

ACES

Protecting the
threatened
American Crocodile
through education



From the Editor *Tamara Sniffin*

Love can be a very unexpected thing...and perhaps it is accidental, or should I say unlikely love that is all the more exciting. Needless to say, who would have thought that someday I would be pledging my love to American Crocodiles?

The romance began in 2008 when I grew concerned about the illegal feeding of crocodiles as a tourist attraction on Ambergris Caye. Each evening at a lagoon south of San Pedro Town local dudes would lure in huge crocodiles with frozen chicken on a rope. The spectacle drew large crowds of tourists who would pay the dudes and even pose their children for photos with these large reptiles with giant teeth. Coming from bear country in Wyoming, I knew this was a recipe for disaster. In the 1970's Yellowstone National Park experienced the same issue with "bear jams" where visitors would hand-feed the bears from the windows of their cars! After several people were mauled the park managers realized what a dangerous situation had been created...the bears no longer had their natural fear of humans and they associated man with the dinner bell. It took Yellowstone Park years to educate the public that "a fed bear is a dead bear" and reverse the habituation the bears had developed.

My concern about the croc feeding led me to contact Vince and Cherie Rose from the American Crocodile Education Sanctuary (ACES) in southern Belize, and we soon joined forces to start a similar "a feed croc is a dead croc" educational campaign on Ambergris Caye. We became fast friends and as I learned about these amazing reptiles and their challenge for survival my heartstrings were pulled. I became an 'honorary' member of the ACES team and over the last ten years have spent countless hours with ACES conducting population surveys, housing crocs "in transit" in my backyard, tagging and releasing crocs while collecting important data and assisting in relocating problematic or threatened crocs. Heck, I've even been known to jump on one! And, I couldn't be prouder of Chris Summers who first offered to volunteer with ACES when he was just a skinny kiddo in 2010 and has now become a field expert and croc wrangler extraordinaire!

What I know, and why I have great respect and love for American Crocodiles is the mere fact that they are survivors. Dating back 200 million years, these perfectly designed reptiles are apex predators essential to a healthy ecosystem. Only one percent of all hatchlings reach adult maturity, so when I spot a handsome, healthy adult I know he has beaten some amazing odds and my heart swells, and when I learn of their declining population and health due to habitat loss, contaminated water conditions or even worse, the senseless killing of one just for the mere fact that it is a crocodile, my heart breaks.

Belize is blessed with many non-profit organizations that are committed to protecting our wild, and often endangered animals, and there is no doubt that ACES has been instrumental in educating and advocating for these gorgeous animals. They say, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" and I suppose that's true when it comes to crocodiles. Maybe while exploring My Beautiful Belize you'll find a little crocodile love too!



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Crocs are Cool:

ACES has dedicated its service to educating the community about the importance of the American Crocodile, while studying their population for future generations to enjoy. P. 3

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White Sands Dive shop provides some seriously cool underwater adventure - diving, snorkeling...it's all awesomeness under the sea! P. 6

M is for Marvelous Maruba Klub

At not-so-secret beach is a fabulous club run by the Maruba ladies! P. 11

It's Plum Season!

Delicious green or ripe, raw or cooked, the delicious plum is in season! P. 12

Why Belize:

Ali Wunderman says Belize reawakened her - her love affair with the country has taken her on some wild adventures since! P. 13

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Take a wild guess at this location...let us know on social media! P. 15

Front Page Image: *Chris Summers during an ACES CSI Tour on Ambergris Caye, holds a juvenile American Crocodile before tagging and releasing it back into the wild. Photo by Karen Brodie Photography.*

Karen's passion for photography and travel (or should we say obsession for learning and seeing) became insatiable shortly after beginning a journey through grief in 2008.

She considers herself as much a traveller as a photographer and feels her most creative on the road while experiencing and sharing in delights or hardship/sorrow. She says that travelling is much more exciting and rewarding with camera in hand ... you never know what doors the lens will open; it is an amazing tool for connecting with people. She loves crowds and events and delights in finding interesting faces, almost like a real life "Where's Waldo?" She has become an integral part of the artistic landscape of Ambergris Caye, and her images showcase her passion beautifully.

We're Social! Follow Us:
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www.mybeautifulbelize.com

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 Anonymus: 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.

Where in Belize...

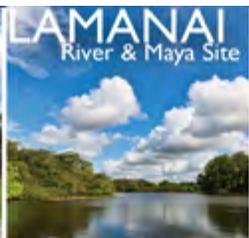
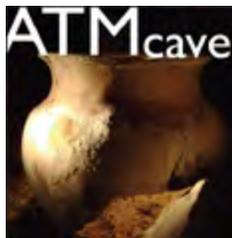
March's location revealed



This is the Sacred Heart Church located in the Yo Creek Village. Yo Creek is a small village located just west of Orange Walk Town, consisting mainly of people of Yucatec Maya descent.

Yo Creek can be accessed via private vehicle (just a 10-minute drive from Orange Walk Town) or through regular bus service departing from Fort Cairns Market in Orange Walk Town.

To join our guessing game, follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @mybeautifulbelize, using the hashtag #whereinbelize. You can also send us your images of mystery locations to add to our guessing game! Send them to hello@mybeautifulbelize.com and join the fun!



ACES – protecting the threatened American Crocodile through education

By Mary Gonzalez

Since its establishment in 2006, the American Crocodile Education Sanctuary (ACES) has focused on educating communities about the conservation of crocodiles in Belize. Founded by Vince and Cherie Rose in Punta Gorda, Belize, ACES has spent numerous years protecting crocodiles from people, and people from crocodiles.

Belize is home to two different types of crocodiles: American and Morelet. Morelets are adapted to survive in fresh water, while the American crocodile is primarily salt-water. An estimated 1,000 American crocodiles remain in Belize - considered the last stronghold for the threatened species. Over the years, ACES has become home to numerous ill and/or injured crocodiles, as well as problematic ones deemed too dangerous to be left in the wild. Permitted by the Belize Forest Department, the sanctuary provides a second chance at life for crocodiles whose only other option is death, keeping both the crocodiles and communities throughout Belize safe from danger, unwanted conflict.

Part of the educational aspect of ACES includes providing hands on presentations at the various island schools on Ambergris Caye (where the organization is primarily based) to teach the younger generation about conservation and preservation. Everyone is taught that it is illegal to feed the crocodiles, and that harassment of the animal includes approaching, chasing, catching, stoning, capturing and keeping as a 'pet', etc. Clearly, poaching and killing the crocodiles, selling its parts or taking its eggs are also illegal, and dangerous.

At the beginning of ACES' educational work, the feeding of crocodiles was a rampant problem, coupled with the promotion of the feeding as an attraction. Not only was the practice dangerous, but it also posed a great threat to the humans involved. Crocodiles also suffered the health consequences of inadequate food sources. Feeding creates



familiarity, and when crocodiles no longer fear humans, trouble arises. Crocodiles eventually go in search of food, moving to more populated areas and causing unwanted disturbances in yards.

Controversy creates new opportunity

ACES was founded in Punta Gorda, Belize in 2006, housing problematic crocodiles that had been removed for their and the communities' safety. In 2010 while

Vince and Cherie Rose were away on an emergency crocodile call on Ambergris Caye, villagers assembled at their property and proceeded to loot, destroy, and burn down their home and the surrounding sanctuary. They tore down the fences and mutilated all crocs in sight.

After the arson, ACES moved their operation to Ambergris Caye

where they continued to study the threatened American crocodile population and relocated problematic crocodiles. ACES' presence has brought a much needed positive change and awareness to the island. Thanks to their tireless educational campaigns, ACES is foremost for rescue and removal efforts.

Continued on Page 4

*******Waterfront Dining**
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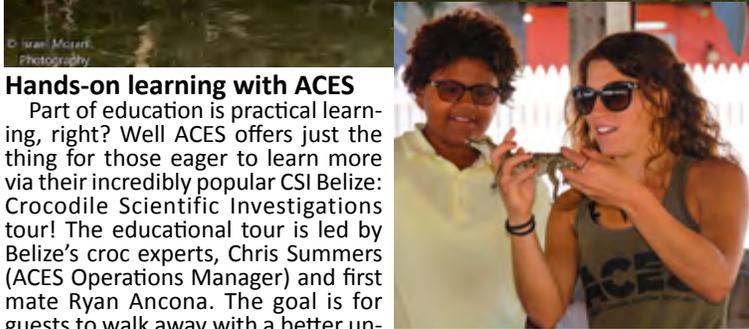
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Open from 1PM - 11PM
1/2 mile north of the bridge @ The Cloisters, San Pedro, Belize

Protecting the American Crocodile through education Continued from Page 3



Hands-on learning with ACES

Part of education is practical learning, right? Well ACES offers just the thing for those eager to learn more via their incredibly popular CSI Belize: Crocodile Scientific Investigations tour! The educational tour is led by Belize's croc experts, Chris Summers (ACES Operations Manager) and first mate Ryan Ancona. The goal is for guests to walk away with a better understanding and appreciation for crocodiles. Summers captains the 'Swamp Thing' through the mangroves on the lagoon side of the island with the intention of spotting, catching, and tagging American saltwater crocodiles to add to their ongoing population survey around Ambergris Caye. Yes, Chris has been known to jump in the water and catch a croc for tagging and monitoring purposes - talk about an adrenaline rush!!

The CSI Tour is a most unique vacation activity – and one you should try while on Ambergris Caye. Lasting around two hours, the tour costs \$50USD/\$100BZ per person, and is ACES' main means of self-sustainability, providing funding for crocodile rescues, rehabilitation, community outreach, and conservation efforts throughout Belize. To book your own, contact Christina Manzi, ACES Marketing Coordinator, via saveacroc@gmail.com or call 623-7920. You can also follow them on their Facebook page at ACES/American Crocodile Education Sanctuary to see all the incredible work they do.

Exciting News in Conservation!

* BELIZE ESTABLISHES NORTHEASTERN BIOLOGICAL CORRIDOR

On February 13th of this year, the Government of Belize issued a formal press release indicating that a proposed Northeastern Biological Corridor had been approved by Cabinet. With this new corridor, Belize is set to establish the largest biological corridor in Central America!



Just what is a Wildlife Corridor? It provides a unique bridge of natural habitats that connects the two blocks through unprotected and privately-owned land. In the case of the newly approved Northeastern Corridor, three parcels (totaling 5,000 hectares) of national land will ensure that there is a protected stretch of forest connecting existing reserves (Shipstern and Freshwater Creek) in the north. The movement of wildlife – primarily jaguars, the Baird's Tapir and pumas - and other biological resources between these important ecosystems will be ensured.

This new development involves a significant amount of collaboration between The Ministry of Fisheries, Forestry, the Environment and Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Natural Resources alongside local conservation non-governmental organizations: Corozal Sustainable Future Initiative, Wildtracks, and private landowners Balam Jungle Estate and the Neulands Community

My Beautiful Belize highlighted the Central Wildlife Corridor of Belize in the February issue, and you can read all about it online at: <https://my-beautifulbelize.com/connecting-landscapes-across-belize-wildlife-corridor/>

* NO MORE PLASTICS/STYROFOAM BY 2019!

The Belize Government made another great announcement on March 20th, announcing that it has approved a proposal to ban single-use plastic bags and food utensils as well as Styrofoam products by April 22, 2019. Across the country, Belizeans are rejoicing as these items are the main contributors to detrimental pollution of our land and waters.

With the second largest barrier reef in the world, Belize has been striving to do its part to reduce marine pollution and protect the natural environment that is the foundation of its vibrant tourism industry. Biodegradable alternatives already exist on the Belizean market, primarily in the form of shopping bags, clamshells, coffee cups and plates manufactured from plant-based materials. Many eco-minded businesses have taken on the task of providing customers with these better alternatives, and as such welcome this initiative.

The proposal was led by the Ministry of Fisheries, Forestry, the Environment and Sustainable Development; Ministry of Investment, Trade and Commerce; and the Ministry of Tourism, who led a collaborative taskforce comprising of the Department of the Environment, Customs Department, Beltraide, Directorate General of Foreign Trade, and Solid Waste Management.

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Discover Mexico Rocks Marine Reserve with White Sands Dive Shop

By Tamara Sniffin

Along the expanse of the Belize Barrier Reef, there are countless areas to snorkel and dive. Many of these areas have been designated Marine Reserves, and off the coast of Ambergris Caye, one of the newest protected areas is the popular Mexico Rocks recreational site. When it comes to exploring this underwater jewel, be it with an air tank on your back or a snorkel in your mouth, the super friendly professionals at White Sands Dive Shop know this area like the back of their flipper!

Located just minutes from several dive and snorkel sites, White Sands Dive Shop offers a variety of subaqueous experiences, with Mexico Rocks being one of their favorite places to take snorkelers and divers who are just learning to dive, are refreshing their skills or just prefer shallower water. For folks who have SCUBA divers and snorkelers in their group,



Photo by White Sands Dive Shop

this site beautifully accommodates both, with the White Sands Dive Shop guides skillfully leading each "school" throughout their underwater discovery. It's also fun to spot your friends or family from below or above the water when exploring the seascape!



Mexico Rocks became a part of the Hol Chan Marine Reserve in 2015, with Zone G designated as the Mexico Rocks General Use Area for snorkeling and diving. Although the site is popular with many tour companies on the island, the area is less congested than the celebrated Hol Chan Marine Reserve Zone A which can attract hundreds of people a day. As in many protected marine areas in Belize, divers can enjoy an abundance of healthy corals and stunning wildlife. From turtles to moray eels and spotted eagle rays, to vibrant fish in a kaleidoscope of colors, this is world-class diving at its best.

Interested in learning how to dive while in Belize? White Sands Dive Shop not only offers certification courses but you can get a head start on preparing before you reach through the online Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) eLearning program at <http://e-learntodive.blogspot.com/>. According to PADI Staff Instructor and White Sands Dive Shop owner Elbert Greer, "In my twenty-plus years of experience certifying tourists for SCUBA Diving in Belize I've learned that the difficult part is not getting my students to jump into the warm, clear Caribbean water with a tank on their back, it's getting them to read and study the manual or sit and watch a DVD in the classroom while they are distracted by being on vacation! Instructors call this bookwork and study part of the course Knowledge Development, and it's the hardest part of my job. With this new online method, student divers will have done this part of the course at home with me guiding them through as an instructor, wasting no time after arriving before they get into the warm water."

White Sands Dive Shop is a full service 5 Star PADI Dive Shop specializing in daily diving, SCUBA instruction and snorkeling. They conveniently pick you up from the dock at or nearest to your hotel and are fully equipped with the best in dive and snorkel gear. For more information please visit their website at www.whitesandsdiveshop.com.



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North Ambergris Caye

©2016, Map not to scale



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. 4PM to 10PM. 668-2156.



CROCS SUNSET SPORTS BAR: The newest bar north of the bridge, with refreshing cocktails, bar food, killer sunset views and all the games on large-screen TVs. Book upstairs bar for private events. Open from 11am everyday.



THE TRUCK STOP: Belize's first shipping container food park. Come try the different exciting options from our food trucks, play backyard games, or cool off with a sundae from our ice cream shop. Pig roast & cornhole tournament every Sunday!



AK'BO'L - 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.

AJI TAPA BAR RESTAURANT: Beachfront dining in a romantic setting. One of a kind 5-Star Tapa Bar and Restaurant situated on the enchanting island of Ambergris Caye. Open all week, 5PM-10PM, except on Tuesdays. Open Friday, Saturday & Sunday for lunch. Call +501-226-4047 for reservations.



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 island's 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.

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 or call us at 226-4290.... we DELIVER!

PLAY



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 1/2mile North of the bridge. 226-3365/625-3364



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.



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.

WHITE SANDS DIVE SHOP: A PADI 5 star Dive shop in San Pedro Town on Ambergris Caye teaching scuba diving and certifying divers, as well as providing daily Diving and Snorkeling adventures to the beautiful Belize Barrier Reef. Scheduled (local) departures are at 9:00AM, and they pick you up at the hotel dock. 226-2405.



MARUBA BEACH KLUB @ Secret Beach - The ultimate SOLAR / OFF the GRID beach experience! Stylish, sleek lounge chairs & bean bag floats. EAT•DRINK•SPA•SWIM•SUNSETS. Open 11-5PM 4 miles from main road. BOAT TRANSFERS available by reservation call 610-3775/9

SuDoku Time!

Answers on Page 15

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EATS & TREATS

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!



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MAXI'S: "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. Tuesday – Saturday, 7AM-11AM/3PM-12AM. Sundays, 10AM-10PM. Breakfasts: 7AM – 11AM Tuesday-Saturday, 10AM-1PM Sundays. Barrier Reef Drive, 226-2052.

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.



SANDBAR: BEST PIZZAS ON THE ISLAND! Sandbar hosts an amazing happy hour special: \$10BZD wood-fired pizzas and 2-for-1 rums on weekdays (3-6PM) and beer and wing specials on the weekend (11am-4pm). Enjoy your afternoon or evening at the bar, tables, or chaise lounges on the beach!



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JUICE DIVE: Belize's first cold press juicery, we offer juice cleanses, daily specials, fresh organic salads and wraps, VEGAN options and so much more healthy, delicious cuisine. Open 7 days a week, 7AM-8PM... Pescador Drive...615-7395



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POCO LOCO'S: Fabulous food court located in the heart of San Pedro Town on Barrier Reef Drive. Choose from delicious crepes and desserts, salad bar and soups, creative burgers and vegan options, mission style burritos and tasty libations. Charming décor in a relaxed atmosphere.

TRANSPORTATION

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 or visit our website at <http://crystal-belize.com>

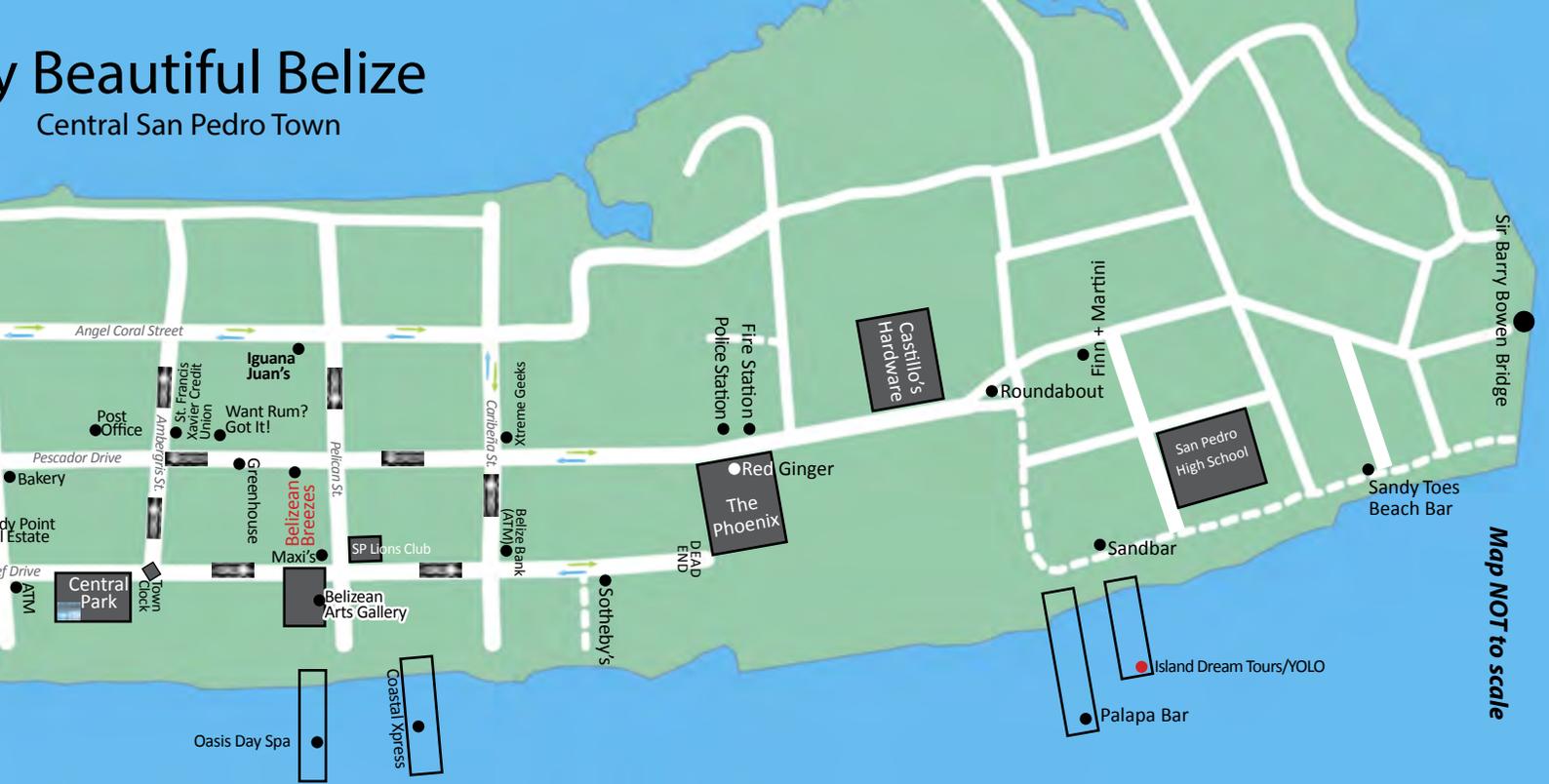
COASTAL XPRESS WATER TAXI – Scheduled ferry service & water taxi for Ambergris Caye. Phone 226-3007.

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.

RAINBOW TAXI – Caye Caulker golf cart; guided island tours; reliable service. 226-0123. Minerva: 661-6254 or Champ 602-8136.

My Beautiful Belize

Central San Pedro Town



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"12" is the only shop in Belize that features only Belizean made luxury products & gifts suitable for both locals and tourists. Featuring exclusive items from around the country from soaps & scrubs to handbags & sauces, we ship same day throughout Belize. www.12belize.com 670-5272.

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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BELIZEAN ARTS GALLERY - Largest collection of paintings in Belize. Featuring contemporary, native and realistic works by leading and on the rise artists. Gold and silver artisan jewelry, ceramics, fabrics and more. Open daily 9am to 10pm. Deep inside Fido's Courtyard. 226-3019.

April 2018

OASIS SPA – Relax, Refresh, Renew with our variety of treatments, including pre-natal massages, deep tissue, aromatherapy and more. On the pier at Fido's Courtyard. 631-6970, oasissspabelize@gmail.com.

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.

SANDY POINT REAL ESTATE: Making Your Dreams of Owning Real Estate in Belize a Reality! Exclusively listing Wyndham Grand Venezia del Caribe properties. We are located on Barrier Reef Drive. For more info visit www.sandypointrealestate.com

OASIS ALOM is located eight miles north of San Pedro Town. This new resort offers a unique luxury experience beyond the most stunning turquoise waters in the Caribbean. www.oasisalom.com Prices starting at \$114,900USD.

PARTY PARTY



WAHOO'S LOUNGE: We are home to the WORLD FAMOUS CHICKEN DROP! Thursday nights starting at 6PM. Drink specials, games and an amazing view of the reef. Located on the beach at the Spindrift Hotel. 226-2002.



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EATS & TREATS



THE COCONUT CAFÉ: Life's better when it's made from scratch! The Coconut Cafe offers breakfast all day, as well as pizzas, paninis and burritos/wraps. We make all of our own breads, pies and cinnamon rolls from scratch.

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M is for marvelous Maruba Beach Klub at Secret Beach

By Tamara Sniffin



The leeward side of Ambergris Caye has become THE go-to place for white sandy beaches, transparent blue waters and cool beach bars that offer up delicious eats, tasty libations, great music and an expansive swimming area of shallow, crystal clear Caribbean water as far as the eye can see. Just years ago, this area was a “secret beach” that only a few lucky locals with hardy vehicles could reach and enjoy, but now, with a full access road, this not-so-secret beach is the ultimate playground for fun in the sun. New to the scene, and perfectly complementing the area with their signature eclectic ethno-vibe, is Maruba Beach Klub.



If the Maruba name sounds familiar, it should! This new beach klub is the brainchild of the super creative and fun sisters Alexandra and Franziska Nicholson from the renowned Maruba Resort Jungle Spa in Maskall Village in the Belize District and Kama Lounge (now closed) here in San Pedro. Replete with their flare for bright colors, bold patterns, lots of lounging space and flowing sheers, the stage is set with groovy techno beats pulsating in the background.

Half the fun of the Secret Beach destination is getting there! Located 6.5 miles north of San Pedro Town, the hour drive via golf cart is a scenic look

at stunning reef views to the east and lush mangrove lagoons to the west. Wildlife such as birds, iguanas, and even crocodiles can be spotted along the way, and there are plenty of restaurants and bars to stop at if you get thirsty or hungry. For those us of who may not have the time to travel by road, or just want to get to Maruba Beach Klub ASAP they offer a free boat shuttle by reservation from town, which is a brilliant idea! The 20-minute ride carries you along the lagoon side of the island where threads of white beaches are kissed by gorgeous blue waters. It’s a part of Ambergris Caye that, until recently, many people haven’t seen, and now the area has grown quite popular for beach barbeques and family recreation.

Of course, it’s not just fabulous ambiance that is served at Maruba Beach Klub! Chef Victor Nal, who years ago started his career at the Maruba Resort Jungle Spa, is in command of the beach klub kitchen. In 2009 Chef Vic was awarded the Belize Tourism Board Chef of the Year at their annual Taste of Belize competition and his talent for taking local dishes to a whole new level continues to amaze even the most discerning palate. From fresh organic salads to wraps, quesadillas, burgers and spring rolls, this gastropub has something for everybody. And, talk about a new idea for a popular menu item, be sure to try their tempura-fried chicken fingers on a stick or their super flavorful conch fritters! With creative cocktails like Chocolate Coconut Mojitos, Craboo Coladas, and Mango-ritas, your taste buds will be doing a happy dance!

After sating your appetite, why not go for some blissful relaxation? Maruba is synonymous with pampering your very soul. Their spa salon is situated on an upper deck that overlooks the beach and is caressed with a cool breeze. Here you can choose from a variety of treatments and massages; life just doesn’t get much better!

While enjoying your day, an attentive staff is happy to accommodate you, and they have fabulous floating bean bag chairs that you can rent by the hour. What a perfect way to lounge in the clear Caribbean waters! Maruba Beach Klub at Secret Beach is open every day until 5PM. To reserve a boat transfer call 610-3775/9 or visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/marubabeach for more information.



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Plum Season is the best season!

By Janelle Cowo

April marks the start of one of my favorite fruit seasons - plum season! Thanks to Belize's lovely tropical weather, several varieties of plum trees blossom each year. To me, plums cater to all my taste buds; crisp and tart when green which are great for eating with some salt and pepper on the side, and then succulent and sweet once ripe.

I grew up eating plums and even today, it's a fruit I gravitate to - especially the green ones. Back home in the Orange Walk District, there were plenty of plum trees in our yard. Each year starting as early as February, the trees would shed their foliage in preparation to bear fruit. By the beginning of March, the first fruits of the season would begin to sprout and by the middle of the month our trees would be brimming with plums ready for the picking. Several of my afternoon hours were spent on the biggest plum tree in the yard, picking and eating the fruit fresh from the tree.

Throughout the season, street vendors across the country sell plums portioned in plastic bags with salt and chili pepper. With each bite you



take, dip the plum in the salt and pepper mixture for a taste you can't resist. Everyone from children to adults enjoy eating plums, be they green or ripe, with salt and pepper or without.

As plum season comes to an end and the fruits on the tree ripen so quickly you can't eat them fast enough, it's time to make plum sweets. A simple yet delicious way to preserve the plums long after the season is over, "Dulce de Ciruela" is a long-standing tradition kept in homes across Belize. While I do prefer eating my plums green, Dulce de Ciruela reminds me of home and is an excellent sweet and sticky snack. Using just two ingredients, this tasty treat can be made by anyone who has a sweet tooth for plums!

Dulce de Ciruela – Plum Sweet

Ingredients:

1lb ripe May Plums
3/4lb White Sugar

Directions:

Place plums and sugar in a non-stick pot over medium heat

Stir constantly, until sugar starts to caramelize and the plums release their natural juices

Once the sugar completely melts, the plums will turn in a caramel brown color in a sticky sauce

Let cool and enjoy!



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April 13th: Minita Concha Art Exhibit at the Image Factory, North Front Street in Belize City starting at 7PM

April 14th/15th: Tilapia and Bird Festival, Ayinha Park in Crooked Tree Village starting at 9AM, daily
April 14th: Pantempers Steel Pan Orchestra Concert at the Biltmore Plaza in Belize City starting at 7PM
April 17th: Parrish Live in Concert at the Dive Bar, North San Pedro Town starting at 6PM
April 18th: Parrish Live in Concert at Palapa Bar and Grill, San Pedro Town starting at 6PM
April 21st: Ariel Rosado Ride starting at Galen University, Western Highway at 6AM
* Temash River Challenge, Crique Sarco Village, Toledo District starting at 9AM (more info at <https://www.facebook.com/temashriverchallenge/>)

April 22nd: Osun Celebration at Bullet Tree Falls, Cayo District starting at 10AM
April 26th - 29th: 2nd Annual Festival of the Sun and Moon at Sandbar Beach Hostel, San Pedro Town starting at 1PM, daily
April 27th - 29th: National Agriculture and Trade Show at the Trade Show Grounds in Belmopan City starting at 8AM, daily
April 28th: 3rd Annual Forward Movement Street Festival at Arthur Street in Orange Walk Town starting at 4PM
April 29th: Red Dragon Martial Arts Extravaganza at the St. Martin De Porres Parish, Belize City starting at 9AM

Belize - My Happy Place

By Mary Gonzalez

The beauty that surrounds us Belizeans is immense and varied. Yet, caught in the throes of simply living and surviving, we might miss moments here and there. However, we get a gentle reminder when we meet people who have plotted and planned for months to visit our country. We meet them and see them trying to enjoy every second of their precious vacation time exploring Belize's wonders. Suddenly, our curiosity is piqued. Why here? What is it that draws you here, out of all the places in the world? Why Belize?

"Belize reawakened me" says Ali Wunderman

We met Ali Wunderman in the most unlikely of places, and once we spent more time together, it was clear that our chance meeting in the Chiquibul rainforest in the Maya Mountains is classically Ali. She is unique, outspoken, passionate and in love with Belize. Her experiences, which she shares frankly with us, have only cemented her love further. Here she shares some of her reasons 'Why Belize?'

MBB: So first of all, how did you find out about Belize?

Surprisingly late in life! A few years ago I was going on a kayaking trip in San Francisco, and the guide was just about to move to Belize to start a kayaking company there. He was really cool and he made Belize out to be this magical jungle paradise, more off the beaten track than Costa Rica or even Nicaragua.

MBB: So you hear about Belize and think to yourself..."Self, go forth



Ali (left) on the boat captained by Luis, heading to the Chiquibul where she spent two weeks volunteering to protect Scarlet Macaw hatchlings from poachers. "[This photo has] been my computer background for two years; I never want to forget what it's like to be there. Belize is very photogenic!" - Wunderman/thenaturalist.org

and explore!" How long did it take you to get to Belize after hearing about it?

About 2-3 years...I got engaged a few years following that kayaking trip, so obviously the honeymoon conversation came up quickly - because that's really why people get married these days.

MBB: haha!

We actually had our sights on Cuba, since it had just become legal for Americans to travel there, but we

also tossed around the idea of Cuba plus Jamaica plus Belize, just to make the most out of the opportunity. Three weeks before the wedding we still had no concrete honeymoon plans, and because Cuba's travel laws were so confusing, it became faster just to pick Belize! Our first stop was Ambergris Caye, at the Phoenix Hotel.

MBB: La di da! So what did you think?

My first impression was...kind of a complicated feeling. My first time abroad was to Costa Rica. I was 10 and I really loved animals and desperately wanted to see the jungle. As I got older, I developed a fear of flying, fear of spiders, and fear of discomfort. I was honestly kind of scared when I got to Belize. It was very hot, and I had been on

two plane flights, plus a Tropic Air flight, and I was nervous to be far from home.

MBB: Wow! That was complicated!

What was weird was how much the environment of Belize put me at ease. The smell of gas from the golf carts, the salt air, food cooking from behind open windows, people chatting, all the bright colors - it was like I had shut myself off from the world, and by going to Belize, all the lights had turned on again!

I am, at my core, a traveler, and it had been a long time since I let myself exercise that muscle, out of fear. Belize reminded me who I really am!

MBB: Would you say it's been a passionate love affair ever since?

Basically, yes! The whole trip was three weeks...the first two were in

Continued on Page 14



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Why Belize Continued from Page 13

San Pedro, because I was still hesitant about traveling around. Plus I was tired from wedding planning - putting a wedding together is no joke. We mostly putzed around the caye, went out to Secret Beach, which was still quite unknown, even though it was only two years ago. By the end of the second week I had contracted giardia. I had been careful with water but I got unlucky. Getting sick abroad was basically my biggest fear, and yet, there was nothing that would have made me want to leave

MBB: Goodness, that sounds terrible...and oh my god, did you go to our local clinic?

No haha! At this point I was on the mainland, starting my G Adventures trip. I cave tubed, visited Mayan ruins, went bird watching, all while feeling like dying.

I hadn't eaten in like five days, constantly throwing up, feeling so crappy. I decided to take a day in San Ignacio and just hang out by the pool. I went to the clinic but there wasn't a doctor there, and the walk up the hill in the heat really took it out of me. My guide was around, and his cousin or someone came to visit, and he had another relative who is a doctor. So it being Belize, they just called the doctor over who came and treated me while I was in a bathing suit at the pool. Gave me some medicine, some advice, all that. That would never happen in the U.S. I felt physically worse than I ever had, and yet so truly HAPPY because that sense of community is almost gone from where I live.

MBB: It's the classic Belizean "everyone is related to someone" story

Yes!!!! And also that Belizeans in general want to help each other and help strangers. I love that. The connection between people is so strong. One of the scariest parts about traveling abroad is feeling alone, feeling helpless if something goes wrong. Things couldn't have gone more wrong for me that first trip to Belize, and yet what I remember is how good I felt about who helped me, and how I was able to help myself.

MBB: Speaking of the mainland, that's where we met you! How did that happen?

So that first trip really reawakened me to who I am. I got sick, saw spiders, etc and loved every second of it. I belong in the jungle and I had ignored it for so long! It felt good to be back. Not only that, it really reminded me that what I truly love is wildlife. That's why I loved the jungle to begin with, it's so full of animals. Seeing howler monkeys at Mayan temples and crocodiles around San Pedro was like... euphoric. I remember being sicker than sick, cave tubing, and thinking about what I wanted to do with my life. When I got home, I was inspired. I immediately created my website, The Naturalist, which was meant to be a digital magazine that explored wildlife topics through a positive lens, as well as tracked my travels as I went looking for animals to photograph/write about. It was only six weeks after the honeymoon that I was back in Central America. My plan was to go from Guatemala to Colombia, hitting every country along the way, but...after Guatemala, I stayed in Belize for five weeks - of course!! I volunteered with Scarlet Six (now Belize Bird Conservancy) and spent

two weeks essentially alone in the jungle, camping beneath nests defending baby parrots from poachers, while jaguars and crocs and every bug circled around nearby and I have never felt so alive!

MBB: Imagine our surprise at bumping into you that day on our one-day excursion!

Yes! I was so desperate for human interaction at that point too - haha! It was definitely an interesting experience.

MBB: Would you say that Chiquibul ranks up there as one of your coolest experience?

Yes, definitely. Not just because it's the actual jungle with actual jungle animals, but because of the access to it. It's extremely rare to find free volunteer opportunities, and even rarer to participate in something where you genuinely get to have an impact. It is NOT a tourist experience. It's not releasing baby turtles on a beach (who don't need that kind of help anyway). The Chiquibul is wild and raw and real. Belize is the only place I know of where 1) locals, not foreigners, are the ones leading the charge for conservation and 2) making it possible to get foreigners like me on board to support them in a hands on way. The location in and of itself is exquisite and special, but it's the same environment that Guatemala has - same trees and all that. But Belize takes a different approach that allows for way more appreciation.

MBB: There are resorts that market the reef to jungle experience, but not everyone can quite say they've done the Ali Wunderman special, huh?

No haha!! And I would recommend my approach. Traveling around is easy and quick (and fun, I love the buses), so there's no real reason to restrict yourself to one hotel - I mean, last trip I went to Cayo Espanto and Old House Hostel, so go figure!

MBB: You're an advocate for the bus route then?

For solo/young/couple travelers, yes. Not for families, unless they're already adventurous. It also depends on how much time they're there. But Belize is not a place I would recommend going if you just want to sit around in one place. It has a lot more to offer than that, and the buses will show you some of that.

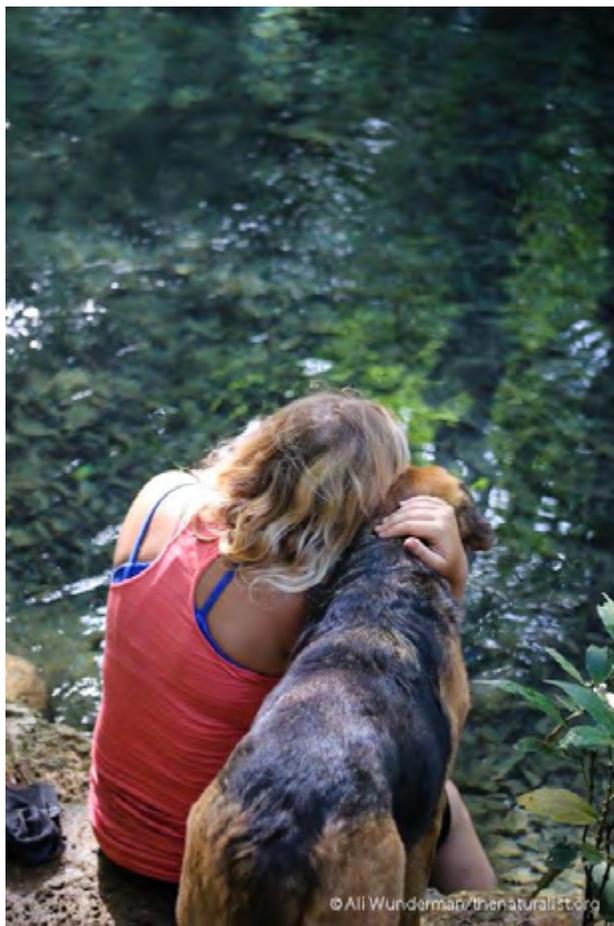
MBB: What about the food in Belize?

I think Belizean food is some of the best in the world. I was just telling my husband today that the lack of chain restaurants means pretty much anything you get is going to be authentic, and delicious, and not processed like American food. I am of course pathologically obsessed with fry jacks. That's what we ate three meals a day in the jungle...

MBB: Wait...you ate fry jacks 3x a day in Chiquibul?

YES hahaha. With beans, sometimes cheese, and canned meat if it was a special day. I don't know why I didn't get sick of them, I only craved them more. I've looked all over Belize for fry jacks like that ones we made and Pop's is the closest to homemade! Errolyn's House of Fry jacks on Caye Caulker is my choice on the Cayes.

[The Chiquibul is where] I learned to make them, and I've tried to make them in the US but I can't get them to puff up. I'm also in love with Marie Sharp's, just the regular fiery flavor. I have a few bottles here and I use it with a lot of meals.



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Why Belize Continued from Page 13

MBB: Obviously you've come back to Belize, and we know it has to do with writing. Care to share?

I've been writing steadily about Belize for magazines and newspapers. In 2016 I broke a story internationally about plans to drill on the barrier reef for oil, and I was told this helped push against that.

MBB: That's brilliant! ...okay, carry on...

Last year I took on the project of revising a Belize guidebook for Frommer's, with the intention of finding and promoting eco-friendly hotels, restaurants, and attractions. Since I have had the chance to experience a lot of these things firsthand, I knew what I could vouch for. Belize being the place that it is, a lot of people also guided me in the right direction, introduced me to people, and gave advice on what to include. Some places call themselves eco-friendly but are the exact opposite (I'm looking at you Harvest Caye/Norwegian Cruise Lines)

So many Belizeans take conservation and the environment seriously, and I wanted to create something that would do their work justice. I already help a lot of people plan their Belize trips, but doing this book gave me the chance to reach out to a bigger audience and help them make eco-friendly decisions

I find that most tourists want to put their dollars towards ethical companies, so if I can do the research for them then it's so much easier for them.

MBB: Ali's Belize version of the Frommer's Travel Guide will be out July 17, 2018. Read her fabulous nature/animal stories online at www.thenaturalist.org!

Wolfe's Woofers Hotel Maintenance



By Dennis Wolfe

"I'm starting to get worried that they won't make it," Sherry said.

"They'll be here. Cruise ships are always on time," I told her. We were sitting in the lobby of the Princess Hotel and Casino in Belize City waiting for Bruce and Becky, our friends from Texas. We had a room at the Princess because they were on the Carnival ship Breeze out of Galveston and we planned to spend the day with them.

As we waited in the lobby a tourist and his wife walked past, arguing loudly. They went up to their room and a few minutes later the man came rushing back down. "I need some help!" he said. "Room 520 on the fifth floor."

"What's the problem, sir?" the desk clerk asked. "It's my wife. She's very upset and threatening to throw herself off the balcony." He turned and rushed back upstairs.

The desk clerk looked puzzle but he picked up the phone and called the maintenance department.

When he arrived, the worker asked, "What's up Winston?"

"I'm not sure," the clerk said. "The man in 520 says he needs somebody from maintenance."

Once again, the guest came running downstairs.

"You have to hurry!" he told the desk clerk. "Quick!"

"Sir, if your wife threatens to jump off the balcony, it's sounds like it's more of a personal nature than a maintenance problem."

"Oh, no. It's definitely a problem for maintenance. She can't get that sliding glass door opened."

Sudoku Answers

Puzzle on Page 7

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

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Where in Belize...

Despite its relatively small square mileage, a lot of Belize remains a mystery. There are so many hidden nooks that may never be discovered by all. We can't tell you how often it is we take the wrong turn down a dirt road, only to find ourselves feeling like we're in a whole new world. It's the beauty of exploring a place that remains relatively undeveloped, and if you're up for the adventure, who knows where you'll end up!



Getting to and from places around Belize can be a challenge, especially when you're looking at places divided by a body of water, and a simple canoe ride won't do. A friend who travels all over the country sent us this photo, showing large vehicles being transferred from one bankside to the other.

Join our guessing game on Instagram and Facebook, let us know if you can identify this little spot!

To find out where exactly it is, and how to get there, follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @mybeautifulbelize, using the hashtag #whereinbelize. We can't wait to see your guesses!

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