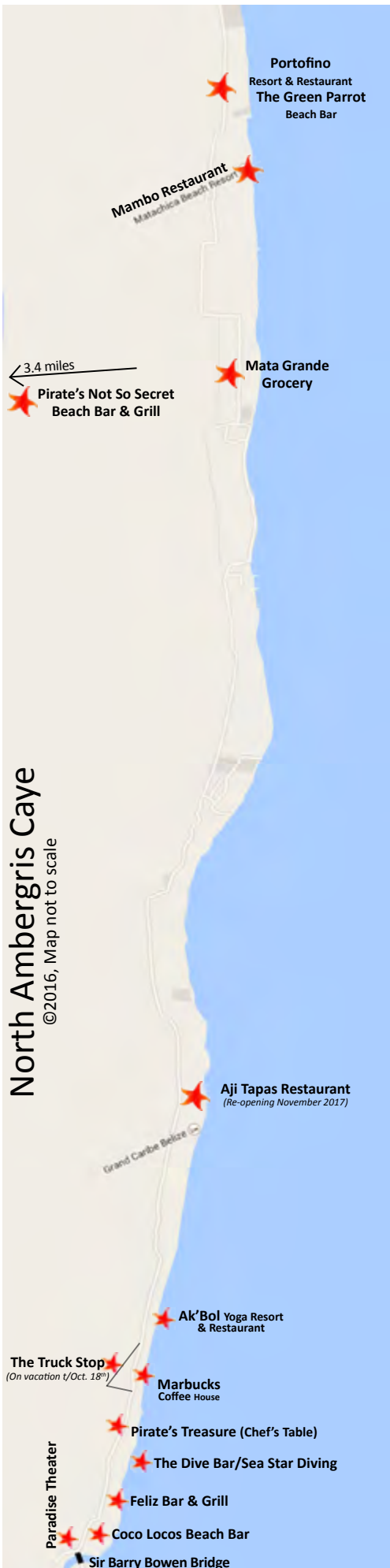
Throughout his career, Goldson served several months imprisonment due to voicing his opinions on colonial rule. He was so dedicated to his cause, that he continuously postponed his wedding date because of work. But his future wife, Hadie Jones Goldson, was not having it, and she demanded to be married on April 28, 1954, the same day as the first election in Belize!

In his later years of life, Goldson went on to become a lawyer. He spearheaded the restoration of Corozal Town following Hurricane Janet in 1955, implemented the Village Council system, established the first Family Count in Belize, enacted a new Education Ordinance making Primary Education free, granted government assistance to Secondary Schools for the first time, and initiated special allowance for retired teachers, and many more achievements. Even after becoming blind in 1978 due to Glaucoma, Goldson continued his career. He never retired, as Belize's wellbeing was always close to his heart.

Our beloved Belizean hero, Philip S.W. Goldson, passed away on October 3, 2001 and in his honor, both our international airport and the major northern highway were named after him. If you find yourself landing at the Philip S.W. Goldson International Airport or driving down the Philip S.W. Goldson Highway, know that they are named after our Father of Democracy.

His full story may be too long to fit these pages, but you can learn more by visiting the Goldson House of Democracy and Patriotism, located on 82 Orange Street, Belmopan City. The exhibit is open from Monday to Friday, from 9AM to 4PM. For more information, contact 822-2613 or email [thegoldsonhouse@gmail.com](mailto:thegoldsonhouse@gmail.com).





## EAT



**PIRATE'S TREASURE** - A unique dining experience with their Chef's Table. Watch as Chef Mar prepares a fresh 3-course Belizean meal over a coconut-husk fire while you enjoy refreshing cocktails and island vibes. Regular Menu always available without reservations. Noon to 11PM. 668-2156.



- Belizean Comfort Foods and Gourmet Seafood. One Mile North of the Bridge, at the island's only Yoga Center. Fresh, is the order of the day! Gourmet Dishes by Master Chef JoVannie Rowland, menu changes daily. Imported Wines, Seafood and Pasta. 7 days.



**PORTOFINO RESTAURANT** - Enjoy our Euro-Caribbean inspired menu and spectacular Caribbean views. Also offering a full VEGETARIAN Menu. For Reservations & Free Transportation, please call 226-5096 or 678-5096.



**PIRATE'S NOT SO SECRET BEACH BAR & GRILL:** The newest trending destination; adventure to SECRET BEACH! Soak up the sun or take a dip in crystal clear shallow waters accompanied with island music, refreshing cocktails, gourmet lunch menu by AWARD WINNING CHEF. Credit Cards Accepted. Open daily 10am to SUNSET!

**MAMBO RESTAURANT** - Enjoy a unique dining experience at this award-winning restaurant at Matachica Resort. Romantic atmosphere with island ambience, offering locally inspired flavors and meals that will excite even the most seasoned palate. Complimentary transportation with reservations - call 226-5010/226-5011.

## REAL ESTATE

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[www.mybeautifulbelize.com](http://www.mybeautifulbelize.com)  
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## PLAY



**COCO LOCOS BEACH BAR:** 1st Beach Bar North of Bridge. Swim up Bar. Monday 4PM Cribbage Tournament and BBQ. Trivia Tuesdays 7PM. Daily Happy Hour 4-6. Bocce ball, Giant Jenga. Pizza & Pulled Pork Sandwiches. Open Every day 12 noon - 10PM. Like us on [facebook.com/cocolocosbz](https://www.facebook.com/cocolocosbz).



**FELIZ BAR & GRILL:** THE Sports Bar across the bridge, with four 43" flat screen TVs, delicious thin crust pizza, wings and burgers. Play corn hole, catch the game, and try our Wednesday dart challenge! 1PM-11PM, closed on Tuesdays. At the Cloisters.



**THE DIVE BAR:** Snorkel/dive with us at SeaStar Belize and then unwind over great drinks, great food and a great time at The Dive Bar. Enjoy beachfront views and complementary water toys, just 1/2 mile North of the bridge. 226-3365/625-3364



**MARBUCKS COFFEE HOUSE** - Specialty Coffee Drinks - both hot & cold; fresh fruit smoothies and baked goods. Join us for Thursday Wine Fun, 4PM-7PM and our delicious Sunday brunch (with mimosas!). Located just off the main road in Tres Cocos, before the Truck Stop. Like us on Facebook and keep up with the fun!



**THE GREEN PARROT** - Eats and treats. Relax on the patio, sip your favorite island drink gaze out at the azure Caribbean Sea, take a dip in the pool and enjoy our great beach bar. Friendly staff always on hand 6 miles north of town. Open daily from 9AM-9PM. For complimentary boat transportation please call 226-5096/ 678-5096.

## SHOP

**MATA GRANDE GROCERY** The biggest little grocery store on Ambergris Caye, located 4.5 miles North of San Pedro Town, it's a must see! Open Monday-Saturday 8AM-5PM; Sunday 10AM-5PM. You can also order online at [www.matagrandegrocery.com](http://www.matagrandegrocery.com) or call us at 226-4290.... we DELIVER!

## SuDoku Time!

Answers on Page 15

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## EATS & TREATS



**HURRICANE'S CEVICHE BAR & GRILL:** The ceviche house! Fine outdoor dining and delicious tropical drinks. Full lunch and dinner menu, seafood specials and pastas. Restaurant open 10am - 9:30pm. Bar open until 10pm Monday to Saturday, closed on Sundays. We also run Tanisha Eco-Tours – and the best Lamanai Tour in Belize! Call 226-2314.

**EL FOGON:** Authentic Belizean Cuisine prepared on a fire hearth. Featuring dishes that represent the diversity of our Belizean culture. Lunch menu and daily dinner specials. Open Mon. – Sat. 11AM – 9PM 206-2121/610-1277 See map for our location!



**FIDO'S COURTYARD:** Fun every day, starting with breakfast and a fabulous view under the island's largest palapa. Enjoy refreshing cocktails, lunches and dinners, with a side of live music. Island life doesn't get any better than this! Located in the heart of town on Barrier Reef Drive.



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**EL PATIO GRILL:** Serving Belizean and Caribbean Cuisine in a gorgeous outdoor patio setting. Home of the famous stuffed jalapeños. Open from 11AM to 10PM - Sunday's, dinner only 5PM-10PM. Closed Tuesdays. Daily lunch & dinner specials. Sunday Live Music! Phone: 226-3898/6243589. Corner Barrier Reef Drive & Black Coral Street.



**MESA CAFE:** Relax in comfortable A/C while enjoying a full range of coffee drinks and healthy, delicious dishes. Open for breakfast and lunch, our menu includes a mix of locally sourced European, Mediterranean, and island inspired flavors. Come experience Mesa!



**BOOMERS:** Fabulous Cafe' Bar and Grill serving American and Belizean breakfast, lunch, dinner and daily specials. Now in a great NEW LOCATION at Carlo & Ernie's Runway Bar. Same great food and service that you have come to love! 226-2299.



**MAXI'S:** Like a fan said, "A little epicurean art for a fraction of the price! Everything is simply amazing; it's difficult to have a favorite." Maxi's offers tasty eats and fantastic drinks. **NEW HOURS:** Tuesday – Thursday, 2PM-12AM. Friday, 2PM-1AM, Saturday, 2PM-2AM. Barrier Reef Drive, 226-2052.



**SERGEANT DUKE'S BEACHSIDE GRILL & BAR:** Texas BBQ. You won't find it anywhere else on the island! Enjoy slow-smoked meats with all the fixin's, cold drinks and Texas hospitality, all right on the beach! 226-5425.

**THE SAN PEDRO LIONS CLUB** Join us on Fridays for fun bingo (7PM) and delicious chicken BBQ (from noon). All proceeds go back to assisting the community in times of need.



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**CRYSTAL AUTO RENTALS** - 2 BZ locations: Philip S.W. Goldson International Airport and 5 Miles Northern Highway. Free shuttle service to and from our Belize City office to anywhere in Belize City. Tel: 011-501-223-1600 Fax: 011-501-223-1900 (direct dialing from U.S.A.) Toll Free in Belize: 0-800-777-7777 Email: [reservations@crystal-belize.com](mailto:reservations@crystal-belize.com) or visit our website at <http://crystal-belize.com>

**COASTAL XPRESS WATER TAXI** – Scheduled ferry service & water taxi for Ambergris Caye. Phone 226-3007.

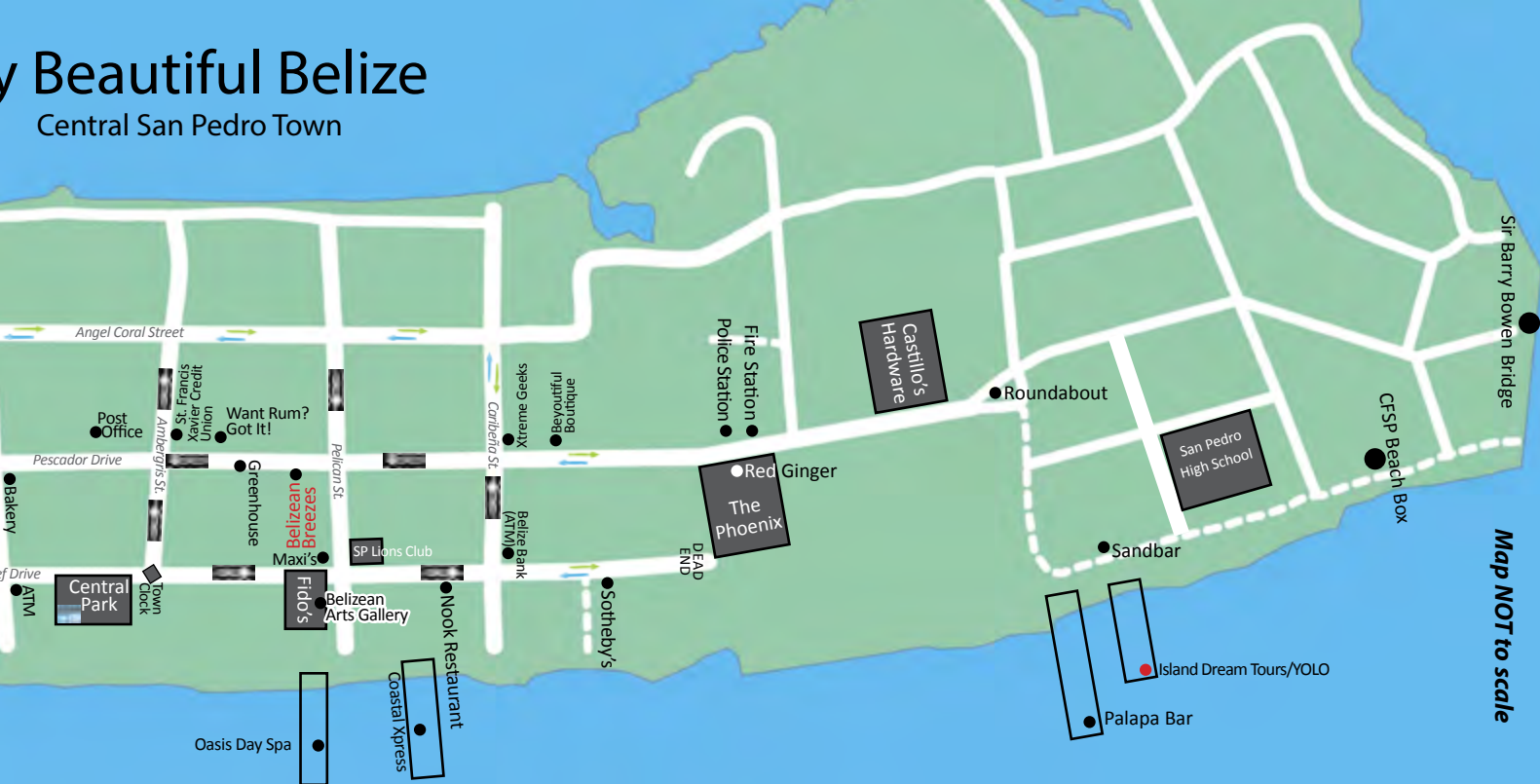
**GET TRANSFERS** - Executive transfer and tour services anywhere in Belize: Chetumal, Cancun, Quintana Roo & even Merida and Guatemala. Phone: 422-2485 (Fx: 422-3511) or email: [info@gettransfers.com](mailto:info@gettransfers.com).

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# My Beautiful Belize

Central San Pedro Town



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**HAVANA CIGARS BELIZE:** Our walk-in humidor stocks an ever changing selection of some of the finest hand-made cigars from Cuba, Central America, and the Caribbean. We also offer an air-conditioned smoking lounge with a full bar and café. On Front Street, across from Holiday Hotel. 226-4576 Find us on TripAdvisor!



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**SAN PEDRO ARTISANS MARKET:** Over 20 booths featuring local arts and crafts. Wood carvings, jewelry, paintings, sculptures, souvenirs and much more. Open daily from 8AM until 9PM. Located on Angel Coral Street across from the Hon. Louis Sylvestre Stadium.

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## South of San Pedro Town



## EATS & TREATS



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**BLACK ORCHID RESTAURANT & LOUNGE:** Come visit us; just a quick Golf Cart Ride 2 1/2 miles South of Town after the Croc Pond Lagoon and well before the Marco Gonzalez Maya Site. Open Tuesday through Saturday; Happy Hour: 3PM-5PM, Dinner: 5:30-9PM. Reservations Recommended (501) 206-2441. [www.blackorchidrestaurant.com](http://www.blackorchidrestaurant.com).

## PARTY PARTY!

**CRAZY CANUCKS BEACH BAR:** Beach bar located at Exotic Caye Beach Resort. Open daily 11am-midnight. Bar food and daily drink specials. Mondays: Live reggae @8pm Tuesdays: Live Music & Hermit Crab Racing @6:30pm Thursdays: Paint n Splash @2pm Fridays: Trivia @7pm Karaoke @8:30pm Sundays: Live music/horseshoes @3pm Follow us on Facebook. Phone: 670-8001

## UNIQUE OFFERINGS



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# Attempting to master Bocawina Falls

By Mary Gonzalez



## Newsflash: didn't anyone tell you that Mother Nature can't be tamed?

Bocawina Falls still had its way with me, but from bouncing all the way down in 2012, I actually scaled and rappelled nearly 100ft in 2017. Go me!

Five years ago, I was a panicked, overweight 30-year old just looking to start her adventurous route. Five years ago, the enormity of the challenge led me to change my life, and focus on getting healthier and fitter. You see, what I never told you, dear reader, is that back then, despite making it down the falls, the actual problem was the short hike TO the top. Nothing tells you to get fit like shortened breathing and a racing heart.

But, that was then. Now feeling a lot fitter and energetic, I was excited to face the challenge once again.

Through the Belize Tourism Board (BTB), I, along with a group of media colleagues spent a weekend exploring Hopkins and trying new and exciting adventures. Out of the 19 of us, 9 decided to brave the falls. I watched as everyone calmly took to the ropes and began their slow descent. Our guides Victor, Victor and Israel were more than clear with the instructions, but they had seen enough people panic at the first step and forget the rules completely.

The roar of splashing water as it gushed down the rockface reminded me that there was a 100-foot distance to the ground and pools below. When my turn came, I tried to remember the instructions. *Slack on the left hand, pull with the right hand, wide-legged stance, lean back... back...LEAN BACK!* The secret was really in leaning backwards. Well, that and better shoes, but halfway down roaring water there wasn't much I could do. Okay, I stopped and took selfies and video but, who's keeping score right?!

I slipped twice, but the time-tested ropes held, and this time, I picked

myself up and kept going. The cold rushing waters actually felt refreshing, because trust me, I broke a sweat in those few minutes of effort!

It wasn't until the last drop (*below*) that my legs betrayed me.

Victor II instructed me to lean as far back as possible to create an L shape against the sheer rock. The slippery moss, my terrible shoes and let's face it, tired muscles, all combined for a spectacular **NO**. His patience and humor managed to help me eventually get down the last few feet, but it wasn't pretty.



Of course, once on flat land, I was ready to try again! However, I am certain it will be many more attempts before I can even think of graduating to the 250-foot roaring Antelope Falls...I am already thinking about setting it as a goal for next year...and I'd love to drag some willing friends along, because it's much more fun having company!

If you want to try your hands (and legs) at this exhilarating experience, you can book your tour online at: [www.bocawina.com](http://www.bocawina.com) Located within 7100 lush acres of the Mayflower Bocawina National Park in the Stann Creek District (Southern Belize), Bocawina Rainforest Resort and Belize Adventures provides both lodging and fantastic choices for adventure. Spend your day exploring the beautiful grounds, ziplining, hiking, rappelling and so much more!

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# Belizean Smiles!

Visitors often tell us that their favorite part of Belize is her people. They talk about how friendly and open Belizeans are, welcoming them warmly to our shores and showing them the absolute best of Belize. With that in mind, we present to you some of those friendly favorites. Chances are, you will meet them during your travels and experience the warmth and hospitality that make them stand out to us too!



By Mary Gonzalez

There are many bartenders in Belize who can capture your heart (and liver). One of those talented mixologists is Romeo Kotch, who hails from Benque Viejo Del Carmen, in the Cayo District. A family man, Romeo works long hours and enjoys his time off with family.

You're not supposed to play favorites, seeing as every bartender works hard to serve your beverage of choice, but I really genuinely have mad love for Romeo.

It could be the fact that he has looked out for us every time we go to his workplace (El Divino at Banana Beach), or that he has given me solid advice to stay safe – especially with which cab to take in the late hours of night.

Then there are his mixed drinks. Good lord – even the BEERS he pours extra strong! He claims to truly enjoy making Green Apple Martinis, and if you're a regular at El Divino, you know all about Martini Mondays! From sangrias to long island iced teas, Romeo takes his job seriously and we love him all the more for it.

## Wolfe's Woofers Empathy

"I don't understand how you could possibly forget my birthday," Sherry said.

"It's not that I forgot," I told her. "I just didn't remember it."

She had tracked me down and brought me to the Holiday Hotel where we always celebrate her birthday with lunch on the deck. Now we were having the same argument that we had last year and the year before that. Now that I think of it, we have the same argument every year at about this time.

"You have no empathy," she said, accusingly. "Empathy is when you can put yourself in someone else's shoes and understand how they feel."

"Well, I can't put myself in your shoes because you wear a size 6."

"See what I mean? Sometimes I think you just have no feelings for other people at all."

"I don't think that's true."

"Here's your chance to prove you have empathy," she said. "Say something to make this poor girl feel better."

A young lady with tears running down her cheeks had made her way across the deck and took the table next to ours.

"Miss, is there any way I can help you?" I asked her.

"I don't think so," she said, between her sobs. "It's my. . . my. . . my cat."

"What about your cat?" I asked her, kindly.

"He. . . he. . . died."

"Oh, that is truly terrible. Is there anything I can do to help?"

"Sir, the only thing that would help is if I could get another cat just like my Tommy."

"I don't understand," I said. "Why would you want another dead cat?"



By Dennis Wolfe

## On the verge of extinction, the Hicatee turtle needs your help

By Tamara Sniffin



Hatchling photos by Heather Barrett

Since the beginning of time, indigenous people have lived off the land. In many places, this practice is still how families put food on their tables, hunting daily for the animals they share their surroundings with. Over time, these sources of protein have become key ingredients in age-old dishes, and although many cultures have evolved away from hunting and gathering, the original meals remain a deep part of their culture, annual celebrations and even rituals.

The case is no different in Belize, and many people throughout the rural areas of our country harvest deer, green iguana, gibbon, peccary, armadillo, game birds and hicatee turtles. Hunted for their meat, eggs and shells, the hicatee turtle is now

listed as a critically endangered species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and is facing extinction in the wild. It is the highest risk category assigned by the IUCN Red List for wild species, and the only critically-endangered reptile in Belize.

The hicatee (Central American River Turtle) is a prehistoric survivor, with relatives dating back to the age of the dinosaurs some 65 million years ago. It lives at the bottom of rivers where it has the unique ability to absorb oxygen underwater, using its modified throat like a gill. Unlike most reptiles, the hicatee doesn't bask in the sun, and they are completely herbivorous, eating decomposed vegetation on the river bottom. Adults can weigh up





# Save the Hicatee turtle

to 50 pounds, and their nesting period starts at the beginning of rainy season, where they often lay up to 12 eggs buried just below the water's edge of a river or lagoon.

With a hunting season that is only closed during the month on May, the hicatee have seen a swift decline in recent years, primarily due to over-hunting. They are especially consumed during the 40-day Lenten season when many Catholics and other Christian denominations commit to 'fasting', and refrain from eating red meat. During this time, fish and hicatee are mainstay menu items for many Belizeans.

For years, using spears and free diving for the turtle, Belizeans primarily hunted hicatee for personal consumption. Now, they are harvested commercially, even setting nets across the entire river for mass collection. The turtles are sold to restaurants and events like Ruta Maya, and to countries like Guatemala where the demand for hicatee meat is growing. This overfishing explains the catastrophic decline in the wild population.

Hicatee turtles have a very limited range that spans from southern Mexico, to northern Guatemala and Belize. Our country has the distinct honor of being the last strong hold for these turtles, who are the last in their lineage. In an effort to save the hicatee turtle, the Belize Foundation for Research & Environmental Education (BFREE), Turtle Survival Alliance, Belize Fisheries Department, other non-governmental organizations and individuals joined forces a number of years ago to form a network called the National Hicatee Conservation and Monitoring Network. Educational outreach programs have taken place all over the country, and a facility for the captive breeding of hicatee has been built at the field station at BFREE called the Hicatee Conservation and Research Center. Here researchers have begun to learn the breeding ecology of this endangered turtle. Turtles confiscated from illegal hunting are now used in the breeding program, and based on the research gathered, the team hopes to make well informed decisions when it comes to recommending their management.

On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, in conjunction with World Habitat Day, a new film "Hope for Belize's Hicatee: Central American River Turtle" will be launched, with plans to dedicate the month and the film to a huge awareness campaign throughout Belize. The film is a 16-minute documentary produced by Richard and Carol Foster of Wildlife Film Productions with assistance by the international organization, Turtle Survival Alliance and Belize BFREE. The film shows the turtle's precarious status across its range, discusses its rapid decline and details some of the current efforts to preserve the species in Belize and efforts to prevent its extinction. The film will be launched online and in classrooms and community centers in Belize, and throughout the month will be shown by members of the network and by others who care about the hicatee turtle and conservation of all of Belize's natural resources.

National Hicatee Day will take place on October 17<sup>th</sup> and is a day to recognize the hicatee as an important animal for Belize. BFREE will be promoting a Save the Hicatee campaign in which people pledge to take positive action by agreeing to support the conservation of Belizean wildlife like the hicatee turtle. They have created a banner that has already been signed by hundreds of students in show of their support, and are encouraging others to create additional signature banners or signs. BFREE is also working on establishing the hicatee turtle as the National Reptile of Belize, and want National Hicatee Day to be an opportunity for people to show their support of this idea on social media by wearing green and taking a selfie or group picture with their sign or banner.

Conservation and education is essential to the survival of the hicatee, and the next ten years could prove critical to their survival. You can learn more about these conservation efforts and how you can help by visiting [www.bfreebz.org/hcrr](http://www.bfreebz.org/hcrr).



*Student of Independence Junior College with a Hicatee*



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# Debating the true meaning of Halloween

By Janelle Cowo



I have always loved Halloween. There is a magic in being able to dress up and embody another character, even for just one night. For traditional Belizeans, Halloween, or All Hallows Eve, is the first of three days celebrating the dearly departed. October 31st is the eve of the Christian celebrations of All Souls Day (November 1st) and All Saints Day (November 2nd). Halloween may now be a joyous day where children and adults alike dress up and have a jolly time, but there may be a darker side to it. It's a story that has been passed from one generation of Belizeans to another.

Let me share a story, one told for many years by those older and wiser than us.

*Every October 31<sup>st</sup> that approached, my grandmother would tell me a tale of what it 'truly' means to celebrate Halloween. To her, and generations before, Halloween is the celebration of the devil – the one day out of the year wherein the gates of hell open and demons roam freely on earth. Sounds just like an old folk's tale, right? After all, wouldn't we be able to tell a demon or monster from a real person. Well, that's the tricky part... most people are in costume, each one more ghoulish than the other! How can you truly tell?*

*To my grandmother – a devoted Christian Mestizo woman – any person that would partake in the celebration of All Hallows Eve was a pagan celebrating Satan himself. She warned us youth to stay away from this celebration, because it was an open invitation to let demons into your life. She went so far as to share 'real life' scenarios of people she knew who had celebrated Halloween and were then plagued with misfortune for the rest of their lives.*

As children this used to scare us just a bit, but the allure of candy always won, and off to Trick-or-Treat we went!

Be it true or not, it's an interesting story, tying in the customs and beliefs of Celtic-speaking countries.

Those of us who don't want to miss out on the fun of Halloween, we join the biggest Halloween party in Belize – The Holiday Hotel Halloween Bash! Every year, hundreds of islanders dress in their best costumes in hopes of win-

ning amazing prizes. With plenty to drink and great dance music, this is a party you don't want to miss! This year's event is tentatively set for Saturday, October 28<sup>th</sup> at 8PM.

Children and our furry friends also celebrate Halloween during Saga's Spectacular Party. Held at Carlo and Ernie's Runway Bar from 11AM, the whole family – including the dog – can come out and enjoy an afternoon of good food and entertainment. This year's fun is tentatively set for Sunday, October 19<sup>th</sup>.

Whatever your faith and beliefs, if you're just looking to have a great time, look out for the various events held on La Isla Bonita!





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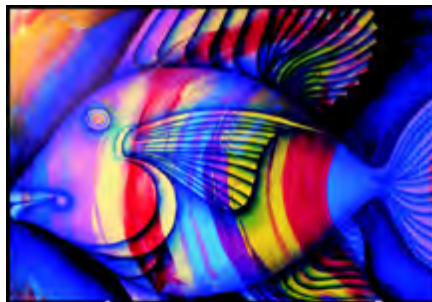
1/2 mile north of the bridge @ The Cloisters, San Pedro, Belize



# Plan your September/October Belize travels

Start packing, because two months of exploration and celebration await you!

**September** is one special month for us Belizeans, and we welcome you to join us as we celebrate our beloved Belize! There are a number of related activities during this month, and then we keep on having fun through **October**, because we like nothing more than an after-party!



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## Sudoku Answers Puzzle on Page 7

2	1	4	7	5	6	9	8	3
8	9	6	3	1	2	7	5	4
7	3	5	8	4	9	6	2	1
5	6	7	1	2	3	4	9	8
1	2	8	4	9	7	3	6	5
9	4	3	5	6	8	2	1	7
6	8	1	2	7	4	5	3	9
4	5	2	9	3	1	8	7	6
3	7	9	6	8	5	1	4	2

## September

**September 2<sup>nd</sup>** – Northern Maya Association Open Day at Orange Walk Central Park, Orange Walk Town starting at 9AM

**September 8<sup>th</sup>**  
– Wet Fete at ITVET, Freetown Road, Belize City starting at 9AM  
– Soca or Surrenda at Marion Jones Sports Complex, Belize City starting at 10PM

**September 9<sup>th</sup>**  
– Belize Carnival Road March across major streets, Belize City starting at 1PM  
– Tribute to the Baymen at honorable Louis Sylvestre Sporting Complex, San Pedro Town starting at 8PM

**September 10<sup>th</sup>** – Battle of St. George's Caye Day held at the central parks of all major municipalities (Corozal Town, Orange Walk Town, Belize City, San Pedro Town, Belmopan City, Santa Elena/San Ignacio Town, Benque Viejo del Carmen Town, Placencia Peninsula, Stann Creek Town and Punta Gorda Town) starting at 9AM

**September 14<sup>th</sup>** – Central Dance Corp Drum Fete at Orange Walk Central Park, Orange Walk Town starting at 8PM

**September 16<sup>th</sup>** – Noche Centro Americana at Central Park, San Pedro Town starting at 7PM

– Expo Belize Market at ITVET, Freetown Road, Belize City starting at 8AM

**September 18<sup>th</sup>** – Paradise on the Fly at El Pescador Resort, San Pedro Town starting at 10AM

## October



**October 1<sup>st</sup>** – Belize Hawk Watch at Cattle Landing, Belize starting at 8AM

**October 7<sup>th</sup>** – 12th Annual Wine and Cheese Party at the George Price Center, Belmopan City starting at 7PM

**October 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>** – Blue Water Classic 2017 Fishing Tournament at South Water Caye, Dangriga District (more info at 615-3172)

**October 28<sup>th</sup> - November 4<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>** Annual Scuba Bash at Sunbreeze Hotel, San Pedro Town

**October 28<sup>th</sup>** – Holiday Hotel Halloween Bash at Holiday Hotel, San Pedro Town starting at 8PM

**October 29<sup>th</sup>** – Saga Spooktacular Party at Carlo and Ernie's Runway Bar, San Pedro Town starting at 11AM

## September 20<sup>th</sup>

– Independence Eve Block Party, Official Flag Raising Ceremony and Fire Works Show, held at the central parks of all major municipalities (Corozal Town, Orange Walk Town, Belize City, Belmopan City, Santa Elena/San Ignacio Town, Benque Viejo del Carmen Town, Placencia Peninsula, Stann Creek Town and Punta Gorda Town) starting at 9PM

– San Pedro Independence Eve Celebrations at the Honorable Louis Sylvestre Sporting Complex starting at 9PM

**September 21<sup>st</sup>** – Largest Independence Day Parade across major streets, Orange Walk Town starting at 1PM

– San Pedro Independence Day Parade across major streets, San Pedro Town starting at 10AM

**September 23<sup>rd</sup>** – BDF Pistol Shooting Competition at Belize Defense Force Compound, Ladyville Village starting at 9AM

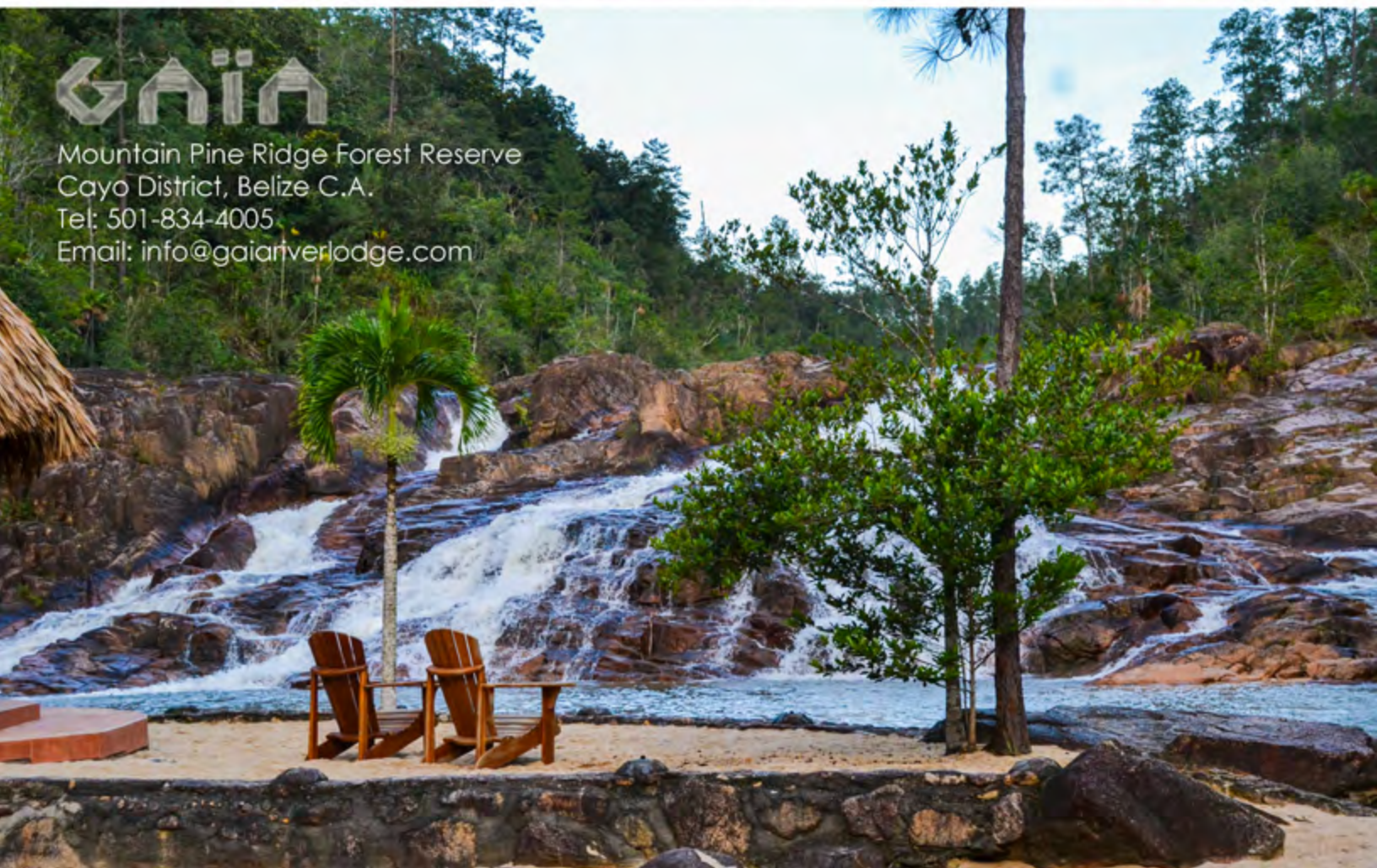




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