

From the Editor Tamara Sniffin

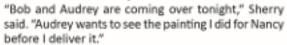
All this talk of festivals has me excited!!!! First, we have the Belize Chocolate Festival in May followed by three different Lobster Fests in June. We are talking about two of my FAVORITE things! What makes these celebrations extra special is not only the party in our mouths but the amazing cultures each one embraces. In Toledo, the cradle of



cacao, the Maya, Creole, and Garifuna cultures are vibrant with food, music, and dance. The trio of Lobster Festivals showcase their unique locations as well, with San Pedro taking it to a gourmet level when island restaurants compete for the best dish lobster dish at their big block party. Caye Caulker holds fast to their go-slow roots with the street lined with grills smoking

with lobster cooked the old school way. Nothing tastes better than fresh lobster straight off the grill, smothered in butter and dashed with a squeeze of lime juice. Add an ice-cold Belikin to the mix and life don't get much better! In Placencia, it's a beach party vibe, hopping with music, dancing, grilling, and merrymaking. No matter what festival you find yourself at, the culture is as rich as the food. We hope that while you visit our country, your travels take you to one of these fine festivals where you are sure to enjoy the very best of My Beautiful Belize!

Wolfe's Woofers Compliments



I was very nice to our company. They would have

never guessed I was dying to be watching the Friday night boxing match on TV.

"It's a beautiful painting," Audrey told Sherry over a glass of wine. "You must have some wonderful paints and brushes."

"Thank you very much," Sherry said.

She sounded so sincere that I'm the only one who knew she was boiling mad.

"What kind of compliment was that?" she asked, after Bob and Audrey left.

"It sounded like a compliment to me," I said.

"No, it wasn't. It sounded like she thinks the reason the painting is good is because I have such wonderful paints and brushes. You notice she didn't mention anything like talent or skill or that I might be a decent artist."

Yesterday afternoon Sherry took a phone call from Audrey asking us to dinner.

"Did I just hear you say you're looking forward to dinner tonight at Bob and Audrey's?" I asked.

"You certainly did."

"After last week's visit from them?"

"I wouldn't miss it for the world."

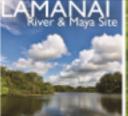
After dinner that evening Audrey asked, "Did you guys get enough to eat?"

"I ate way too much," I said.

"Me too," Sherry said. "Everything was delicious. You must have some amazing pots and pans."







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Birding on the beach: You never know what you'll stumble across when walking our beaches. Even if you're not an avid birder, when you meet these little feathered friends, it sure is fun to try and identify them! P. 6 Palapa's Big Heart: An integral part of the community, Palapa is a fabulous blend of fun and community-mindedness! P. 11

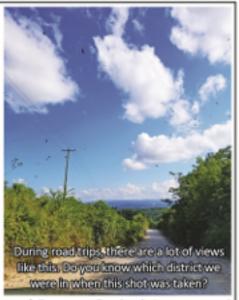
Lobster Festivals galore: Please make sure to attend at least one of these three amazing festivals celebrating the Spiny Lobster! Whether San Pedro, Placencia or Caye Caulker, you're bound to enjoy. P. 12

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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!



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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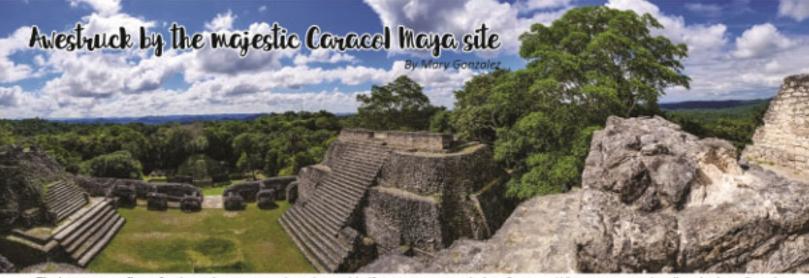








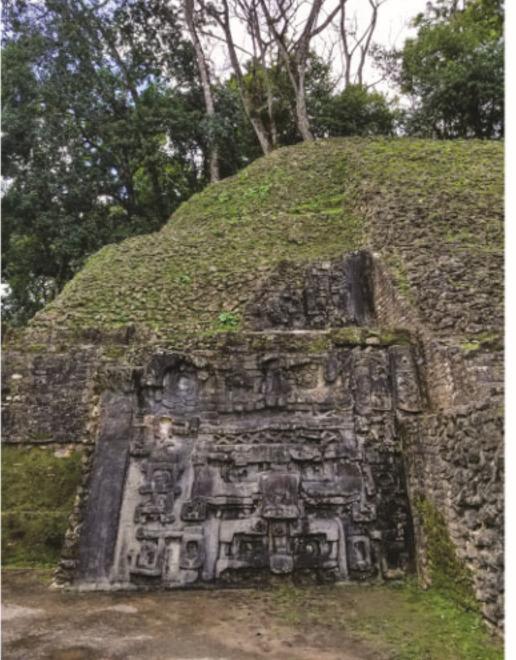


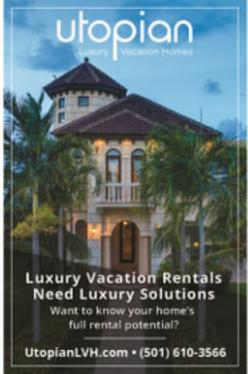


The latest census figure for the entire country of Belize is under 400,000 within 8867 square miles. So you can imagine how difficult it is to understand how one 75 square-mile site could have housed half our current population. But, that's the archaeological belief - that Belize's largest Maya site - Caracol, was home to 200,000 Mayas, housed in around 35,000 buildings. What was once a bustling city is eerily quiet when we arrived. The only sounds are those of leaves rusting in the breeze, interspersed by an occasional roar from howler monkeys calling to each other high above the treetops. When we make our way past the entrance, darkened by the thick trees, it's to emerge near a few tall structures. The sight of trees and their roots intertwined with the stone edifices is a testament to the amount of time Caracol lay undiscovered and untouched. In fact, despite having been discovered in 1938 by Rosa Mai, a logger seeking mahogany in the Chiquibul Forest, actual mapping didn't take place until between 1951 and 1953.

Caracol has always been a bit of a myth to this Belizean. I have vague memories of getting to visit once during my childhood school days in the later 80's. The long, bumpy bus ride filled with eager, curious children, our teachers asking us to behave as we itched to climb every step we saw. I had forgotten the actual journey to the site from our village, only remembering it took.

Continued on Page 4







forever. When we made our way in a private vehicle from Gaia Riverlodge, nothing about the winding dirt road seemed familiar. Due to its difficult-to-get-to location, visitors to Caracol are encouraged to get to the ranger look-out station before 9:00AM. There, a few members of the Belize military wait to register your entrance into the Chiquibul forest, and accompany you for your safety. That sounds a lot more daunting than it really is,

but again, distance, lack of access to communication, undeveloped roads, all mean we take precautions to get to one of Belize's more unique locales.

In a few years, this may not be as big an issue, as the Government of Belize recently signed a loan agreement to finance what is known as the Caracol Road Project. The intent is to ensure proper access to what could be one of Belize's largest attractions in the tourism industry. The hope is that Belizeans and visitors alike will be able to take in the majesty of Caana, Belize's tallest man-made structure (at 136 feet). For now, we risk our private vehicles on unfamiliar terrain, driving through a bit of a potholed section of dirt road. On this trip, we're surprised to drive on patches of paved road, clearly old and washing away, deeply rutted in several large parts, but still navigable enough. It's all worth the

bumps and jumps, as we eventually pull into the parking area near the visitor center to make our way through the famed Maya city of Caracol.

We pay our \$5 Belizean fee at the entrance, then head inside the visitor center to familiarize ourselves. Despite not having a guide for our visit - a first for my editor Tamara and a second for me - we make do with a slight briefing through read-

Continued on Page 5







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Barrier Reef Drive, San Pedro, Ambergris Cave

ing and studying artifacts on display. I have a feeling there will be some addition to the informational walls when the road gets put in, because over the years, exciting discoveries in the archaeological world have shown a connection between Caracol in the Cayo District with Nim Li Punit in the Toledo District.

The idea that royalty once walked those grounds, commanding 200,000 strong deep inside a forest; well, it still gives this Yucatec Maya woman chills! How much do we really know about those who came before us? Where did 200,000 people just, disperse to? What caused them to leave, never to return? Will we ever have answers that satisfy us? Probably not! But we can respect their history by restoring their temples, appreciating the work that went into making structures like Caana (Sky Place)!

It's a daunting task clambering to the top of Caana, but at the end of many, many steps, the stunning views are well worth the hike. If you look hard enough (and know your geography) you can actually see Guatemala to the west. The vistas are stunning, and even though there's a bit of huffing and puffing, the breeze cools us off quickly, and we take our fill of some of the best views of Belize.

After conquering the tallest structure, we are a little undecided where to go. But, as we tend to do, we pick a direction and begin walking. Without a guide, we are left to our own devices, exploring the various surrounding structures throughout the property. We stumble upon a shelter of sorts, and realize that there are some amazing pieces barely protected from the elements. I'm reminded that in Belize, you get the REAL experience. Caracol is still being unearthed, and there are so many untold stories just waiting to be shared. We crawled into dark crevices...we stumbled on a mano y metate...we stood under archways and [I] chased butterflies through ball courts. We studied stelae and marveled at the plants growing all around. We decided our next visit would include a guide just so we could have factual information to report, but for a first 'discovery' of Caracol, our self-guided tour was perfect.

If you've booked a tour to get to Caracol, all is set for you. Just be aware that the drive from San Ignacio Town to Caracol is about two-and-a-half hours. From the Mountain Pine Ridge area at Douglas D'Silva Forest Station, it's approximately 45 minutes until you reach the Caracol Archaeological Reserve. The site is open to visitors all year round, with special notices posted in case there may be flooding on the roads.







There is nothing more relaxing than a stroll on the beach. There is something about the vast expanse of the horizon that allows your worries to drift over that unseen ledge, temporally disappearing from heart and mind. Along the way, shorebirds often scamper the waterline, escorting you on your sandy saunter. These little beach buddies are a delight to watch, and you may wonder just who are these new found feathered friends!

Shorebirds, which include Sandpipers, Plovers, and Stilts, are tough to identify. Ambergris has the Black-necked Stilt, about six species of plovers and possibly twenty species of sandpipers. Most shorebirds are small, like a sparrow or a medium-sized robin, with slender bills for probing in the mud or sand, and slender legs for wading. Hundreds of different patterns on these birds can make it tricky to identify them. Don't be discouraged, just try to answer, is it a sandpiper or plover?

Plovers are generally smaller than sandpipers with shorter, thicker bills and have a behavior of run and stop, run and stop, looking for food in the wave action on the beach.

On a recent beach stroll just north of San Pedro Town, we enjoyed a sizeable flock of Least Sandpipers chasing the

gentle waves in search of crustaceans, snails, and other marine creatures. It is so entertaining watching them run to and away from the waves as if they're afraid to get their feet wet! Sticking out in the crowd were also a few Semipalmated and Spotted Plovers who joined in the beachy banquet. Along the way, we saw the usual cast of feathered characters, but our big treat was watching a trio of juvenile White Ibis perusing the beach.

White Ibis are common on Ambergris Caye but are usually seen on the lagoon side of the island within mangrove habitats or grazing shallow inlets. These young birds seemed to be on a mission, using their long-curved bills to probe the sand in search of tasty marine life while enjoying a day on the beach! And who can blame them?!

If you'd like to learn more about birds the Merlin app is a great resource! Just post a photo through the app on your smartphone and it will ID the bird! It's a very handy and a fast way to learn more about your new feathered friends.





For More Information on Trips and Overnight Charters: 011-501-610-0226 XsiteBelize@yahoo.com

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Tuesday - Saturday 10am-7pm Sunday 12pm-5pm unlimited day /weekly options available at San Cos Plaza - Son Pedro Town Phone: 633-2992



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SuDoku Time! Answers on Page 10

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May 2019

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EATS & TREATS



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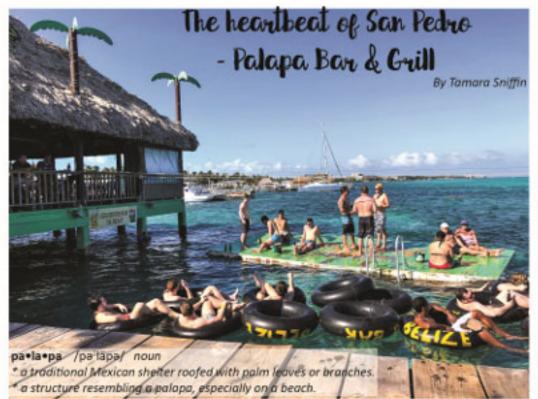
SOUTH STATION: Great People, Great Place. Located next to Ambergris Lake Villas is your quaint, Edenic and relaxing hang-out joint. Tuesdays to Sundays (Bar 11am-11pm, Restaurant 7am). Live Music and Ladies Night on Fridays; Karaoke on Saturdays, with Food and Drink

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This type of structure is a familiar sight to those living or traveling to Belize, and they come in a variety of sizes, from small individual ones shading beachside lounge chairs to massive ones that shelter a huge gathering space. In San Pedro, the word palapa is quickly associated with one of our favorite go-to places on the island, the Palapa Bar and Grill.

Located on the very popular Boca del Rio Beach, this island mainstay has been entertaining, feeding and watering guests and residents for decades. More than twenty years ago it was originally located on the beach north of San Pedro Town, then at a beautiful over-the-water structure in the same area. In December 2015 the island icon moved to the Wet Willy's dock closer to town, and here she settled into her reputation as an outstanding place to enjoy great service, beautiful water and swimming area, tasty food, cool libations, and island fun. Tragically, Hurricane Earl destroyed Palapa Bar along with other beachside establishments and docks in August 2016. In true-to-form tenacity, owners Scott and Jodie Harnish along with their dedicated staff worked shoulder to shoulder to resurrect the island icon, and in a matter of months, Palapa Bar rose from the rubble even bigger and better (hard to believe) than before!

There is far more to this landmark establishment than exception island hospitality and what endears her to the community is her generous heart. Dedicated to giving back to their island home, Palapa Bar hosts countless fundraising events each year. They are especially involved in forming and supporting the Rickilee Response and Rescue (Triple R Response) charitable organization created to assist Ambergris Caye in water re-



sponse and rescue. Funds raised through fun events like the Ground Hog Day Boat Poker Run help to support the volunteer-based emergency response system that coordinates both American and local community resources to help protect human life on Ambergris Caye. They also host special events for the Ambergris Caye Elementary School Special Education Program, Saga Humane Society and the Sunshine Scholarship Foundation which provides education funding for underprivileged children in San Pedro.

Be sure to visit this island favorite while in San Pedro, soak in their floating innertubes while buckets of ice-cold beers are delivered to you, enjoy the live music they often host, dive into a delicious burger and marvel at the gorgeous seascape before you. This is one place that gives back all the love it receives, what could be better?!

Be sure to check out their website at www.palapabarandgrill.com or find them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PalapaBarBelize.





Where the road ends on the southern tip of Ambergris Caye



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ww.lasirene.bz



San Pedro Lobster Festival

Not only is this the first festival of the season but it's also the longest 10 days long to be exact! First held in 2007, the San Pedro Lobster Fest. is all about the food. Your typical lobster on the grill won't cut it at this festival! From lobster infused margaritas to lobster Pierogi, each year restaurateurs get more creative cooking up some truly mouthwatering creations. This year's festival will kick off on June 13th with a Lionfish event. The official Lobster Crawl starts on June 15th, when participants can visit participating establishments to get their official Lobster Fest passport stamped. Each stamp entitles the passport holder to a raffle ticket to enter a grand raffle of a vacation package for two to the San Pedro Lobster Festival 2020. The fun culminates on June 22nd with the Annual Block Party at Central Park, which sees booths serving up all manner of culinary delights specializing in the star of the evening: the Spiny Lobster! Live entertainment and refreshing drinks keep the party going till late at night. For more information and a full schedule of the San Pedro Lobster Fest visit their website at www.sanpedrolobsterfest.com

Placencia Lobster Festival

Taking place from June 21st to the 23rd, the 21st Annual Placencia Lobster Fest is all about its people. A fundraising event held by the Placencia Village Council and the Placencia Chapter of the Belize Tourism Industry Association, this festival plays a major role in sustaining local businesses during the slower tourism season. The entire community comes together, welcoming guests with their signature Placencia hospitality!

So what can you expect at the Placencia Lobster Fest? Food galore, vibrant local art displays, the best of cultural entertainment and one of the grandest raffles in Belize! The party goes down at the beach beside Tipsy Tuna Bar and Grill. Bring out the whole family, as at this festival; there is plenty of fun for the kids too. Check out the Placencia Lobster Fest's Facebook page for a complete rundown of activities at www. facebook.com/pg/PlacenciaLobsterfestBelize

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Of the three, Caye Caulker Lobster Festival is the longest running, having first started back in 1994. This three-day event is without a doubt a PARTY. Each year, organizers hold to their promise of being bigger and better, and this year should be no different. As it is the number one event celebrated on the island village, residents of Caye Caulker take pride in dishing out the most festive atmosphere possible. From a pageant to a cook-off and even an all-day, all-night beach party, the

Caye Caulker Lobster Fest has it all! So what can you expect when attending the Caye Caulker Lobster Fest? The first night sees the crowing of Miss Lobster Fest (current reigning beauty is Melody Arnold), followed by the official opening ceremonies held on Saturday. Throughout the day, one can enjoy displays of live lobsters, the weighing in of the biggest lobster for the weekend brought in by local fishermen, while the main town dance is held as the sun sets and moon rises. The festival ends on Sunday with a colorful powder beach party, live music, and enough drinks to quench the island's thirst! Of course, there will be plenty to eat throughout the festival. This year's Caye Caulker Lobster Fest is extra special, as it marks their 25th



Anniversary and will run from June 28th to the 30th. For more information and a full list of activities check out their Facebook Page at www. facebook.com/cayecaulkerlobsterfest/

All three festivals are spectacularly Belizean – and you might be tempted to attend them all! We don't blame you, in fact, take us with you!

We advise everyone that in Belize the Lobster Closed Fishing Season runs from February 15th through June 14. During this time lobster traps should be removed from the waters as it is illegal to have or consume Spiny Lobster. Please ensure that your guides or fishermen adhere to these rules, as we must ensure there will be lobster for many future festivals to come.



Belize celebrates chocolate leve in the Toledo District

Across the globe, cultures celebrate a countless number of things. While many of these annual events are faith-based, others celebrate harvests, seasons, animals, plants, celestial events, foods, and even beer! In Belize, we too find much to celebrate and revere, with one of my favorites being the annual Belize Chocolate Festival. What a worthy recipient of admiration and love! Traditionally held over the Commonwealth Holiday weekend (mid-May) in Punta Gorda, Toledo District, the mighty cacao AKA chocolate has had its very own festival since 2007.



This year the anticipated weekend event kicks-off with their popular Wine and Chocolate Gala on Friday, May 24th at Garbutt's Marine starting at 7PM. Talk about a match made in heaven! Guests enjoy an evening of meeting Belizean artisans while sampling their exquisite chocolates and sipping delicious wine. Tasty appetizers are also served, and the ambiance is warm with twinkling lights and live music performed by talented Belizean artists. It's the perfect evening of mixing and mingling while indulging in chocolate and charismatic culture.

Although chocolate is the star of this event, the festival also celebrates the many different ethnicities of Belize and their cultural beliefs. On Saturday the Taste of Toledo Street Fair is held along the Front Street of Punta Gorda overlooking the Caribbean Sea. Chocolatiers, artisans, vendors, food merchants, chocolate making demonstrations and beer tents line the street for several blocks from 10am to 5pm while visitors have fun interacting with the booths, eating great food and enjoying live Maya and Creole music and cultural performances. There are drink specials and even stage competitions for the public with great prizes to win. Fun children activities include face painting and a scavenger hunt.

If you plan on attending this super fun festival be sure to book a room sooner than later, as Punta Gorda Town fills up fast! For more information, please visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ BelizeChocolateFestival. Tickets for the Wine and Chocolate Gala can be at the purchased at the Tourist Information Officer on Front Street in Punta Gorda or contact Charmagne Westby Ramirez at 722-2531 or email btiatoledo@btl.net.



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A Belizean's palate can best be described as 'quite complex'. We love to combine sweet, sour and even hot spices to make that perfect blend of flavors. Be it breakfast, lunch or dinner, we always want more for our food. In fact, even our snacks are EXTRA. One of my favorites that has that explosive taste is the Chamoyada - a sweet and spicy blended fruit and ice concoction topped with more seasonal fruit and spices.

Chamoyadas are mostly made by local fruit or smoothie vendors, and make for the perfect snack on a hot afternoon. While a Chamoyada can be made from a variety of fruits, such as pineapples, watermelons, tamarinds or strawberries, my personal favorite is the mango chamoyadas. Since mango season is upon us, May and June are my favorite months to indulge in my cravings!

Of course, if you can't find a vendor, you can easily make your own chamoyadas from home. Here is a recipe for mango chamoyadas as made by us:

Ingredients:

- · Two ripe juicy mangos cut into strips
- Ice
- · Chamoy sauce (a Mexican condiment sold at supermarkets across the country)
- Tajin powder (another Mexican condiment sold at supermarkets across the country)
- · Sugar (optional)

Directions:

Blend three quarters of the mango strips with ice and about four tablespoons of the chamoy sauce. The result should be at a slushy like consistency. You may want to add sugar for extra sweetness. Pour the mixture into a cup, then top with the remaining mango



slices, a drizzle of chamoy sauce and sprinkle on the tajin powder. Sip the cool concoction, or scoop it up with a spoon. There really is no wrong way to eat up. Enjoy!

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Calendar of Events: MAY

May 11th - Corozal Sustainability Conference at the Corozal House of Culture, Corozal Town starting at 10AM



Bee at The Truck Stop, North Ambergris Caye starting at 7PM

May18th - Grown Up Spelling May 11th - San Pedro Town Council Mother's Day Extravaganza at the Honorable Loius Sylvester Sporting Complex starting at 7PM



May 11th - Benita' Kitchen Cake Bake off Competition at the Benny's Warehouse, Belize City starting at 9AM.



May 11th - Bingo Night at Crazy Canucks Beach Bar, San Pedro Town starting at 5PM



May 15th to 20th Festival of the Sun and Moon held across San Pedro Town, visit Facebook page @sunmoonbelize for for details and schedule





May 21" - WSET Level 1 Award in Wines - Belize at Best Western Plus Belize Biltmore Plaza, Belize City starting at 9AM



June1" - Made in Belize Expo at the Agriculture and Trade Show Grounds, Belmopan City starting at 10AM



3pm: Live Music (Cover Band) Mondays 12pm: Guitar JAM circle Spm: Live Reggae

6:30pm: Hermit Crab Races Tuesdays Wednesdays 4pm: Live Music Thursdays 2pm: Paint 'n Splash



Adventures at Sea with Xsite Belize!

By Janelle Cowo

If you're on Ambergris Caye, chances are, the water called you here. Who doesn't enjoy being out on the cool Caribbean while taking in the spectacular sights of Belize's coastline? I know this may sound corny, but from the minute I set foot on a boat, my body and mind instantly enter relaxation mode. There is no better place for me to be than on the water.

Of course, there are several options for a perfect adventure at sea when you find yourself vacationing on La Isla Bonita. From speed boats to catamarans and even classic sailboats, Belizean Captains are here to ensure a memorable trip.

One go-to for sailing is Xsite Belize. They offer customizable trips aboard their 42-foot catamaran Miss Faith or their Sailboat Miss Take. As Xsite says "If we Sea with Ksite Belize!

can make it happen, we will try!"
Sailing trips are available to top
snorkeling sites such as Hol Chan
Marine Reserve, Shark Ray Alley,
and Coral Gardens.

One of their unique and fun trips is their Live Aboard Sailing Charters - overnight sailing, camping at one of Belize's most beautiful atolls, snorkeling or diving along the second largest Barrier Reef in the world and even fishing! Xsite takes care of all the details of the trips from meals to drinks and even gear. Their trained captains, crew, guides and cooks are there to ensure your trip is memorable and completely hassle-free. I don't know about you, but that sounds like an adventure worth packing for!

For more information, be sure to check out their website at xsitebelizesailing.com or email them at xsitebelize@yahoo.com. Follow them on Facebook @ XsiteBelize as well, to see what fun special and offers they have.

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