

A young child with dark curly hair, wearing a floral headband, a pink floral tank top, blue pants, and pink sneakers, is climbing a set of wide, grey stone steps. The child is leaning forward, reaching up with their right hand to touch a higher step. The background is a wall made of rough, grey and tan stones. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

# My Beautiful Belize

TRAVEL PUBLICATION

February 2020 | Vol. 08 #02

FREE

*You're never too young  
to discover Belize!*



## From the Editor Tamara Sniffin

snorkeling in the rain

Who hasn't had a vacation ruined by crummy weather? After all the planning and excitement, it just doesn't seem fair when Mother Nature literally rains on your parade, or worse! With our ever-changing weather these days vacationing during agreeable seasons is getting less predictable. As good travelers it's always best to be prepared for unexpected downtime, especially when, gosh forbid you are without Wi-Fi! Packing a real book and a deck of cards is an easy way to assure you have some form of entertainment when the going gets tough. On our last family vacation our Crazy Eight's card game marathon was epic! And, when it comes to snorkeling or diving, don't let rainy weather stop you from enjoying the seascapes, after all, you will get wet! Whatever the scenario, making the best of an unexpected situation is all we can do, and chances are you won't easily forget the vacation that turned out differently than planned. One thing for certain, come rain or shine, your vacation in *My Beautiful Belize* will be unforgettable. Welcome!

## Wolfe's Woofers A Little Bit

"How is the new baby?" I asked Romy.

I was having coffee on the deck at the Holiday Hotel when Romy joined me at my table.

"Ugly," he said. "And that's no joke. I'm having coffee with Don Tomás this morning and I want to find out where the ugly in his family tree came from."

"Oy! Don Tomás! Over here," Romy called, as Don Tomás arrived on the deck with their coffees.

After we settled down with our drinks, Romy said, "Suegro, after ten days you and I both know that your new grandchild is ugly. Can you explain this?"

"I think so," his father-in-law said. "You came to me and said my three girls was the most beautiful on the island. You asked permission to date my daughter Lisa and you told me you wanted to marry her. Why didn't you?"

"Lisa has a little bit of a birthmark by her left elbow that I didn't see at first. I wanted the perfect girl so I started dating her sister, Margarita."

"But you never married Margarita, either," Don Tomás said. "Why?"

"I noticed that the big toe on her right foot turns out," Romy said. "It's just a little bit but it means she's not perfect."

"So, you married my youngest daughter Carmen."

"Who is perfect. I hoped you can explain how she had such an ugly child."

"I think so," Don Tomás said. "My oldest daughter, Lisa had a little bit of a birthmark, her sister, Margarita had a toe that turns out a little bit and Carmen was a little bit pregnant."

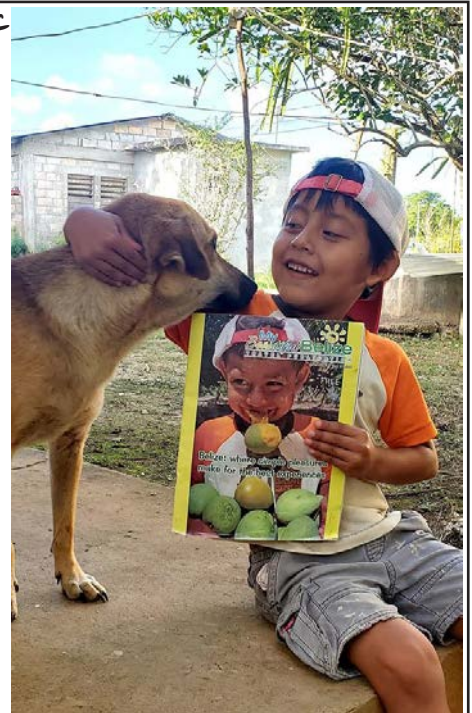


## Fun Photo of the Month

We just couldn't resist sharing this photo with our readers.

Our June 2019 cover model Abrey 'Tinka' Phillip happily shows off his modeling debut to his pet while enjoying some time with his photographer uncle Jorge Acosta back home in Xaibe Village, Corozal.

We can't wait to see his mango harvest for 2020 - and we sure hope he shares some!



## IN THIS ISSUE:

Corozal's Santa Rita Site The Maya history of Belize spreads across its landscape, including the Corozal Bay! P. 3

**Graffiti Fun:** Given the freedom to spray and color walls, several lucky artists took advantage and brightened up walls along Miami Beach, Corozal at the 2020 Graffiti Festival. P. 6

Time for lobsters to honeymoon While the crustaceans make more lobster babies, do you know what our fishermen get up to?! P. 6

**February is about love and carnival** Prep yourself for Valentine's presents and dinners and celebrations, then prepare to join in the island's big Carnival celebration. February is time to celebrate! P. 11

**30 Years of Wildtracks:** An often thankless job, the good people and volunteers at Wildtracks Belize have been patiently putting in work to help rehabilitate manatees and monkeys of Belize. Learn more: P. 12

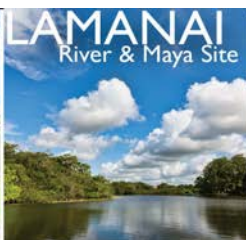
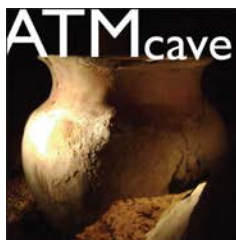
**Rain can't stop the reggae jam** or can it?! Our Editor and her family discover the true meaning of togetherness when rough weather puts a 'damper' on their holiday plans. P. 14

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# Adventurous Firsts: Exploring Santa Rita

By Janelle Cowo



A single ancient Maya temple rises along the Corozal Bay in the outskirts of Belize's northern-most town of Corozal. Known as Santa Rita, this archaeological site may not be large, but it does not lack in splendour. Believed to once have been part of the great coastal Maya city of Chetumal, occupied from 2000 BC to 1530 AD, Santa Rita is, in my opinion, the perfect site for my toddler's first exploration into the ancient Maya world.

As a travel aficionado, I have been eager to take my little one on adventures across Belize since the day she was born. Now 19 months old, Inori is finally ready to take off with momma and explore her little country. Of course, travelling with a toddler is not always easy, so I have to shy away from the more remote and challenging destinations. Located just outside of the heart of Corozal Town, Santa Rita proved to be the right location for my toddler's adventure debut. A day trip from San Pedro Town; our journey began with a quick flight aboard Tropic Air followed by a short, 15-minute car ride to the site.

Santa Rita is open seven days a week, 8AM to 5PM. A small park fee of \$5BZ for Belizeans and \$10BZ for foreign visitors is charged at the entrances. In Belize, Sundays are considered family day, so Belizeans enter free at all archeologically sites across the country.

Continued on Page 4





# Adventurous Firsts

Continued from Page 3



At its peak in history, archaeologists believe Santa Rita once covered the entire area of what today is Corozal Town and enjoyed the status of being the provincial Maya capital of Chetumal. However, today only one temple has been restored. Structure Seven is the tallest of all the structures at Santa Rita and one of the few that still exists. The modern-day town of Corozal was now built over many of the other ancient temples of Chetumal.

To my curious toddler, Structure Seven rose high into the skies, and she was eager to reach the top. The temple is decorated with elaborate murals showcasing sacrificial rituals. I enjoyed sharing this piece of history with my daughter. With every stride she took to climb higher and higher, I am reminded of the importance it is to pass down our Belizean heritage to our little ones. For Inori, this was just the first adventure of many yet to come!

Fun fact: Almost every year, on the beautiful grounds of Santa Rita Archaeological Site a ceremonial wedding is held. With the help of the Corozal Chapter of the Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA) and the Corozal House of Culture, the students of the Corozal Junior College re-enact the wedding between Maya Princess Tzazil-Ha and Spanish Conquistador Gonzalo Guerrero. The grand event is not only a tribute at keeping the Maya culture alive, but a chance to relive history. It's usually held in December of each year, but the exact details and date aren't available until closer to the date.



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# Colors and Culture: Corozal's Graffiti Fest

By Mary Gonzalez



It didn't matter that the sun was beating down along Miami Beach in the Corozal Bay. People were out and about, and all along a stretch of concrete walls, the sound of spraying, the smell of paint and the sight of colors came together. Artists from as far as Cuba, Mexico, El Salvador and of course, Belize, took turns creating masterpieces in graffiti style at Corozal's second annual Graffiti Festival.

After the success of the 2019 Graffiti Festival, organizers at the Corozal House of Culture decided to continue this beautiful, artsy and fun tradition. Corozal itself has much beauty to boast about, and it is fast becoming known as one of the most colorful towns in Belize. Businesses along the Bay happily lent their wall space, and volunteers even joined forces to prep and condition them beforehand. Do you ever remember wanting to take your colorful crayons and markers to the living room walls as a child? These lucky artists get to live out those dreams!

Of course, being that it was a community effort, there was a theme: "Ancient Chactemal." Primarily populated by Mestizo-Maya, Corozal has a group of fiercely proud Maya people who are pleased to honor their ancestors. Focusing on the Maya roots that go deep throughout Corozal/Chactemal, the theme brings to life what we imagine our ancestors dreamed and spoke of. Fierce warriors, the mighty jaguar, the famous jade head, a colorful bird, text and more took shape throughout the day, with curious onlookers taking pictures each time to map their progress.

Under a swathe of tents, vendors and other artists had their works on display. Paintings in a variety of styles by different artists (including body painting), jewellery, homemade ice cream, coconut soaps and oils, handmade reusable bags and purses, and educational booths - there was something for every age and interest. It was a true community effort, one that brought art in all its forms to life on a bright Sunday in Corozal. Along the bay, sailboats whizzed past, sailors taking guests out for a fun ride to enjoy the art of sailing too. On the stage, the Caribbean Roots



band struck up a variety of tunes, their sound carrying in the air and adding to the very local festivities. To an outsider, it was like a step back into the days of village life, elevated with a well-organized international art display, but with a very Belizean flavor. You just must attend their next festival and see for yourself!

Congratulations to the Corozal House of Culture, which under the auspices of the National Institute of Culture and History, is determined to promote and celebrate all things Belizean, cultural and historic. Their efforts at celebrating creative expression was a success, and next year's event already seems like it will be a blast. Mark your calendars for the Corozal Graffiti Festival 2021, to be held on Sunday, January 31, 2021.

## Where do our Lobster Fishermen go during Closed Season?

By Mary Gonzalez

Every February 15<sup>th</sup>, I start wondering what lobster fishermen get up to during the closed season. From June 15<sup>th</sup> to February 14<sup>th</sup>, they have been working their traps and heading out to check on their catch, cleaning and selling them for our consumption and for export. But lobsters need to go on honeymoon for a bit, so they can make more delicious babies for years to come. That means no lobster fishing, and it means my mind wonders what these fishermen are up to during the off season. I mean, I think I have an idea: *\*cleaning, fixing and upgrading their traps*



*\*sorting their gear*  
*\*meeting with clients and figuring out their next season's requests*  
*\*working on their new season's fishing outfits (I hear a little dazzle and glitter never hurt)*  
*\*perfecting their lobster BBQ recipe*  
*\*nap (often)*  
*\*meet up with their fishermen friends and have a cold one at Cholo's...told you my imagination was wild and silly!*

However, the not-so-fun reality is that we don't actually have full-time lobster fishermen. Our guys are year-round HARD workers - who definitely deserve to grab a cold one at Cholo's after a long day!

As such, when one season closes, another opens, and thus our fishermen friends might rest a couple days before heading back out to get conch. Some are certified tour guides who take visitors out to snorkel, dive and picnic. They also go fishing both in and out of the reef, their catch landing at restaurants across the island. There isn't an off-season for these hard workers. But come June 15<sup>th</sup>, they're back with our favorite crustacean. Their gear might even be a little bedazzled...maybe...okay, maybe just their Yeti cup (those seem to be a thing) - no judging!





## EAT



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## PLAY



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## SuDoku Time! Answers on Page 8

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



## EATS & TREATS



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## Sudoku Answers Puzzle on Page 7

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

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

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## EATS & TREATS



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**SALT LIFE VILLAGE BELIZE** will encompass all the comforts of home with a full service resort and fly fishing lodge, an east side beach club, estate homes, restaurants, bars and retail outlets throughout the development. For more information email [sales@saltlifebelize.com](mailto:sales@saltlifebelize.com)



**LaSIRENE** is located at the southern tip of the island. Currently 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](http://www.lasirene.bz)

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## Important Information

**Belize Tourism Board** - 227-2419.  
**Belize Tourism Industry Association** (BTIA) - 227-5717.  
**Belize Hotel Association** - 223-0669, [bha@btl.net](mailto:bha@btl.net)  
**San Pedro Tourist Guide Association** 226-2391.  
**San Pedro Police Department:** 206-2022  
**Dr. Otto Rodriguez San Pedro Poly-Clinic 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. [islabonitaalanon@yahoo.com](mailto:islabonitaalanon@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.  
**Hope Haven:** 226-2333  
**Rotary Club of Ambergris Caye:** Join Rotary at our weekly meetings, Wednesdays at 11:45am, Banyan Bay Villas. Find us on Facebook!  
**Ambergris Caye Masonic Lodge** - [ambergriscayemasoniclodge@gmail.com](mailto:ambergriscayemasoniclodge@gmail.com) 672-2265



# A February of Love and Celebration!

By Janelle Cowo

We have officially kissed the New Year goodbye and are now embracing 2020's exciting happenings. February has much to offer, not only is it the month of love but also signals the arrival of El Gran Carnaval de San Pedro!

Planning on spending Valentine's Day on Ambergris Caye? There's no shortage of romantic venues on La Isla Bonita! From dinners overlooking a warm sunset at Rain Restaurant and Rooftop Terrace to a cruise onboard the YOLO, we can help you impress your special date!

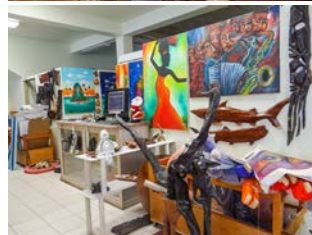
## Start off with some gifts...

It isn't Valentine's Day without chocolates, and the Belize Chocolate Company is the place to go for handmade Belizean chocolate that is sure to delight. If you are looking for more artisanal pieces that are sure to make your better half feel extra special, check out 12 Belize and The Gallery of San Pedro for a truly artistic and unique gift. And let's not forget to stop on by Graniel's Dreamland for a wooden masterpiece or Havana Cigars for the cigar aficionado in your life.

## And end with a meal...

Be the MVP this Valentine's and impress your special someone with a seafood feast at Aqua Seafood Restaurant and Steakhouse or enjoy tapas under a starry night at Aji Tapas Restaurant and Bar, both are located just north of Sir Barry Bowen Bridge. If you find yourself south of the island, the intimate fine dining at La Palmilla at the Victoria House will surely delight. A little closer to the town center is Casa Picasso, offering a terrace or indoor dining options. There is no shortage of dining experiences on Ambergris Caye!

## Experience El Gran Carnaval de San Pedro!



As unique as the culture behind it, El Gran Carnaval de San Pedro is a festival of color and sounds. The festivity, synonymous with the Mestizo culture, is believed to allow people to have fun before heading into the solemn Lenten Season. This year, Carnival will start on Saturday, February 22nd with the 2nd Annual Carnaval Parade and Fiesta Block Party. Come out and party with DJ Debbie and Titans Mas Band as the festive Carnival celebration begins. The fun continues with three days of painting and comparsa dancing from Sunday, February 23rd to Tuesday, February 25th. The celebration ends on Ash Wednesday, February 26th with the reading of Juan Carnaval's last will and testimony followed by his ceremonial burning.

Like any festival, there are a couple of regulations in place to ensure a safe environment for all. It is recommended that only children paint on Sunday. NO painting of comparsa participants, properties, signs, vehicles, and people in uniform or coming from work; no oil paint or spray paint; no bottle squeezers will be allowed; no throwing of eggs or use of rotten eggs and painters are asked to respect tourists unless they want to participate. The painting zones include the beachfront from Ruby's Hotel to the cemetery area and Barrier Reef Drive. Non-painters are recommended to avoid the painting zones. Barrier Reef Drive will be closed to all vehicular traffic and no parking will be allowed on either Barrier Reef Drive or Pescador Drive between 1PM to 7PM on all Carnival days. Both the San Pedro Police Department and San Pedro Traffic Department will be enforcing the rules and regulations of the Carnival celebration along with the designated areas. Comparsas will perform along Angel Coral Street, Pescador Drive, and Barrier Reef Drive.

"Vivelo y Gozalo" - join us in living and enjoying El Carnaval!



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# Wildtracks: Celebrating Thirty Years of Habitat Conservation and Threatened Species Rescue and Rehab

By Tamara Sniffin

Who doesn't love monkeys and manatees? The two creatures are synonymous when conjuring up images of wild Belize, and both are in dire need of protection. Our country is fortunate to have many individuals and non-profit organizations dedicated to protecting and preserving their vital habitats, with one, who for the last 30 years, also caring for them when injured or orphaned. Often painstakingly nursing them back to health, the grand reward is when sometimes years later, the creatures are successfully released back into their natural home.

Wildtracks, founded by the dynamic British duo Zoe and Paul Walker, started their good work in 1990 and was registered as an NGO in 1996. Located near Sarteneja, the largest traditional fishing community in Belize within the Corozal District, their altruistic organization not only rescues, cares for and rehabilitates monkeys and manatees but other threatened species as well. Their efforts expand to four different issues; awareness and outreach, sustainable development, threatened species, and habitat conservation.

Conservation education, community outreach, and awareness are essential ingredients in developing an appreciation and commitment to wildlife and habitat preservation. Wildtracks outreach programs focus on local schools where they offer hands-on activities to students inside and out of the classroom. Through learning about terres-



trial and marine ecosystems and their delicate balance, students earn a better understanding of why it is important to protect them. Past students have grown to be environmental stewards, now leading conservation organizations, sustainable tourism initiatives, and inspiring new generations - demonstrating the success of sustained outreach programs.

Balancing conservation and sustainable development are vital to maintaining important habitats while accommodating human progress and growth. Working closely with stakeholders in identifying solutions to sustainable development issues, Wildtracks participates in building community capacity and mentors' organizations to meet this balance. Locally they partner with the village of Sarteneja in improving the sustainability of the local fishery and promote income diversification.





© Colette Kase

Nationally they have offered facilitation in national planning for biodiversity and sustainable development, playing important roles in the development of Belize's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and the Belize Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity for the Government of Belize to name a few. They passionately advocate for habitat conservation, collaborating with the community, nonprofit organizations, the tourism industry, and natural resource consumers and manage two privately protected areas in the Corozal District, Fireburn and Balam Na.

In concert with government and non-profit organizations for the conservation of threatened species, their rescue and rehabilitation programs care for injured or orphaned primates and manatees. As the only rehab center in the county, they also receive primates confiscated by the Belize Forest Department. There are two species of primates in Belize, Geoffroy's spider monkey, and the Yucatan black howler monkey. Globally they are both endangered, and in Belize, their populations are threatened by the illegal pet trade and deforestation. Rehabilitation can be a lengthy process, taking months, even years before one is ready for wild release.



Celebrating 30 Years of Conservation in Belize



The Antillean manatee, a sub-species of the West Indian manatee, is globally endangered as well. With a regional stronghold in Belize of an estimated population between 700 to 1,000, these 'sea cows' are facing a rapid decline due to boat collisions and reduced habitat. Utilizing a team of manatee vets and biologists, their renowned Manatee Rehabilitation Center, established in 2000, is critical to the care of distressed manatees. They have successfully released six manatees back into the wild and have eight more currently in care, preparing for release in the coming years. With the wild population so low it is important that when possible, rehabilitated individuals are returned to the wild to contribute to their dwindling population.

None of this could be possible without the Wildtracks Volunteer Program, where countless volunteers have assisted them from the beginning. Receiving invaluable hands-on experience for those studying the many facets of Wildtracks' mission, or for those who just want to help, their time spent can be grueling, with attentive critter care 24/7, late-night feedings, cleaning cages and of course plenty of poop. But the rewards far outweigh the challenges, and the feeling of nursing an animal back to health and releasing it back to its wild home is priceless. Working with other organizations is also essential to their success, and they are proud to partner with the Government of Belize Forest Department and collaborate with national and international NGO's such as the Save the Manatee Club, Huston Zoo, Belize Wildlife, and Referral Clinic and the Sarteneja Alliance of Conservation and Development. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation registered in the USA, essential tax-deductible funding comes from like-minded organizations and individuals who share their commitment to conserving wildlife while building a sustainable future for all. For more information about Wildtracks and how you can donate, please visit their website at [www.wildtracksusa.org](http://www.wildtracksusa.org).

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# Our Soggy Adventure to Isla Marisol

By Tamara Sniffin

It was a family post-Christmas vacation we had planned for months. With my sister and son joining us in Belize from frigid Wyoming, along with my husband, son and 85-year-old mother, we were destined for a remote island off the southern coast of Belize. Here we would spend four days in glorious sunshine and crystal-clear Caribbean waters where we planned to dive, snorkel, paddleboard, kayak, eat too much, laze in hammocks drinking one-too-many Belikin beers and even read a book while decompressing after the ever-so-hectic holiday hysteria. We were well-prepared for fun in the sun, heck I even gifted everyone colorful long-sleeved swim shirts to protect us from all that sun! In hindsight, I see this was my first step in jinxing us. Bring an umbrella and it won't rain, prepare for too much sun and you can bet the weather will make sure you don't need it!



We were headed to the Isla Marisol Resort Dive Resort on the Southwest Caye of Glover's Reef Atoll some 36 miles west of the Dangriga coastline. This area is located within a United Nations World Heritage Site and Protected Marine Park and promised unparalleled diving for hubby and son and great snorkeling for us floaters. After flying to Dangriga from Belize City we were transferred to an open-air boat for our voyage to paradise. There were other guests boarding who over the next few days would become friends, and with the sun shining, clear skies and donning lifejackets and smiles we took off. Well, sort of. It was low tide and our weighted boat promptly got stuck on a sandbar when exiting the mouth of the river. It was a Saturday afternoon with dozens of locals out enjoying the water and it wasn't long before many able-bodied young men made great fun out of getting us unstuck. It was a memorable and entertaining start to our adventure!

## Here's what's coming up in February

**February 8-9<sup>th</sup>**

**Placencia Sidewalk Art Festival,  
Placencia Peninsula Sidewalk**

**February 14<sup>th</sup>**

**Chase the Ace at Croc's  
Sunset Sports Bar, north San  
Pedro Town, starting at 6PM**

**Maui Jim Live Concert**

**February 15th - The Truck Stop, 5:30PM**

**February 18th - Palapa Bar and Grill, 6PM**

**February 20th - Crazy Canucks, 4PM**

**February 14<sup>th</sup>**

**Cocktails for  
the Manatees at  
KuKumba Beach,  
Belize City, 6PM**



**February 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**Back to Prom at Crazy  
Canucks Beach Bar and  
Grill, starting at 7PM**

**February 29<sup>th</sup>**

**10<sup>th</sup> annual Street  
Art Festival on Albert  
Street, downtown  
Belize City**



**March 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>  
La Ruta Maya  
River Challenge**



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More than an hour later, after passing a handful of tiny islands, some dotted with colorful cabañas, we reach our picturesque destination. Managers Mora and Letty welcome us at the dock and give a briefing about our island home. Power by day is solar and wind, while in the evening a generator takes over. Meals are served three times a day in their common dining/lodge area, offering delicious Belizean and American homemade dishes enjoyed in a casual, communal atmosphere, and they ask if anyone has special dietary requirements they can accommodate. Guests are welcome to use the kayaks and paddleboats that rest on the nearby beach and they point out the ever-so-important bar at the end of a dock across from the main lodge. Now that we are fully informed Letty escorts us to our cabins.

Cozy, cute and clean, two of our three cabañas rest at the water's edge overlooking the expanse of the blue sea. Our creature comforts include hot water in the shower and air conditioning available at night. Complete with a nice porch and requisite hammock, the stage is set for some serious relaxing. After a tasty dinner of grilled Wahoo steaks, we enthusiastically plan our next day of vacation fun. As we fall asleep with visions of sunbathing and snorkeling dancing in our heads, the clouds start rolling in and the wind begins to howl.



The following day my sister and I chase the sunshine with our beach chairs whenever it manages to break through the clouds. We imagine how pretty the area would be if the sun revealed its beauty, and the blue in the water is just vibrant enough to confirm that it is indeed there. Little did we know that would be the last we'd see of the sun for the next three days. Despite the cloudy day the weather still allowed for some diving where my hubby and son enjoyed exploring the nearby reef with Divemaster Mora and other guests. We hoped the next day would bring better weather, but Mother Nature had other plans. Belizeans call the rain 'wet blessings from the sky,' and over the next two days, we were properly baptized. The wind was relentless, the clouds dark and angry, the sea churned and the 'sky juice' rained down on us. We braved the weather and managed to explore all 18 acres of the island and beachcombed along a long stretch of exposed reef that had succumbed to the elements.



We played Yahtzee and cards games for hours and were thankful we had brought a set of Bocce balls to play under the shelter of coconut trees. We had our share of beers and I even read a book. With limited internet access and more than thirty miles of water between us and the mainland, stranded on an island in the Caribbean took on a whole new meaning! We managed to get in one afternoon of snorkeling and diving, and I could only imagine how beautiful the seascapes would have been if the conditions were better.

Despite the terrible weather, we made the most of it. It's not the nice people at Isla Marisol's fault that my sister claims it was the worst vacation...ever, and we all agreed if the weather had been better our stay would have been fabulous. On their website, they warn that the transport boat may not be covered, and you might get wet. As we board the vessel on departure day, we are decked out in lifejackets and large black plastic bags. Our captain does his best to skirt around pockets of rain but between the choppy water and drizzle, we are soaked by the time we return to Dangriga. As we wait for our flight back to Belize City, my octogenarian mother exclaims, "Well, that was fun; I would go back again," and yes mother, I'd do it all over again too, but first I'd check the weather forecast!

For more information about the family-owned and operated Isla Marisol Dive Resort, please visit their website at [www.islamarisolresort.com](http://www.islamarisolresort.com).

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