

From the Editor Tamara Sniffin

There are places in Belize that can only be described as heaven on earth. I think heaven, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder, and we all have our own idea of what the forever after would be. For me, a picture-perfect secluded island in the Caribbean is where I could spend an eternity, lazing the day away in a hammock overlooking a white sandy beach and snorkeling until I grow gills. But, until I go to that private island in the sky, I will have to settle for an occasional day of Caribbean perfection here on Earth in the heavenly country of Belize.



I've been fortunate to have spent quality time on a hand full of cayes in our country, from Long Caye and Half-Moon Caye within the Lighthouse Reef Atoll, the Snake Cayes in the Toledo District and Hatchet Caye (now called Ray Caye) and recently Ranguana Caye off the coast of Placencia. And, I do visit our island neighbor Caye Caulker while living on Ambergris Caye. Am I seeing a trend here? Each beautiful in their own way, I just

can't get enough of these Caribbean jewels.

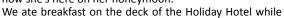
While traveling on the mainland a while ago I meet a tourist who had no plans to visit the cayes. After a little persuading we convinced him that if he wanted the full Belize experience, he had to visit one of our sandy sanctuaries, and boy was he glad he did, exclaiming he had no idea how beautiful they are! While visiting Belize I encourage you to discover one or many of our island paradises, even if it's just for a day! You will be glad to discover a slice of heaven in My Beautiful Belize!

ABOUT THE FRONT PAGE:

Pelicans are busy dive-bombing for fish and guests on kayaks and paddleboards leisurely float the calm waters at **Ranguana Caye**. This two-acre private island paradise has accommodations for overnight guests, but is also open to day visits, where you can enjoy the castaway experience of majestic palm trees, white sandy beaches and colorful lounge chairs.

Wolfe's Woofers Hidden Talent

"Dennis, this is Cynthia and Paul," Sherry said. "I met Cynthia when she was in Belize for a vacation two years ago and now she's here on her honeymoon."



Cynthia told us of dealing with the problems of being married to a professional poker player.

Cynthia said, "In spite of all the scheduling conflicts we've finally made it to our honeymoon. We planned a trip to meet our families together but we even had to do that separately because of poker."

"What do you mean?" Sherry asked.

"Paul has to travel at a moment's notice to play a hot tournament so anything we schedule probably won't happen."

"I see."

"We had airplane tickets for Houston to meet Paul's family in Houston but he got invited to play in a million-dollar tournament in New Jersey where my family lives. Paul went to meet my family while he was there and I went on to Houston to meet his. We met up again here in Belize."

"That reminds me," Paul said. "Your uncle is fooling around with his secretary and his wife knows it. Plus, you might want to ask your mom who your real father is."

Cynthia said, "My God! My aunt and uncle just announced their divorce and last month I discovered that I was adopted. How could you possibly know all of that?"

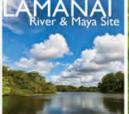
"It's a hidden talent developed from years of playing poker," Paul said. "I can read men like books. Most women, too."

"My hidden talent is that I can read the future," his wife said. "My prediction is that we'll be divorced within two weeks."

"How can you possibly predict something like that?" Paul asked. Cynthia said, "You'll know as soon as you see your brother again."









The Best Adventures by

The Placencia Peninsula: It's attachment to the mainland makes Placencia ideal for exploring and discovering favorite playgrounds in Belize! P. 3

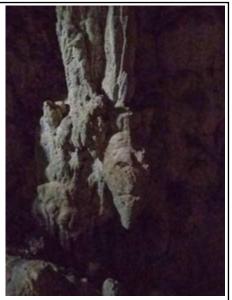
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Maruba Beach Klub: From drinks to delicious food to a bit of pampering, Maruba Beach Klub at Secret Beach offers an array of services! P. 11 Ready, Set, PADDLE!: The Belikin La Ruta Maya Challenge is almost here! Get ready for an exciting 175-mile race of stamina, determination and Belizean celebration. P. 12

The Citrus Industry is sweet: Our oranges are more than just sweet pulpy orange juice - it is an industry that has helped shape Belize! P. 13 **Belize Street Art Festival:** NICH honors the colorful passion of our local artists by hosting an annual Street Art Festival every final Saturday in February. This year featured some really cool artwork and even the Ek Balam Pok Ta Pok team! P. 14

Where Belize...

Do you ever feel, like someone's watching you? Our guide shared wonderful stories of the Maya civilization as we explored Xibalba Cave, in the Cayo District. Then he had us turn off our lanterns and there it was! A face staring at us, and only visible in the dark. Creepy and so cool.



To join our guessing game, follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @mybeautifulbelize, using the hashtag #whereinbelize.

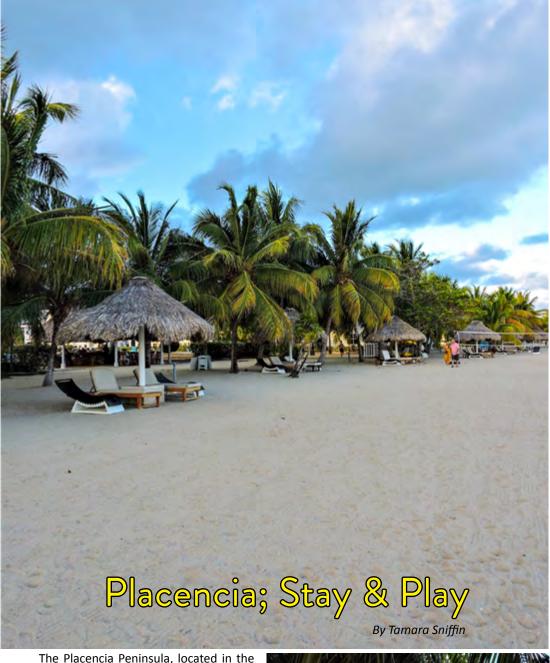
You can also send us your images of mystery locations to add to our guessing game! Send them to hello@mybeautifulbelize.com and join the fun!

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Where the road ends on the southern tip of Ambergris Caye



Architecture:

Blurring the lines between indoor and out, La Sirene makes minimalism welcoming.



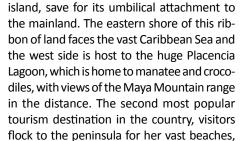


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Stann Creek District of Belize, is all but an

laidback atmosphere, wide variety of places to stay and tons of water sports to be enjoyed. From diving and snorkeling the Belize Barrier Reef about an hour boat ride away or exploring the dozens of cayes that dot the waters off her coast, this area is all about stay and play!

One establishment popular on this 19mile strip of land is the grand The Placencia Resort. Located at the beginning of the peninsula in the Maya Beach community, this resort offers comfortable and Continued on Page 4



Stay & Play in Placencia

Continued from Page 3

well-appointed accommodations for groups of all sizes. With an expansive pool, complete with swim-up bar, endless beaches and two restaurants, one on the end of a dock, a day of play can be easy spent without ever leaving the property.

Exploring the area is great fun and no visit is complete without a visit to the village of Placencia on the southern end of the peninsula. Quaint bars and restaurants line the beach and strolling their famous sidewalk where merchants showcase their crafts is a charming experience. The sidewalk holds the esteemed Guinness Record for the narrowest main street in the world and was the only throughway for the village for decades.

When it's time for some real adventure taking a day trip to one of the nearby cayes is the best way to immerse yourself into the ultimate Caribbean experience. White sandy beaches, crystal clear water, swaying coconut trees, sleepy hammocks complete with a thatched bar and restaurant makes for the quintessential island getaway. One island that checks off all the above and more is the one and only Ranguana Caye.

Continued on Page 6









Stay & Play in Placencia

Continued from Page 4

This two-acre paradise is a private island with accommodations for overnight guests but also offers day visits where you can enjoy the castaway experience. Their super friendly and attentive boat mates, Captain Freddy, along with Keith aka 'Sharkbait' and Ely, tend to their guests when boarding, and are fun and informative during the hour-long ride to the caye. The tiny island is a jewel, green with majestic palm trees, white sandy beaches and colorful lounge chairs awaiting. Pelicans are busy dive-bombing for fish and guests on kayaks and paddleboards leisurely float the calm waters. Nothing could be more picturesque, rich with warm tropical pastels and shocks of brightly colored kayaks, every view is eye candy.



The day is spent swimming, sunning, walking around the tiny island, and sipping delicious Rum Punches created by bartender Freddy. Children tirelessly play in the sand while their parents enjoy the peaceful ambiance or try their skills at paddle boarding. Here you are forced to do noth-

ing BUT relax. After a delicious lunch of BBQ chicken with rice and beans, Keith and Ely take us on a snorkeling tour just off the beach. Gorgeous corals and purple sea fans color the seascape, where endless schools of shiny sardines' dart by. We see Southern Stingrays, Yellow Stingrays, Nurse

Sharks, French, Gray and Queen Angelfish, Spotted and Scrawled Trunkfish, a variety of Parrotfish, Banded and Foureye Butterfly fish, a host of colorful wrasses and even a Spotted Moray eel! For an hour we explore the underwater wonderland and are thrilled with all the sea life! When the day

comes to an end no one wants to leave, and it's a somber boat ride back to Placencia. So much fun, so little time!

For more information about The Placencia Resort or visiting Ranguana Caye please go to the Muy'Ono website at https://muyono.com.







ΕΔΤ



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.



- 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.

PLAY



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, 9am - 4pm. Call 610-3775/9

SHOP

MATA GRANDE
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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!

SuDoku Time! Answers on Page 10								
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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 206-2121/280-2626 See map for our location!



CALENTE

CALIENTE: On the beach at Sprindrift, Caliente Restaurant serves delicious Caribbean and Mexican cuisine. Try our Jalisco chicken, or our awesome ceviche and don't skip the fabulous margaritas including our specially priced *MAMARITAS!* Indoor

and outdoor dining available. Locally owned/family run. 226-2170.



SANDBAR: BEST PIZZAS ON THE ISLAND! Sandbar hosts an amazing happy hour special: \$10BZD woodfired 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!



RAMEN 501: The first Ramen spot in Belize! Located inside Pocoloco's Food Court on Barrier Reef drive. 100% locally sourced and prepared ingredients. Open for lunch and dinner — open late on weekends! For orders call 608-8025.

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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Travellers Liquors FACTORY OUTLET and showroom! 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!

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.

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ORIGINAL all-natural soap company! With 2 locations, there's something for everyone. Soaps, butters, scrubs, full facial line, Monkey Farts & more. GIFTS GALORE. 9a-9p, M-Sat. 226-4322, Pescador Dr. & Barrier



BELIZE CHOCOLATE COMPANY: The first ever chocolate boutique in Belize, makes bean to bar chocolate on Ambergris Caye, together with delicious truffles, tasty hot and cold chocolate drinks and unique chocolate gifts. Located on Front Street. Call 226 3015.

GRANIEL'S DREAMLAND: Exotic Hard Woods and Mahogany Products made locally. Gift Items, indoor and outdoor furniture, carvings, and custom-made orders. Worldwide



Shipping. Free Delivery to Hotel, Airport or Boat within town limits. 226-2938, Pescador Drive. granielsdreamland2@yahoo.com, www. granielsdreamlandbelize.com Facebook: Graniels Dreamland



"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 handmade 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!

ISLAND DREAM TOURS: Specializing in Sunset Dinner Cruises (Gourmet, Buffet) Booze Cruise and Private Charters – you design your own dream on-the-water tour! Cruise includes wine, fresh fruits and hand-crafted cocktails! Join the Fun!! 615-9656! Like us on facebook.com/islanddreamtours

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.



KIDTOPIA: Located on the second floor of Sancas Realty Plaza (Unit #13) on Coconut Drive, downtown San Pedro, Kidtopia is a kids club/drop-off center for children

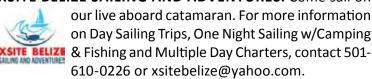
between the ages of four to fourteen. Open Tuesdays-Saturdays from 10AM-7PM, and on Sundays from 12PM-5PM.

"THE GALLERY" OF SAN PEDRO: The largest collection of Belize Paintings in the country. Original Paintings and affordable HD Canvas Prints in custom sizes.

New Location, 2 1/2 Blocks North of the Roundabout. Plus pies/cakes from the "Pie "The Gallery Queen". 226-4304.

GEORGIE'S CRUST & CRUMBS: Over 25 pies using only fresh fruits (Blueberry, Blackberry, Cherry etc) and first class ingredients. Flakey,

buttery crusts. Also a variety of specialty cakes. Located 2 1/2 blocks north of the roundabout with "The Gallery" 615-9327. XSITE BELIZE SAILING AND ADVENTURES: Come sail on





LA SIRENE RESORT, Spa and Luxury Hotel is located at the southern tip of the island. Currently LaSIRENE in the development phase, La Sirene's model home located on Coconut Drive is open to the

public. Open from Monday to Saturday from 9Am to 5PM. For more information visit www.lasirene.bz





ISLAND BUZZ CAFÉ: A cozy friendly café serving Breakfast and Lunch all day, at least until 1:00ish Monday-Friday. Sometimes Saturday. Hardly ever on Sunday. Coffee, Bacon & Eggs, Biscuits & Gravy, Breakfast Burritos, Subs, Paninis, Smoothies. Call ahead or delivery 668-1322.

PEPPERONI'S PIZZA: The island's most delectable combination of traditional Italian crafted pizzas with Belizean influences. Handmade, local, and fresh ingredients made daily along with good vibes, music, and service. Dinein, carry-out, & delivery offered. Open 7 days a week at 4:30pm-10:00pm and Friday-Sunday from 10:30am-2:30pm. 501-226-4515



El DIVINO CARIBBEAN STEAKHOUSE & MARTI-NI 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.

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.



JYOTO JAPANESE RESTAURANT AND SUSHI BAR: An authentic Japanese restaurant by native Japanese sushi chef, Toshiya Tsujimoto serving locally sourced produce and the freshest of seafood. Open Wednesdays to Mondays from 12-2:30PM and 5-9PM. For reservation email jyotorestaurant@gmail.com or call 501-628-0100

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. Reservations Recommended (501) 206-2441. www.blackorchidrestaurant.com.



PARTY PARTY! bar located at Exotic Caye Beach Resort. Open daily11am-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:



DIRTY MARTINI: It's where we specialize in sophisticated chill. Using all types of infused liquors to create amazing and fresh new cocktails. Come relax, be with friends and get dirty.

Tel. 602-8516. Open 2-10pm weeknights, 2-12am weekends. Located in Mahogany Bay Resort. Next to Jyoto.



SOUTH STATION: Great People, Great Place. Located next to Ambergris Lake Villas is your quaint, Edenic and relaxing hang-out joint. Tuesdays to Sundays (Bar 11am-11pm, Restaurant 7am). Live Music and Ladies Night on Fridays; Karaoke on Saturdays, with Food and Drink

Specials, every day. Contact us at southstationsanpedrobelize@gmail.com or 601-2858. Sudoku Answers

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COMPANY: Local fresh roasted coffee manufactured i n San

Pedro Town. Available throughout Ambergris Caye and countrywide. M-F: 8:30-4:30, Sat: 8:30noon. ONLINE WEB STORE, NOW OPEN!!! For more information visit www. cayecoffee.bz.

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Puzzle on Page 7

Body, soul and belly, Maruba Beach Klub at Secret Beach caters to them all!

On a small island like Ambergris Caye, secrets are hard to keep, especially when it comes to a secluded beach that no one knows about! So is the case with a lovely area off the beaten path that once only the locals knew about, and only adventurous souls braved the challenging roads to get there. Those days were just a few years ago, and now this escape, almost eight miles north of San Pedro Town, is a must-do destination for a day of endless beach fun. The turn-off road to Secret Beach is now one of the best maintained on the island, and a half dozen beachside bars and restaurants line the western shore of the caye. Here fun in the sun while bathing in shallow, crystal clear waters and sipping on umbrelled cocktails is the epitome of island ambiance.

While each establishment along the beach is rich with tropical charisma, Maruba Beach Klub takes it up a notch with not only a cool vibe, tasty food, and delicious libations, but also a full-service spa that overlooks the gorgeous Caribbean seascape. Established by longtime hospitality and wellness gurus Alexandra and Franziska Nicholson from the renowned Maruba Resort Jungle Spa (now named Belize Boutique Resort & Spa) in Maskall Village in the Belize District, the sisters have been treating guests to unforgettable accommodations and wellbeing experiences for decades.

Situated on the second floor above their bar and restaurant, the spa is an open area overlooking the gorgeous expanse of azure waters and enjoys a cool and refreshing breeze. In the front area, guests can enjoy a casual spa experience where the space is less private than the usual studio spa you may expect, and lively music rises from the bar. It's a setting where you'll want to keep your bathing suit on while skilled therapists massage your worries away and the ocean breeze soothes your senses. This front area is also where they offer facials, manicures, and pedicures. For those wanting a more private experience they also have a separate massage studio for individuals or couples who prefer a more secluded, peaceful environment. Guests can choose a deep tissue, Swedish, Aroma, Maruba Mood Mud massage or even a Maruba Molasses scrub.

Unique to Maruba Beach Klub is their own natural Maruba Therapy products that include mood





mud masks for face, body and hair, honey moisturizers, assorted body scrubs, soaps, oils, and therapy bath teas. These all-natural treatments are used for massages, tropical wraps, seaweed, body wraps, facial treatments, and aromatherapy. Mud has been used for centuries as a natural health and beauty treatment, and their six different Mood Muds not only detoxify and exfoliate dead skin cells but restore minerals and firm and smooth the skin. Each Mood Mud possesses restorative components such as arousing strength and health, treating skin disorders,

stimulating healing, absorbing and destroying negativity, inspiring truth and peace, and encouraging self-improvement, eloquence, and intelligence. Are you looking for something truly unique? A Maruba mud bath will leave your skin feeling silky smooth, and your body relaxed and rejuvenated.

There's more to Maruba Beach Klub than just pampering the soul as they do a great job of indulging your belly and quenching your thirst as well! Be sure to try their colorfully layered Maruba Punch or one of their champagne cocktails served with a split of Freix-

enet and fresh frozen sorbet. One of my favorite snacks? Chicken fingers fried in tempura batter and served on a stick, so crispy and light, super yummy! Or instead of a juicy burger, you can take a healthier route and enjoy one of their vegan dishes.

Maruba Beach Klub is open daily from 8:30am until 5pm, and if you prefer not to drive there via golf cart, they can arrange transport via land or boat. You can find them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Secret-Beach-Belize or call 610-3779 to book transport or a spa treatment.

Belikin La Ruta Maya River Challenge is here!

Like Christmas falls on December 25th, and our Belize Independence Day is September 21st, so does the Belikin La Ruta Maya River Challenge land on the weekend of National Heroes and Benefactors Day (formerly Baron Bliss Day). March 9th is the official holiday, so whichever Friday or Monday is closest is the Public and Bank Holiday, making for a nice long weekend for spectators, participants, sponsors and last-minute enthusiasts to flock to one of the many observation posts to catch teams paddling the Macal River and into the Belize

River in what is considered the most grueling canoe race in Belize.

Spread across four days, this race is one of the most anticipated annual events, taking paddlers through a 175-mile route that starts in the Cayo District and ends in the Belize District. 2019 will see the race begin in the early morning of Friday, March 8th from the Hawkesworth Bridge that divides the twin towns of San Igancio and Santa Elena, Cayo District. The race actually ends at the Belchina Bridge in Belize City on Monday, March 11th, but throughout the long weekend, there are stops at

the riverside communities along the way.

The first day of the race aims to stop at Banana Bank Lodge outside of Belmopan. On the second day, the paddlers continue from Banana Bank Lodge to Double Head Cabbage Village on the Belize River. On day three, racers make their way along the Belize River ending in Burrell Boom Village. On the last day paddlers push through the final stretch from Burrell Boom to the Belchina Bridge in Belize City.

Founded in March 9, 1998, the concept by Richard Harrison of

Big H Juices was intended to bring together a team of businesses and like-minded individuals to promote sports and endurance, while raising consciousness about one of Belize's natural resources: The Belize Old River.

Today, one of the longest canoe races in Central America brings together professional and amateur paddlers from all over the world who take on the four day grueling challenge of paddling 175 miles of the Belize Old River against rapids and winds. Join the fun along the way at the various outposts, and live one of Belize's classics!







Sweet Oranges are a tasty source of Belizean Pride!

Growing up, I always seemed to learn much more about my country via road trips with the family, than by sitting in school. While Belize isn't one of the largest nations out there, it has some impressive natural resources. In school, we learned that the agriculture industry was what shaped Belize into the country it is today – by fueling its economy. I never really understood the magnitude of this industry until my first drive down to southern Belize.

Along the Hummingbird Highway and through the Southern Highway, lies an area called the Stann Creek Valley. Nestled between breathtaking mountainous terrains, this patch of land is known to be the most fertile in the country. It is here that you find the heart of one of Belize's main contributors to the agriculture industry, the citrus farms.

Rows and rows of orange trees as far as the eye can see, dot the roadsides. The sweet scents emanating for the plantations attract a number of birds and even butterflies, making for a beautiful natural sight. During harvest season, you can see growers hard at work, picking ripe oranges by hand.

These sweet oranges are very important to Belize, making up 1.6% of the country's Gross Domestic Product. But just how did citrus come to be so important to Belize? It all started back in 1913 when grapefruits were first cultivated in Belize for export to England. At first, it was nothing more than a small-scale operation to accommodate the needs of our mother country. But in just 41 years, the industry saw major growth, reaching the million-dollar export mark. With a steady stream of investment, the Belize citrus industry grew from just 900 budded grapefruit trees to close to 48,000 acres of farmland dedicated to the growing of oranges and grapefruit.

Even though the industry has experienced a couple of setbacks in recent years, it still accounts for a minimum of \$79 million in exports and 2,800 jobs.

For me, being able always to have fresh OJ is the real perk of having a prominent citrus industry in the country. In fact, one







of my favorite cocktails is simply rum and orange juice – an easy way to get my daily fruit serving. Citrus is such a big part of our Belizean society that you can get it pretty much anywhere; fresh oranges from street vendors or concentrates and juices at the local grocery stores.

Side Note: Talking so much about oranges has me craving one of my favorite fruit snacks. Known to locals as **Holchoch** (pictured above), this is a refreshing dish made using slices of jicama and sweet oranges. I like to sprinkle mine with some habanero pepper salt and just a twist of lime... yum! This Belizean snack is sold by local vendors across the country for just a dollar or two per portion. It's deliciously refreshing and a real throwback to our childhoods!



Sundays 3pm: Live Music (Cover Band)
Mondays 12pm: Guitar JAM circle
8pm: Live Reggae
Tuesdays 6:30pm: Hermit Crab Races
Wednesdays 4pm: Live Music
Thursdays 2pm: Paint 'n Splash
Fridays 7pm: Trivia & Karaoke (9pm)









Where Did You Read My Beautiful Belize?

Our dear friend and faithful reader Courtney Sage recently travelled to Thailand with her husband Mark. They made sure to take their copy of My Beautiful Belize with them for a snapshot. Here is Courtney at Railay Beach

We wish you could have brought home some Mango Shakes and Thai Iced Coffees for us, Courtney!!



If you happen to read your copy of My Beautiful Belize in a unique location, be sure to take a picture and send your photo to: hello@mybeautifulbelize.com

March Calendar of Events



March 8th – Music for the Birds Concert at the Belize Raptor Center, San Ignacio Town starting at 4PM



March 10th – Rovers Car Show at Martineja Restaurant, Sarteneja Village, Corozal District starting at 11:30AM

CHALLENGE OF THE BRAVE

March 8th to 11th – Challenge of the Brave Survival Camp at Progresso Village, Corozal District. More info contact 625-1276



March 16th – Chiquibul Challenge Marathon starting at Las Cuevas Research Station, Cayo District starting at 10AM

March 8th to 11th – La Ruta Maya Belize River Challenge starting at Hawksworth Bridge, San Ignacio Town at 7AM

March 9th – Ambergris Caye Elementary School Gala at Palapa Bar and Grill, San Pedro Town starting at 5:30PM

 5th Annual Raft Race Regatta at Barrier Reef Sports Bar and Grill, Caye Caulker Village starting at 7PM



March 9th to 16th – Island Vibes Belize Retreat at Ak'bol Yoga Resort, north Ambergris Caye

March 15th and 16th – Jim Dalton in Belize at The Dive Bar, north Ambergris Caye starting 6PM daily

March 16th – Live Well Cayo at Sacred Heart Junior College, San Ignacio town starting at 10AM

March 17th – 7th Annual St. Patrick's Day Bash at Crazy Canucks Beach Bar, San Pedro Town starting at 1PM

March 23rd – 4th Annual Caye Caulker Lionfish Derby at Barrier Reef Sports Bar and Grill, Caye Cualker Village starting at 7AM

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!

This location could be ANYWHERE in Belize...so we'll give you a hint. It lies inside a conservation area, and there are several archaelogical sites around...

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!





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