

The background of the entire page is a vibrant underwater photograph. It shows a variety of coral reefs, including large, flat, fan-like corals in shades of purple, pink, and orange. There are also smaller, more complex coral structures. Several small, striped fish are visible swimming among the coral. The water is clear and blue, with light rays filtering down from the surface.

My Beautiful Belize

TRAVEL PUBLICATION

| June 2018 | Vol. 06 #06 |

An underwater world worth saving!

The Belize Barrier Reef awaits de-listing from
UNESCO's World Heritage Sites In Danger

From the Editor *Tamara Sniffin*

As you may know, the 2018 theme for My Beautiful Belize is conservation, and what an inspiring topic it has been! Each month we feature at least a couple stories about the amazing organizations, programs, projects and people who work very hard to make a difference in our beloved Belize, and we are delighted that there is no shortage of such stories! In this issue, we are happy to share with you an article from Southern Belize where one village is funding school programs by recycling produce bags into colorful tote bags for sale. I love that by repurposing materials the Colombia Kids Program is raising much-needed income to enhance their education. Talk about a win, win situation!



In this issue, we are also super inspired by Biodiversity and Sustainable Development scientist Valentine Rosado, who proves that in a country where some claim there is little opportunity, with hard work and dedication a person can succeed in Belize, regardless of their means. Like so many of the other champions for the environment we have featured this year, their common denominator is sheer determination and perseverance. Oh, to just have an ounce of that!

As we were finalizing the touches on this issue, we received incredible news that the Belize Barrier Reef may actually be de-listed from UNESCO's World Heritage Sites in Danger. The final decision of the World Heritage Committee will be made in June this year at its 42nd meeting in Bahrain. Kudos to all organizations that worked tirelessly to make this happen!

We hope that while visiting Belize you will have the opportunity to meet some of these outstanding individuals, there are many, and each has an amazing story to share. Don't be shy about striking up a conversation with one of the many people you will meet while you are here, most of us are blessed with the gift of gab and love to visit.

Welcome to My Beautiful Belize!

About the cover: Located on the edge of the Gladden Spit and Silk Cayes Marine Reserve some 20 miles east of the Placencia Peninsula, the perimeter of Hatchet Caye showcases a kaleidoscope of sea fans and corals teeming with tropical marine life. Here, the Belize Barrier Reef is a stunning testimony to what a healthy reef system looks like.

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 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.

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The Boy Who Couldn't Swim: Valentine Rosado is living proof that determination and perseverance can lead to a life spent doing what you love! P. 6

Spicy Belize: Habaneros are often referred to as Maya Cherries. No...they are not sweet, but they sure add flavor to a meal! P. 14

Get happy at Sandy Toes: How could you not have the best time at one of the cutest beach bars around? P. 15

Belize = Serendipity: Courtney Sage describes her love affair with a place she once only dreamt of visiting: Belize! P. 16

Good News Everybody: Conservation is flourishing in our country, and there are so many people pushing for change! P. 18

Recycling for the children: San Pedro, Columbia youth get to enjoy extra-curricular activities by recycling produce bags...learn more on P. 19

For ad rates and story opportunities, email us at : hello@mybeautifulbelize.com

For detailed stories and many more beautiful photos, visit www.mybeautifulbelize.com

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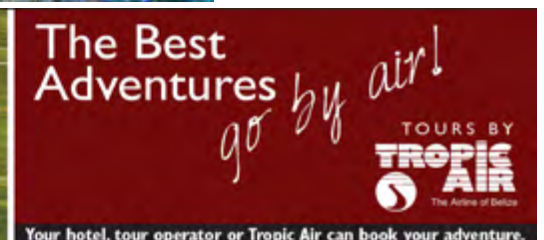
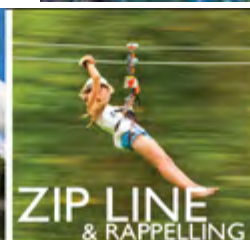
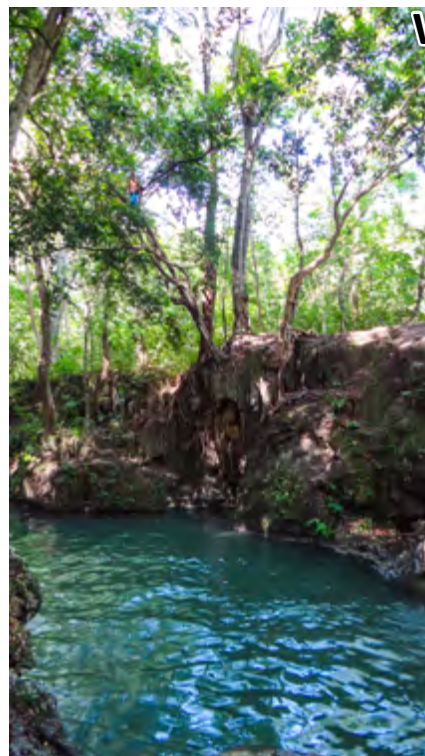
Where in Belize...
May's location revealed

Cristo Rey Waterfalls

Hidden down a dirt road and accessible to those in the know, the waterfalls of Cristo Rey offer an especially cooling rush during the hottest months of the year in Belize. We made our way to these falls by clambering on a shuttle, then hiking our way to swim, timing it so we don't miss the return shuttle to San Ignacio Town. If you're driving, well, you're in luck and can enjoy the falls as long as you want!

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!



Hatchet Caye, an Emerald Isle Paradise

By Tamara Sniffin



"It's good luck to see dolphins," William, our excited boat captain exclaims as he slows our speeding vessel down and sharply turns back to where he just spotted crescent shaped dorsal fins breaking the water. "There, you can see two of them," he points as we quickly grab our cameras and steady our stance on the rocking boat. Our eyes follow Williams direction and as we skim the choppy sea steel-black dolphin backs crest the surface as the pair swim in unison. We marvel at their graceful beauty as they disappear into the blue abyss and we indeed feel lucky, and more excited than ever to reach our Hatchet Caye destination some 20 miles east of the Placencia Peninsula. Not once during the 1 hour, 15-minute boat ride do we feel "alone" on the vast blue expanse, the dolphins

and Captain William are good company, and from near and as far as the horizon the seascape is dotted with emerald isles. Some of the larger ones sit populated with cottage clusters while others are secluded islands graced with ribbons of white sandy beaches or no more than a modest tangle of mangrove habitat. With an estimated 75 cayes within the area, it is easy to dream of boarding a sailboat and exploring them all for days on end, and we are impressed when William rattles off names like Lark Caye, Laughing Bird Caye, Round Caye and Moho Caye along the way.

The majority of cayes within this Placencia/Laughing Bird Caye Coastal Planning Region are either wholly or partly owned or leased. Located on the edge of the Gladden

Spit and Silk Cayes Marine Reserve, Hatchet Caye is privately-owned with secluded areas reserved for their resort guests while hosting a public area where visiting fishing/snorkeling/diving/sailing groups are welcome to enjoy their Lionfish Bar & Grill and beach area. Upon our arrival, this popular eatery and watering hole is bustling with jovial island hoppers and resort guests. We are greeted with a refreshing glass of rainbow colored juice and resort manager Dasha welcomes us to our home for the next two nights.

Replete with a handful of cozy beachside cottages that face the Meso-American Barrier Reef with views of the Silk Cayes on the horizon, these cabañas are the perfect combination of lavish leisure. No detail has been overlooked, pro-

viding the ultimate in comfort and privacy. Our abode is an ocean view room on the ground floor of the main building which houses a third-story "crow's nest" deck for amazing 360° views and the ultimate space for a private massage.

As a gal from Ambergris Caye, people often ask me what it's like to live on an island, and I like to respond with a quote from Police Chief Brody in the 1975 movie classic "Jaws" when he says, "It's only an island if you look at it from the water," which is indeed the case on Ambergris. However, from every vantage point on this 7.5-acre oasis there is no doubt you are on an island, with breathtaking seascapes where ever you look. But don't let this tiny slice of tropical heaven fool you when it comes to

Continued on Page 4

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Emerald Isle Paradise Continued from Page 3

BIG adventures, which they offer in abundance! Resort guests are welcome to use their large selection of non-motorized water "toys", and your choices include kayaks, pedal boats, paddle boards and Hobie Cats complete with complimentary sailing lessons if needed! Surrounded by world-class dive sites, they also offer diving tours and certification classes and fishing in the area attracts anglers from around the world! Just off the shores of Hatchet Caye is a prime habitat for permit, tarpon and bonefish, where fly fishing "grand slam" dreams come true, or venture further into the deep blue for Yellow Fin and Black Fin Tuna, Wahoo, Dorado, Sailfish, and Blue and White Marlin.

As much as I love the water toys and fishing, for me it's all about the snorkeling! The coral formations around the caye are super healthy and teaming with a kaleidoscope of marine life. The following day we start from the main pier where we spend more than two hours snorkeling around half the island, then take a lunch break and finish snorkeling the other half of the caye! Never in water deeper than eight feet, through warm, crystal clear water we spot Queen, Gray and French angelfish, trunkfish, cowfish, trumpetfish, tons of colorful wrasses and parrotfish, neon gobies, butterfly fish, grouper, sea stars and anemones among gorgeous varieties of coral. The resort also offers guided

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Emerald Isle Paradise

Continued from Page 4

snorkel trips to nearby sites such as the Silk Cayes or you can snorkel with turtles within the Gladden Spit Marine Reserve. And, if you're really feeling adventurous, at night the lights on the end of the pier attract gorgeous spotted eagle rays, squid, octopus and other fish that you can snorkel with in the dark. Too creepy for me - I think I'll just enjoy watching them from above while sipping a nice glass of wine!

Of course, with all this activity, a person can work up a mighty hunger and thirst, and the friendly staff at the Lionfish Bar & Grill assure that you are well fed and watered! Offering a delicious variety of breakfast and lunch items you can order off the menu morning classics like Huevos Rancheros or a yummy breakfast burrito to fuel you up for your busy day of fun, while lunch items like tasty Lionfish tacos or a jalapeno infused burger along with a frosty mug of Belikin beer can top you up for an afternoon of relaxing around their fresh water pool, making good use of a beachside hammock or perhaps a little pampering with a massage? Their dinner menu varies each night, with your choice of appetizer, three different entrees and a dessert. Fresh seafood is a mainstay served in a variety of ways, such as with pasta or perhaps in a kabob, and other items like ribeye steak or braised ribs paired with your favorite cocktail or wine can hit the spot after a hard day of play!

Whether you're on a romantic getaway, celebrating a special occasion, on an exciting family adventure or spending quality time with friends, your escape to Hatchet Caye is sure to be one for the memory books. Be sure to check out the summer specials they are currently offering at <https://www.hatchetcaye.com>.



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Valentine Rosado: How a boy that couldn't swim grew up to save the sea

By Tamara Sniffin



Across the globe, there are non-profit organizations that are dedicated to conservation. Powered by selfless individuals who are dedicated to the cause nearest and dearest to their hearts, there are shining stars within the constellation of people who work hard to make a difference in this troubled world. Be it the preservation of endangered flora and fauna, to keeping native languages, cultures, music and the arts alive, each person is an essential cog in the wheel of conservation. Belize is blessed with many such organizations, and although it takes a collective group to accomplish the many challenges before them, often there are those who inspire others to share the same commitment. In this monthly series, we spotlight one of these outstanding individuals.

Biodiversity scientist, documentary filmmaker and photographer, sustainable development advocate, conservationist, dive instructor, husband, father and all-around heck-of-a-guy Guadalupe "Valentine" Rosado was born and raised in the Corozal Bay. He grew up wanting to become a medical doctor, got good school grades and especially enjoyed science. His parents had no

formal education beyond primary school but were very hard working. "Every day they reminded me of how important it was to study, and they gave me all the positive influence I needed. I worked like a man from an early age (the meat shop, and fish trade business is seriously hard work) and it made me appreciate the importance of studying and pursuing a career. I

believe that it made me a stronger person and prepared me to take up tasks without complaining or feeling that I am above what needs to be done," he recalls.

Valentine reflects on his first major 'life hurdle' when a few weeks before completing high school and heading off to medical school his 'intellectual independence' awoke, revealing that medicine was not a

life for him. "I needed to understand what aspect of science I truly wanted to do for the rest of my life. My family and network of support were devastated. They thought I was lost and would only amount to a 'menial being' instead of living up to my true potential. My 'fall back' was my love for nature and travel and I thought if I pursued biology I would eventually

Continued on Page 8

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Valentine Rosado

Continued from Page 6

figure out my true passion. I grew up staring at the beautiful Corozal Bay and was always intrigued by the sea. My school holidays were spent in San Pedro visiting family and hanging out at the Amigos del Mar Dive Shop watching the divers come back from dives, hearing their stories and wondering what it was like to explore the reefs. I watched my cousins swim all evening at the end of the dock and could never understand how is it that they learned how to swim on their own? I collected marine brochures and travel magazines and wondered how a boy that cannot swim could ever have a career focused on the sea? Even while I earned my first degree in biology, I wanted to figure out if marine biology would be something I was good at, or if there was something else that would truly fulfill my life's ambition."

This 'calling' was affirmed after he had the opportunity to join a group of university students from the U.S. for their field experience in Belize. "On this trip, I spent an entire week exploring many coral islands in southern Belize. I slept on the dock of the marine field station looking at the marine life 'glow' under millions of stars. It was a place far away from any form of light pollution and everyone was very passionate about nature. I was convinced that I had made the right choice. Medicine was not for me, but nature biology, specifically marine, sure was!"

At 17, Valentine finally learned how to swim well enough to take his first diving course. "I worked my butt off for my first summer holiday (as a medical school 'deserter') and saved my money to self-finance my scuba course in San Pedro. This is something that I am very proud of. My first dive was a disaster (I got incredibly seasick) and I thought I was done, but thanks to my dive instructor (and the pressure of all the money I had paid for the course), I found the courage to return and finish the course. I was so hooked that throughout my studies in biology at Sacred Heart Junior College and the University of Belize, I pursued a parallel career as a marine guide. By the age of 19, I was already a tour guide, a PADI dive instructor, an Emergency First Response Instructor and a Belize Emergency Response Team paramedic. The best part of being a marine guide/instructor and struggling biologist was the opportunity to dive every atoll in Belize and every region of



Aruba



Belize



Belize



Miami

our barrier reef. I studied sea turtles at nesting sites, groupers at spawning aggregations, fish and corals using scientific methods and met a lot of amazing people. By the time I went back to do my graduate studies, my experience working on a multitude of conservation projects and coastal communities made it so much more impactful. I now have a science degree in Biodiversity and Sustainable Development and my past experiences gave me a whole different perspective to conservation work."

A man of many environmental interests, Valentine believes there are benefits to having a varied focus. "The ability to actively take in the experience and knowledge from multi-disciplinary realms allows you to make better connections across learning barriers and to develop a unique worldview to solve challenges. I've worked in the NGO sector and struggled to understand challenges we had working with the government sector. I spent time working in the government sector and developed a great sense of appreciation for the work that they do and the challenges they face. I spent time working in the private sector and they too have a unique view of the world. I have not mastered these realms, but I have amassed a comprehensive understanding that will enable us to be more effective at our conservation work. Most importantly, biodiversity scientists must be able and willing to work with all sectors to develop solutions to the problems affecting our world, solutions that are based on sound science and the principles of sustainable development."

Over the years he has been involved in several mangrove restoration projects with measured success, not only in Belize but in Costa Rica, Aruba, and Miami, U.S. "In 2013 we reforested three islands in Aruba that had been affected by several storms and were almost completely eroded. Seabirds were still nesting in the sand spit although they didn't stand a chance against the wave action. The success of the mangroves, despite the conditions, has been a catalyst to expand the project to other areas. In 2015 we assisted a high-profile tourism development in Miami in reforesting their coastline and now that their high-rise towers are almost complete, the project will be expanded to increase the vegetation coverage along the coastline.

Continued on Page 13

North Ambergris Caye

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SuDoku Time! Answers on Page 19

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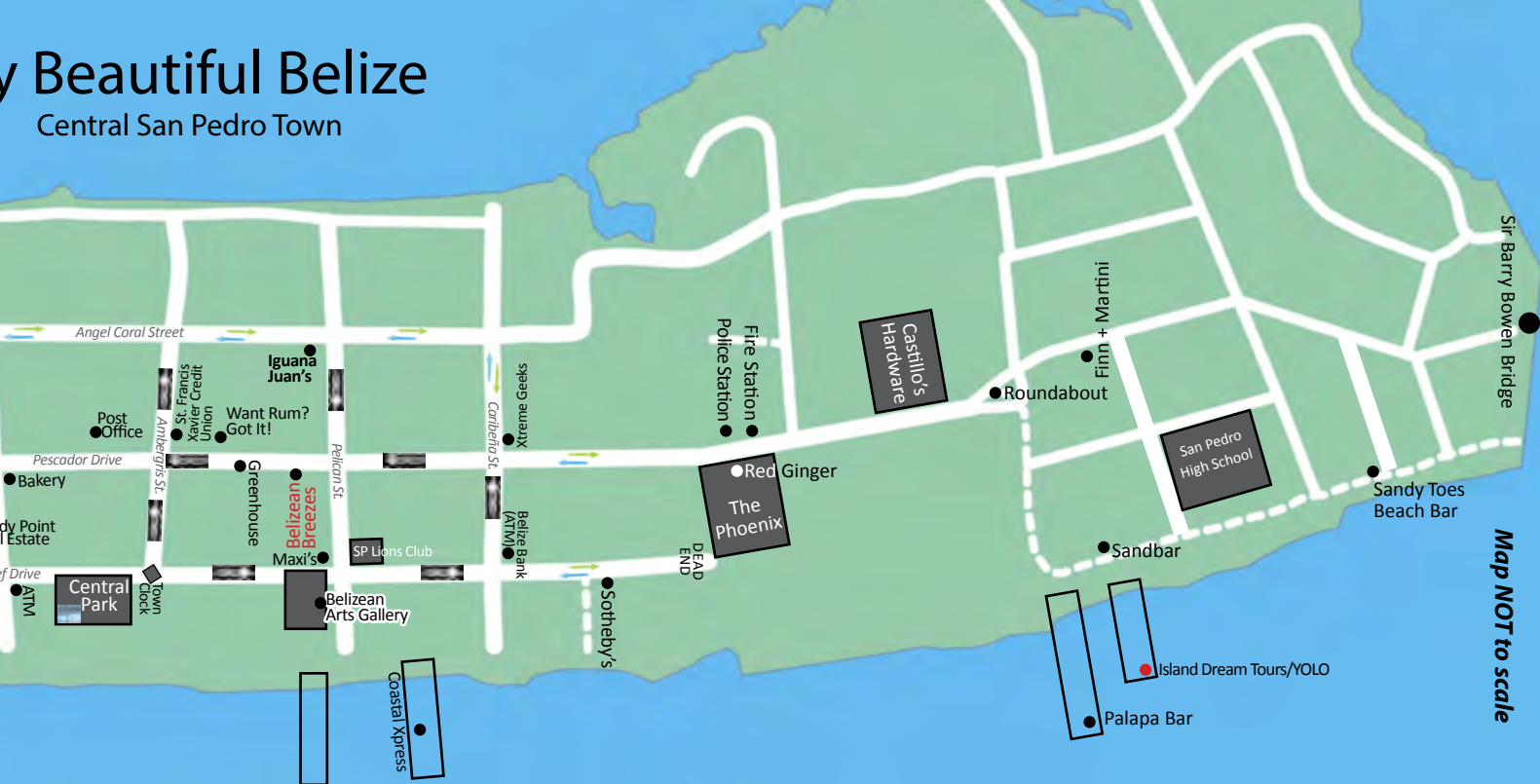
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Central San Pedro Town



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June 2018

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

BELIZE SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY is a full-service firm offering sales, vacation rentals, and property management in Belize (Ambergris Caye & Placencia Peninsula). We are service oriented and will ensure that our clients' needs are met and exceeded. www.belize-sothebysrealty.com

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.



WANT RUM? GOT IT! 100% Belizean Rums. Travellers Liquors FACTORY OUTLET and show-room! Home of world class and award winning rums. Wholesale and retail. Daily complementary rum tastings of over 25 products! www.facebook.com/wantrum #15 Pescador Drive

226-4690.

PALAPA BAR AND GRILL: On the Wet Willy's Dock. Daily 11am – 11pm. Relax on the inner-tubes and have your bucket of ice cold beers lowered to you. Outdoor seating, awesome smoked food, cheeseburgers, seafood and tropical drinks and an astonishing view!



SANDY TOES BEACH BAR: Enjoy our sandy Boca del Rio beachfront and swimming area, or sit inside the bar with our 40" Flat Screen TVs. Live music Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday Beach BBQ. Kitchen open daily 10AM – 11PM. Best island vibe in San Pedro!



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CASA PICASSO RESTAURANT: Tapas dining in an artful setting. Global flavors from local ingredients...martinis, wines, cocktails. Vegetarian & gluten-free options. Open Tuesday-Sunday at 5:30pm. Last reservations 9:00pm. 226-4443 or reservations@casapicassobelize.com. Located south of town past Caribeña Gas Station & Belikin Distributor. Find us on Facebook or casapicassobelize.com.



EI DIVINO CARIBBEAN STEAKHOUSE & MARTINI BAR: Banana Beach's signature restaurant, featuring indoor and outdoor dining and sports lounge. Serving USDA meats, wood fired pizza, fresh seafood, pastas...locals LOVE our ceviche! Daily dinner and drink specials, Happy Hour from 3-7pm. 226-2444.

HIDDEN TREASURE RESTAURANT: Serving Latin American & Caribbean cuisine in an enchanting atmosphere. Serving dinner Wednesday-Monday from 5pm - 90pm, closed on Tuesdays. Located in the Escalante neighborhood. Live music on Thursdays! Free shuttle service to customers in town. Contact us 226-4111/4236 and www.hiddentreasurebelize.com



THE PALMILLA RESTAURANT AT VICTORIA HOUSE: A casual experience with a unique mix of island seafood and continental cuisine. Relaxed and informal yet romantic. Admiral Nelson Bar is the place to be casual and relax in your swimsuit, enjoying breakfast, lunch and dinner with magnificent views. Reservations recommended: 226-2067.



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.

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



CAYE COFFEE ROASTING COMPANY: Local fresh roasted coffee manufactured in San Pedro Town. Available throughout Ambergris Caye and countrywide. M-F: 8:30-4:30, Sat: 8:30-noon. ONLINE WEB STORE, NOW OPEN!!! For more information visit <http://www.cayecoffee.bz>.



Valentine Rosado

Continued from Page 8



In Costa Rica, resort owners on the Pacific Coast are now using mangroves to minimize the impacts of erosion. In 2010 we introduced the Riley Encased Methodology (REM) mangroves to San Pedro and several locations in Belize. Our most successful site was in 2014 in San Pedro. It validated our efforts and promised to be an example for coastal developers in Belize. We were inspired that after 2010 the mangroves thrived without additional support and were doing well up to 2014. However, we failed to gain interest in expanding the reforestation project and today none survive. Our lesson is that although our approach was successful, the process must be ongoing, with new mangroves introduced every year and people dedicating their time and investments to safeguard their survival."

As a talented photographer and filmmaker, Valentine has learned how to incorporate imagery into his conservation work and recently formed a private consulting firm, Grassroots Belize, with his wife Angie. "We combine our qualifications and experience working on conservation projects that instill meaningful change for the environment and the communities that depend on them. We work on conservation projects that we are passionate about and we work with clients who share our core values. My wife has a background in accounting and business

administration, and our science work is focused on research and sustainable development planning that aims to strengthen the ability of communities to withstand climatic impacts. We work with NGOs, government, universities and tourism developers on projects that include water quality monitoring, seafloor mapping, and mangrove reforestation, but our work only matters if we can inspire others to participate in projects that aim to improve our world. And, I can now combine my passion for photography and film through images of people living in harmony with nature. We also realize that our philanthropic work with communities helps to meet financing gaps for important conservation projects. We are in a unique position to foster working partnerships between the private sector and conservation organizations that would not engage in dialogue otherwise. We believe that bridging this link helps the private sector make meaningful contributions to conservation whilst empowering communities. This past year we welcomed our baby girl to this world and it was ever more important to assess our work plan. The stakes are much higher for us now, and it was obvious that we need to reduce our contribution to volunteer work. However, the work that we do helps improve our world. It would not be responsible for me to bring

my daughter into a world that is doomed by our actions."

Conservation work certainly comes with its challenges, and Valentine comments, "Belize is such a beautiful place, and this beauty is what attracts tourists and investors, but they are loving Belize to death. We are doing amazing conservation work in Belize but the same beauty that attracts people is being destroyed by development and the global impacts to the environment. I am not an extremist (you know, the tree-hugger stereotype that is associated with biologists and conservationists) and I keep fighting this stereotype. I believe that people and their well-being play an essential role in the work that we do. Preservation is one thing, but globalization has already happened. Conservation, on the other hand, has a strong focus on sustainable development and the role that people play."

If you would like to keep up with this ever-busy advocate and scientist extraordinaire you can follow Valentine at www.facebook.com/ValentineRosado, www.facebook.com/GrassrootsBelizeFilms or at his website at www.grassrootsbelize.com

Most photos by Valentine Rosado.



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Paintings Jewelry Decor Crafts



Spicy Belize

By Mary Gonzalez

When hot peppers are a staple at the dinner table

Hot peppers are a signature staple in most Belizean homes. Green to yellow to orange and red, they are used in a variety of ways in the kitchen. While habaneros are not the only peppers we eat, thanks to hot sauce maker Marie Sharp, they are pretty iconic. Thus, a bottle of Marie Sharp's often graces our tables. More often than not however, some variation of homemade hot sauce takes center stage during family meals, and everyone partakes - young and old.

Growing up in the village of San Antonio, we grew pretty much everything we ate. I can remember my grandmother snapping off bunches of okra from the vine, plucking sun ripened tomatoes and prepping chaya leaves. My cousins and I would round up the eggs from the chicken coop and pretty soon, a delicious feast would be on the table to enjoy. Accompanying the meals would be some curtido (onions and chopped habaneros soaked in a briny vinegar base), or a favorite of my grandma's, her fried peppers.

She would take a bunch of tiny red chiles, something we called bird peppers, and drop it in a pan with hot coconut oil and some thinly sliced shallots. After a nice sauté, she would take the cooked mixture and in her special wooden mortar and pestle, grind it all up. That tiny wizened woman then spread some of the spicy concoction on her corn tortillas, eating the rest of her meal with extra spice. Of course, having learned a hot lesson by sneaking a taste, we children were more than satisfied with a small sprinkle of curtido.

The older we get, the more our palate can handle and soon, habaneros, sometimes referred to as Maya Cherries, are a proper staple. Soup for lunch? Drop a couple habaneros in the pan before turning off the heat. Want to eat some tart green fruits? Smash up some habaneros with salt, add a little spice to the mix. Making Sunday dinner? Roast habaneros and make a delicious smoky mix to bring some heat to the dish. Ceviche time? Toss in some fresh slices of habanero – mind the seeds!

Growing up familiar with hot peppers as part of every meal often has us reaching for that something extra to take our dishes over the edge; it's as Belizean as Rice and Beans!



Toes in the Sand - happiness abounds at Sandy Toes Beach Bar

By Mary Gonzalez

Beach bars dot our coastline on Ambergris Caye, each vying for your attention with cocktails, nibbles and atmosphere. Each one is unique, and Sandy Toes Beach Bar is one that has captured the hearts of many with their irresistible touches across their stretch of sand. Owner Ishmael 'Ish' Lisbey is no stranger to the beach bar vibe, as he was the lone ranger standing when the much-beloved BC's Bar served its final cocktail.

BC's regulars were thrilled when Ish then took on a spot in Boca Del Rio, across a fabulous swimming spot, and began setting up a thatched building set to serve up the best in cocktails, snacks, meals, music and the kind of service that locals and visitors have come to expect. Sandy Toes has wriggled its way into our inebriated little hearts, with its bright beach chairs, friendly service and tasty food and drinks.

Sandy Toes really caters to the classic 'on the beach' vibe. I've spent many hours soaking in the sunshine while sitting on chairs as waves lap across my legs, shooting the breeze with my gaggle of girlfriends. Indulgent waiters bring us cocktails and snacks in the water...just another fabulous weekend in San Pedro.

Children's shrieks and laughter rings through the air as they build sand castles, their parents catching up under the shade of umbrellas specially set out for their enjoyment, and when the sun gets to be too much, there's nothing quite like bellying up to the bar and downing an ice cold Belikin beer, snacking on fresh ceviche or nachos. If you want something heartier, I highly recommend their fried chicken. I'm not joking – the seasoned chicken is crispy and delicious, with either fries or the ubiquitous Belizean rice and beans. They also have tasty quesadillas, fajitas and more, all cooked to perfection. For something different to hit the spot, I'm also partial to the Jack and Dip. Ish recommended it to me one evening as I sipped more than one too many cocktails, and it was the perfect antidote for the alcohol. Strips of flour dough are deep fried into little fry jacks, and served alongside a gloriously flavorful bean dip for the best bar snack ever. (I didn't say it was healthy...but damn are the calories worth it!)

Sometimes there's live music, or a deejay spinning tunes that has everyone on the dance floor.



After a few rum punches or panti rippas, even I believe I can dance! To look around, you'll see people of all ages, races and places having a grand old time. Hard-working bartenders and waiters make sure everyone's taken care of, all with a smile on their face. If you ever catch yourself in conversation with Ish, you will see why he has a following. His sincerity and genuine love for people comes across in spades, and you know you're part of the big Sandy Toes family.

Hope to catch you with sand in your toes, drink in your hand on the beach at Sandy Toes!



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?

Hailing from Memphis, Tennessee, USA, Courtney Sage feels that Belize has been the definition of the word 'serendipity'. We certainly appreciate the chain of events that led her to the shores of Ambergris Caye, as she is one of the Belize visitors that gets what makes us unique and worth visiting, over and over again! She's currently living in Germany with her husband Mark, their African Grey Parrot Cleo and one very spoiled kitty, L'Baby and is busy making grand plans for a return visit to Belize.

MBB: How did you find out about Belize?

Courtney: I knew for a long time that there is an incredible reef in Belize. It was on my bucket list, but I had no idea how I would be able to get there.

MBB: When did you finally make your first visit?

Courtney: 2007

MBB: And how was it versus your dream expectations?

Courtney: I literally cried when I saw the turquoise water. I'd only seen water like that in magazines...so, the WATER. The people: So warm, so helpful, so proud of their country and heritage. The food: I recall how I was initially very wary to eat anything terribly unfamiliar, but after a disappointing American style chicken breast sandwich, I decided to follow the advice I'd been given to "look for where the locals eat". A Belizean foodie was born.



Courtney enjoying one of her favorite Belize activities: snorkeling!



MBB: Aha! We keep hearing about the food in Belize being a draw. Any favorites?

Courtney: I was immediately addicted to Sunday dinners (Belizean rice and beans). Watermelon wa-

ter. Salbutes. Mmmm...breakfast at Estel's: fry jacks with Marie Sharp jam, fried potatoes and Maya eggs. Coconut pie from Elvi's Kitchen, beans and cheese pupusas from middle street. Funny story about those pupusas, I always thought the cabbage and tomato sauces were onions and hot sauce - ha!

I love Manelly's coconut ice cream and of course, anything from DandE's. Oh, and shrimp ceviche from Lily's Treasure Chest.

MBB: (Besides eating - ha) how would you spend an ideal 12 hours here?

Courtney: I can never sleep past sunrise - once I'm conscious of where I am (my favorite place ever) - so starting around 5/6AM, I'll sit on the porch and share my yogurt with my favorite tabby cat while bird watching and looking for iguanas and crocodiles in the canal next door.

Then I'll walk around for a couple of hours, watching the town wake up. I head towards the beach, sitting on docks looking for fish friends. I also like to go on a morning and afternoon snorkel if possible - Hol Chan and Mexico Rocks

I would meet with friends for lunch at Celi's, and I always order the same thing: Sunday Dinner

After lunch, I like a nap, so I'll find an unoccupied hammock usually, followed by an afternoon snorkel, then drinks somewhere. Nothing quite so refreshing as a rum punch at The Palapa Bar!

My ideal finisher for the day would be dinner at my friend's house - she makes salbutes to die for, and I get to catch up on my beloved local commercials on her TV. I head to bed around 8PM because I can't keep my eyes open and I'm so full and happy.

Continued on Page 17



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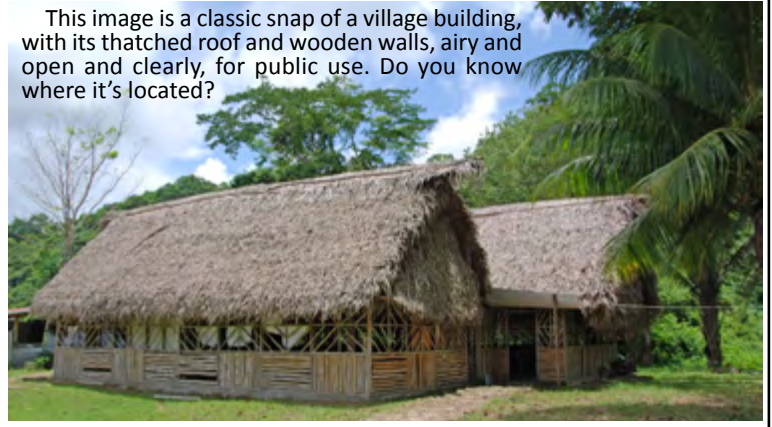


Where in Belize...

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!

Join our guessing game by following 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!

This image is a classic snap of a village building, with its thatched roof and wooden walls, airy and open and clearly, for public use. Do you know where it's located?



Belize - My Happy Place

Continued from Page 16

MBB: Aw. Sounds like a great day, and like you have local friends on the island! Tell us more about that.

Courtney: I feel like Belize has been the definition of the word serendipity for me...the people I've met, etc. I have family friends in Belize City who I've met through my mom. Her church had yearly trips to El Salvador, and she met a missionary there who ended up married to a Belizean woman. One day in Memphis, I wondered aloud if I could visit Belize and stay with them in the city. I was clueless and assumed I could stay with them and travel back and forth to the island every day. NOT!

However, the wheels began spinning and I turned to the internet, found Ambergriscaye.com, nabbed a great deal on a hotel and next thing you know I was on Ambergris Caye. I loved the energy of the town. The hotel was lovely but too far north for a solo traveler unfamiliar with the island. I spent all my money on water taxis.

After I returned from my first trip, I sent some of my photos to the ambergriscaye.com website and developed an online friendship with Marty Casado, the man behind the site. He gave me some of the best advice of my life: to meet Mary Gonzalez (now Rodriguez) and Marie Parham, and to go to Lamanai with Tanisha Tours. Because I followed his advice, I have a cluster of humans on that little island that occupy a huge part of my heart and make my life richer beyond explanation. I've planned a honeymoon for my dear friend, a family trip for 5, and even my own honeymoon there!

MBB: Oh...so it's Marty's fault, huh? Haha – we're so glad you listened! Seeing as you are one of our favorite people, share with us some of your Belize favorites too...

Courtney: Snorkeling at Mexico Rocks! But I also love snorkeling around docks and meeting new fish friends. The variety of marine life I've seen in Belize is mind blowing, and endlessly inspiring to me. I love to people watch – to see children going to school in their white uniforms! I learned there are secrets to keeping those so white, and it's hard work!

I am endlessly entertained by observing the daily goings-on (most certainly mundane to the locals, but fascinating to me) of activities in a place I see as having a much slower pace.

MBB: What are some of your not-so-favorite things about Belize...I have to ask because we know it's not all 100% perfection!

Courtney: I am concerned about the developments that destroy what Belize has been so progressive in protecting – I don't want it to be another Cancun. Most people who come to Belize do so because of their love for nature.

MBB: Any nature visits in your future?

Courtney: Yes! I want to spend time at Belize Bird Rescue. I want to see where my bestie grew up in Cayo. I also want to snorkel the Silk Cayes, Sapodilla and Tobacco Cayes, to name a few. I want to explore the area where the Garifuna live...I want to see the Maya Mountains and the Five Sisters Falls.

MBB: ...we need to make plans to join you all over the place!

June 2018

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Exciting News in Conservation!

Fragments of Hope is back from Jamaica!!



The cool people at Fragments of Hope (FoH) were part of a reciprocal exchange with Oracabessa Bay Fish Sanctuary in Jamaica in early May, 2018. The exchange was made possible with a GEF SGP grant, inspired by a request for assistance with a faster coral out-planting technique.

FoH focuses on transplanting corals to replenish the reef, and is in full support of more regional exchanges. They are thrilled with the in-country cooperation between groups in Jamaica working towards the same goal: more corals = more fish no matter how you grow them, as long as you get them on the reef!

**(GEF - Global Environment Facility) (SGP - Small Grants Program)*

Hands Across the Sand raises environmental awareness



Annually, people across the world join in holding hands to observe "Hands across the Sand". The event is also hosted in other countries, rallying citizens to take part in raising awareness about the fragile environment and the need to protect it for future generations to come. On May 19th, thousands of Belizeans joined hands to rally.

Oceana in Belize commends participants for sending a message to the country and the world that they care for their environment. They also call on the Government of Belize (GOB) to continue in the battle with them and to protect the country's natural resources.



Fighting for Cayo Rosario



These cuties were just a few of the island residents who joined in the flotilla rally to send a message to developers who have proposed a tourism project that will include 40 over-the-water structures at the southern tip of Cayo Rosario, just west of Ambergris Caye. This part of the project is considered a threat to the future of some of the most important fishing flats around the island that supports the fly fishing industry. Many of the supporters at the rally were fly fishing tour guides who have traditionally used the area for many years. Cayo Rosario is within a marine protected area, and is a haven for mangroves and several bird species. Organizers of the protest hope that their movement sensitizes the local authorities on this issue and pushes them to make an effort to seek a fair solution.

The Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System is expected to be de-listed as a World Heritage Site in Danger



The Ministry of Fisheries, Forestry, the Environment and Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Natural Resources recently led a collaborative team comprising the Fisheries Department, Forest Department, Lands and Surveys Department, the Belize UNESCO Office and the World Wildlife Fund to implement a series of remedial actions to qualify the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System for de-listing from the list of World Heritage Sites in Danger. The Ministries and their collaborators are pleased to announce that a draft decision has been published on the World Heritage Center's website that the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System has now substantially met the indicators for de-listing. The final decision of the World Heritage Committee will be made in June this year at its 42nd meeting in Bahrain.

The Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System comprises seven protected areas along the largest barrier reef in the northern hemisphere. It includes atolls, several hundred sand cays, mangrove forests, coastal lagoons and estuaries. This outstanding natural system illustrates the evolutionary history of coral reef development and is a significant habitat for threatened marine species, including sea turtles and the West Indian Manatee. The Barrier Reef and its various attractions are one of the core foundations for Belize's vibrant tourism industry. It was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1996. We anxiously await the updates with the good news of a de-listing!

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Columbia Kids Projects repurposed produce bags help fund extracurricular activities



Photos by Alisa Atkinson

Parents in the village of San Pedro, Columbia in the Toledo District of Southern Belize have initiated a project to raise funds to support extracurricular activities for their children while recycling produce bags. The heavy-duty bags, originally used for large quantities of rice brands, rabbit feed and even dog food, are fashioned into unique market bags that are not only functional but colorfully portray the Belizean culture.



The village is made up of many artisans: weavers, stone carvers, artists and chocolate makers! Many artists and artisans have joined the project and a percentage of their sales go towards helping the kids project. Every item is tagged, and each tag informs exactly how much money paid contributes to the project. These strong and pretty bags sell for \$5, with \$2 going directly to the person who sews it, \$2 directly towards the projects, .75 cents for materials and transport and .25 cents to the student who brings in the original bag.

The San Pedro Columbia Roman Catholic School receives some of the lowest school fees in Belize, which means that the

school cannot afford to take children on outings or have 'special occasion days.' This project funds educational trips, with a focus on fun as well as learning. It also helps the school to improve children's welfare by building up libraries, playgrounds and other essentials.

Currently the bags are available for purchase through their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/Columbia-Kids-Project where they post new inventory as it becomes available. They soon hope to have the bags available at select businesses as well. For more information please message them through their Facebook page.

What's happening in June?

June 9th:

Comedy Show Starring Mark Evans at Iguana Juan's Restaurant & Bar, San Pedro Town

June 10th: A Day in San Antonio: Culture, Nature & Sports. Join the Maya villagers in enjoying cultural presentations, bicycle race, and even the Pok Ta Pok Maya Ball game! San Antonio Village, Cayo District



June 16th: Youth Leadership Hiking Trip to the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, organized by Hopkins Organization for People and the Environment

June 16th: Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry is hosting its first "Made In Belize Expo" at the Agricultural Show Grounds in the City of Belmopan.

June 23rd: San Pedro Lobster Festival Block Party, Central Park, San Pedro Town

June 29th- July 1st: Caye Caulker Lobster Festival – enjoy the original lobster festival in gorgeous Caye Caulker Village

June 13th – 17th: Belize Jungle Yoga Retreat at Black Rock Lodge, Cayo District. Enjoy two of life's greatest pleasures, yoga and nature. Four nights, five days of jungle-inspired yoga flows, delicious cuisine, and as much (or as little) adventuring as your heart desires!

June 15th:

Party Like a Lob*star! Grand lobster season opening party. Banana Beach Resort, San Pedro Town.

June 16th & 23rd:

Belize Jazz Festival, Southern Foreshore, Belize City



Wolfe's Woofers Horsepower



By Dennis Wolfe

"I took care of the car rental," Sherry said. "I told them you'd be there around nine a.m. to pick up the car."

"Thanks. Now take me to catch the plane for Belize City."

By ten o'clock I was on the Burrell Boom road heading into Bermudian Landing. From there I would take the Lemon Road to a cutoff that would take me to Mike McFarland's ranch near the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary.

That was the plan, but when it started raining the dirt road to Mike's place turned to sludge and before long my rented car was hopelessly stuck. An hour later the rain stopped. As I sat there wondering what to do, a Mennonite with a horse and wagon came plodding up the road.

"Good day, neighbor," the man said. "You look like you need a hand."

"I certainly do," I told him. "I need to get a wrecker to tow this car out of the mud."

"You don't need a wrecker," he said. "My horse, Billy, can pull the car out for you."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure. Billy is very strong."

After unhitching Billy, the Mennonite produced a coil of rope from the wagon. He tied it to the car and to Billy's collar. He gave the reins a slap and yelled, "Pull, Pull, Pull!"

Billy stood where he was.

With another slap, the Mennonite yelled, "Pull, Blackie! Pull!"

Billy still did not move.

Another reins slap followed with, "Pull, Johnny!"

Next, the Mennonite slapped the reins and said, "Pull, Billy! Pull!" Billy surged forward and easily pulled the car from the mud.

"That was strange," I said. "Why did you call him by the wrong name three times?"

"Because he's blind. If he thought he was pulling that car by himself he wouldn't have even tried."

Sudoku Answers

Puzzle on Page 9

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

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