



# My Beautiful Belize

TRAVEL PUBLICATION

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Spring  
into  
Belize!

FREE



## From the Editor: Tamara Sniffin

Hi! I am Tamara. Although my condition is not contagious, I do have to wear a mask...a snorkel mask that is. You see, I am a thalassophile. A person who loves the ocean.

I recently read a Huffington Post article titled, "17 Signs You're Actually Addicted to the Ocean." Some of the signs I ticked off in the survey included, you don't understand the appeal of a ski vacation, and your phone or desktop wallpaper looks something like this right now. Yup, here's my current screen saver.

Other signs included, your heart actually hurts when you see photos of other people's beach vacations on social media, you've seen every single ocean-related documentary on Netflix, you either have a GoPro or have been begging for one for months (I have worn out five underwater cameras in the last 15 years) and you completely lose your sh!t during Shark Week. Some things they failed to add were, you have memorized every line in Finding Nemo, you can't remember the last time you actually wore shoes, having a friend with a boat is a wonderful thing, you have more long sleeved swim shirts than sunscreen, one dresser drawer is full of nothing but swimming suits and cover-ups and new snorkel gear often makes it on to your Christmas or birthday wish list.

Another survey I read to test if you're a thalassophile included booking vacation destinations to the beach. Ha, now you know who you are! Chances are you may be affected as well! My guess is the condition is contagious after all! Once you are submerged into our glorious seascapes there's no shaking that feeling. Water inspires us, it intimidates us. It creates peace and awe at the same time.

You have come to the right place to satiate that hungry thalassophile soul. We welcome you to My Beautiful Belize, above and below our glorious Caribbean Sea.

## Wolfe's Woofers Fisherman's Secret

"Happy birthday Don Carlos. Happy birthday to you!"

The crowd at Señor Garza's 103rd birthday party clapped and cheered. The old fisherman was one of the first people I met on Ambergris Caye many years ago and I was there to help show how much we loved and respected him.

His oldest daughter, Carlita said, "Papi, Mary from *The San Pedro Sun* wants to write an article about the secret of your long life."

"Hunh?" he said, as he adjusted his hearing aid. "She want to know my secret?"

Mary said, "Yes, Señor. I need to know your big secret."

"Back in 1953," Señor Garza said, "I am fishing around Turneffe when a sudden storm comes. The wind push my boat up on a tiny little caye with nothing there but a fisherman's shack. Another fisherman show up and his boat been took by the storm so I get him inside and about dark we make a bed. We hung our clothes up to dry and huddle up to stay warm. Sometime in the night he kissed me on the back of the neck and that set us off. Whoo! What a night we had."

Don Carlos took another drink of rum before he continued.

"In the morning a boat pass by and rescue us. Before he left, he kissed me and said he had to get back to his family. I never learnt his name and I ain't never seen him again. That's the big secret of my life."

The horrified party guests sat with their mouths open.

"Oh, Señor Garza!" Mary said, "I meant the secret to your long, healthy life."

Don Carlos said, "Oh, that's just eat good, plenty rum and no worries."



By Dennis Wolfe

## WHERE DO YOU READ MY BEAUTIFUL BELIZE



Courtney Sage enjoys reading her copy of *My Beautiful Belize* while visiting the **Lichtenstein Castle (Schloss Lichtenstein)** in the Swabian Jura of southern Germany.

It has been described as the "fairy tale" castle of Württemberg and overlooks the Echaz valley near Honau, Reutlingen in the state of Baden-Württemberg. The modern castle was inspired by the novel *Lichtenstein* (1826) by Wilhelm Hauff and was built in 1840–1842.

Send us your photo reading your copy to [hello@mybeautifulbelize.com](mailto:hello@mybeautifulbelize.com)!

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**Caribbean Shrimp Company** is offering boat tours, crocodile tours, shrimp farm tours, swimming, birding, nature trails, horseback riding, RV camping, and even paintball...get there! P. 5

**BYOB (bags)** Time to put those re-usable bags to use. There are a number of entrepreneurial people making cute ones for your groceries! P. 11

**Easter time is here** How ready are you for Easter? Once you've gotten your tickets and booked your rooms, arm yourself with a plan and cover it the Belizean way! P. 12

**Wearing one's heart on a sleeve:** A love of heritage and Belizean history has led our Associate Editor to permanently carrying her Maya heritage on her arms. Got ink? P. 13

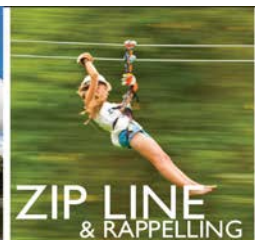
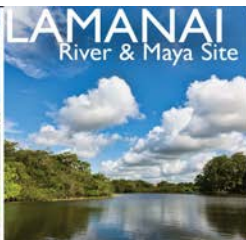
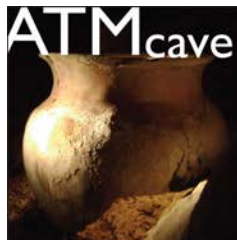
**Traveling with children** a first-time parent can relate with our Office Manager - traveling is in the blood, and children need to explore the world. Here are some tips to bear in mind when in Belize. P. 14

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# Happiness is a day sailing with Xsite Belize

Tamara Sniffin



You can't fully appreciate the Caribbean Sea without a day sailing on it. In Belize, our waters are clear and gloriously blue, and as you tack along the ribbon of our Belize Barrier Reef with your sails full of warm tropical air, you can't help but feel at peace. Add a little snorkeling, a great crew, yummy food, refreshing libations, chill music, and good company and your day will be one for the memory books. In the cays and along our coastal communities, there are many tour operators who offer sailing excursions. From sunset sails to half-day and full-day adventures to over-night trips for several days of island hopping, there are a variety of options. On Ambergris Caye, Xsite

Belize offers them all, served with the warm hospitality and charm of a small, family-owned and operated business.

Our day on the Miss Faith catamaran begins at their dock in downtown San Pedro. Here we are greeted by Captain (and co-owner) Nef, first-mate and guide Caesar, Caesar Jr. and Joshua. As we get situated on the boat, Caesar, a super friendly real deal fisherman from the village of Sarteneja, gives us a briefing on what the day entails before we launch. There are eleven of us signed up for the day of fun, and it doesn't take long for us to make introductions and scout out our favorite spot for lounging.

It takes less than an hour to sail to our first destination, Hol Chan Marine Reserve. Here Caesar informs us about the history of the reserve and goes over safety protocol and snorkeling techniques. The rest of the crew readies our gear and provides us with the wristbands the reserve requires. We are divided into two groups, one led by Caesar while ours is led by Captain Nef. After the team is sure everyone is equipped for their underwater adventure, off we go into the wild, blue yonder!

Continued on Page 4



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# Day sailing with Xsite Belize

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The water is deliciously clear and warm. Teeming with colorful fish of all sizes, we snorkel over coral where Nef points out the amazing marine life. We are delighted by the array of creatures, spotting French angelfish, butterfly and parrotfish, permit, eagle rays, trumpetfish, Queen Conch and more as we thoroughly enjoy our time with El Capitan! Once back on the boat we are presented warm washcloths soaked in freshwater to remove the salty water from our faces, which feels wonderful! We snack on fresh pineapple and watermelon as we venture to our next stop, Shark and Ray Alley. Here we dive into water busy with nurse sharks and rays who are attracted by the chum tossed to them. This is a perfect “first” swim with sharks as this species is not known to be aggressive. Regardless, it is still an exhilarating experience!

Once back in the boat we freshen up again with the wet wash clothes and set sail for Caye Caulker. Delicious shrimp ceviche and tortilla chips are served while we sip on yummy rum punch and soak in the warm

sun. A menu for our next stop, Koko King is circulated and Captain Nef takes our orders in advance, what a great idea! When we arrive an hour later, we go straight to the restaurant where tables are reserved for us and our food promptly appears. We opt for fish and shrimp tacos, the perfect meal after working up an appetite with all the snorkeling! More rum punch flows and we have free time

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2 miles North of Bridge next to Grand Caribe



to enjoy the lovely beach and ideal swimming spot for water lovers. It's beyond fun!

As the sun starts dipping to the west we are back on the boat, happy with full bellies and brimming with rum inspired smiles. We are entertained as Joshua encourages seagulls to take tortilla chips from his hand and we marvel as the setting sun brings new color and life to the surrounding clouds. Sun-kissed and blissfully tired, we all agree it was indeed a day for the memory books!

To learn more about the variety of tours Xsite Belize offers please visit their website at [www.xsitebelizesailing.com](http://www.xsitebelizesailing.com)





# Countless ways to have fun while exploring the Caribbean Shrimp Company

Tamara Sniffin

The Caribbean Shrimp Company might be one of Belize's best-kept secrets, but not for long! Located in Ladyville, just 20 minutes from Belize City and near the Philip Goldstein International Airport on the Northern Highway, this 266-acre property offers a variety of activities, tours and delicious fresh shrimp served at their open-air restaurant perched above the surrounding shrimp ponds. With something for everybody, your visit can include a mangrove lagoon tour on their unique solar-powered boat. Explore the crocodile habitat they sponsor for the American Crocodile Education Sanctuary, where you'll meet a few of the resident crocs. You can also learn more about their organic and holistic process of raising shrimp, enjoy watching the birds who are attracted to the shrimp ponds, swim and lounge at their new Lighthouse Bay saltwater pool or even engage your friends or family in some jungle paintball! The options are all yours, depending on how much time and energy you have, not to mention appetite!

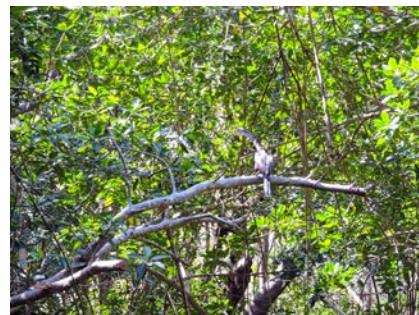
## Mangrove Maiden Boat Tour



New to the Caribbean Shrimp Company, it's hard to say what's cooler about this one-hour adventure; their customized solar powered Mangrove Maiden boat that silently carries you through a magical maze of mature mangrove stands, or the majestic mangrove trees themselves. Mangroves are a critical forest ecosystem and essential to protecting coastlines in tropical and subtropical regions. Not only do they safeguard land from storm surge and erosion, their ability to thrive in highly saline waters and soils serve as an important filtration system while providing vital habitat for juvenile fish and reptiles within the tangled network of their roots and a host of other ecosystems within their forest. Under the dense canopy of old-growth trees, we are surrounded by nature's most beautiful artistry as we wind through the channel out to sea and back. Busy birds dart from tree to tree and we spot an Anhinga on a high branch. They are sometimes called snake-

birds as when they swim their long neck is only visible above the water, looking like a snake. He doesn't want to cooperate for a photo, but I do manage to capture his image, well camouflaged within his habitat. As we scour the twisted roots along the water's edge, what first appears as part of the landscape focuses into baby crocodiles, perfectly blending in with their wild habitat while enjoying some sunshine. And yes, they are cute! The hour is a peaceful, beautiful excursion through a rare and wild landscape not often seen.

## Meet the Resident Crocodiles



The Caribbean Shrimp Company has long partnered with the American Crocodile Education Sanctuary (ACES) in providing habitat space for captive crocodiles. For several reasons, these animals have been deemed problematic and dangerous, but instead of being euthanized, they now live in natural enclosures on the property. A tour introduces you to the work ACES does in protecting, rescuing and relocating problematic crocodiles and you'll meet resident crocs and big boy George. A 16-foot croc relocated from Ambergris Caye; George lost his fear of man when locals fed him chicken as a tourist attraction. If George feels like eating while you are there his big teeth are impressive to say the least!

Continued on Page 6

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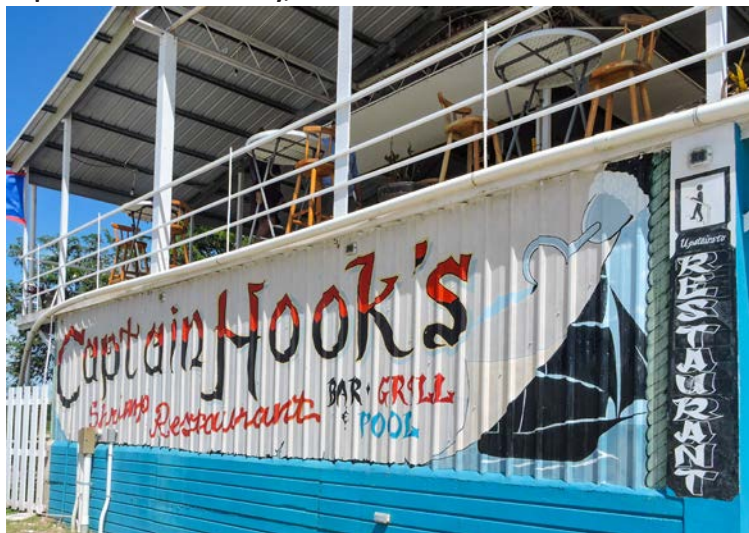
## Exploring Caribbean Shrimp Company Continued from Page 5



### Organic Shrimp Farm Tour

The Caribbean Shrimp Company is a second-generation family-owned business and the oldest continuously operated shrimp farm in the country. They are the only organic saltwater shrimp farm in Belize, channeling water directly from the Caribbean Sea through their ten shrimp ponds. Annually they produce 100,000 pounds of shrimp for local and export markets. During a walking tour of the farm, you will learn about their organic production and can even try your luck at using a cast net to catch your meal! It doesn't get fresher than that!

### Captain Hook's Hideaway, Restaurant & Bar



This is the epicenter of the farm. The restaurant hosts a wrap-around deck on the second floor of their observation tower with views of the shrimp ponds and heavenly breezes. Here is where you are in for a culinary treat! The Vannamei shrimp they farm has a sweet taste, a firm structure, and pinks up beautifully when cooked. Rich in protein, until you have tried it, you won't believe how delicious fresh, organic shrimp can taste! We devour a huge plate of ceviche full of succulent



shrimp and spiced to perfection. We order shrimp sautéed in garlic sauce and coconut shrimp fried crispy, and the ice-cold Belikin beers are the perfect complement to our meal. With each bite, we marvel at the amazing flavors! Their menu offers a wide variety of shrimp dishes, and I want to try them all! They do offer chicken and burgers for those who prefer something else. You can also purchase frozen shrimp in convenient one-pound bags in small, medium or large-sized shrimp to enjoy at home later.

**And there's more! Swimming, birding, nature trails, horseback riding, RV camping, and even paintball!**

There's nothing more refreshing than taking a dip on a hot day! Another new feature on the property, their 40-foot saltwater pool is the perfect place to enjoy food, drinks, cool off and relax. There's a special spray park area for the kids and their soon-to-be-completed new waterslide promises to be a blast. The area is also popular with birders, especially when one of the shrimp ponds is routinely drained! Birds flock to the area to nab up a tasty free meal, and birders are there, armed with binoculars and cameras to inventory the influx. Anytime is a good one to enjoy these avian creatures who help themselves to the free-range shrimp, especially from the top of their five-story observation tower or from the comfort of a table at the restaurant while enjoying ceviche and beer. The property also hosts a network of nature trails where signage informs you of the foliage and Maya mounds in the area. For those who'd rather let someone else do the walking, horseback riding can be arranged to explore miles of the coastline and their property. They also provide overnight parking spaces for RV travelers and if you are feeling adventurous, you can go full-on military and experience the largest paintball field in Belize! The place is perfect for a family fun day or whatever you fancy.



For more information about the Caribbean Shrimp Company and their amenities, please visit their website at [www.caribbeanshrimp.net](http://www.caribbeanshrimp.net)



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# North Ambergris Caye

©2018, Map not to scale



**EAT**  
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**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.



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**AQUA:** Open Tuesday to Sunday from 5:30Pm to 10PM, Aqua Belize offers an elevate seafood and steakhouse dining experience. Located 1 mile north of San Pedro Town inside Caribeville. Sushi nights on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Reservation highly recommended: 226-4001



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**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!



**RAIN:** Located 1 mile north of San Pedro Town inside Caribeville, Rain Restaurant and Rooftop Terrace offers unobstructed views of the Caribbean Sea and Lagoon for the perfect atmosphere to dine. Open daily from 7AM to 10PM serving breakfast, lunch and dinner.

## 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.



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## MEDICAL SERVICE



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## SHOP



The biggest little grocery store on Ambergris Caye, located 4.5 miles North of San Pedro Town, it's a must see! **Open Everyday 8AM-6PM.** You can call us at 226-4290 or also order online at [www.matagrandegrocery.com](http://www.matagrandegrocery.com) .... we DELIVER!

## SuDoku Time! Answers on Page 8

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



## EATS & TREATS



**IGUANA JUAN'S:** Thoughtful burgers, killer vegetarian, creative cocktails and more, served with an eclectic vibe overlooking Back Street! Specializing in American and Central American dishes. We're 'Conveniently' Located Upstairs, of an Old Building, on a Back Street, on an Island, in Central America... Come Find Us!



**ISLAND WONDER KITCHEN + BAR:** Exciting Enjoy a kid-friendly environment serving up a variety of local and international cuisine. Located on Barrier Reef Drive across from Central Park. Open Tuesday - Wednesday: 7am - 3pm, Thursday - Saturday: 7am - 10pm, and Closed

Sunday & Monday. For more info contact 601-5048.



**THE SAN PEDRO LIONS CLUB** Join us on Fridays for fun bingo (7PM) and delicious chicken BBQ (from noon). All proceeds go back to assisting the community in times of need.

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## Sudoku Answers Puzzle on Page 7

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

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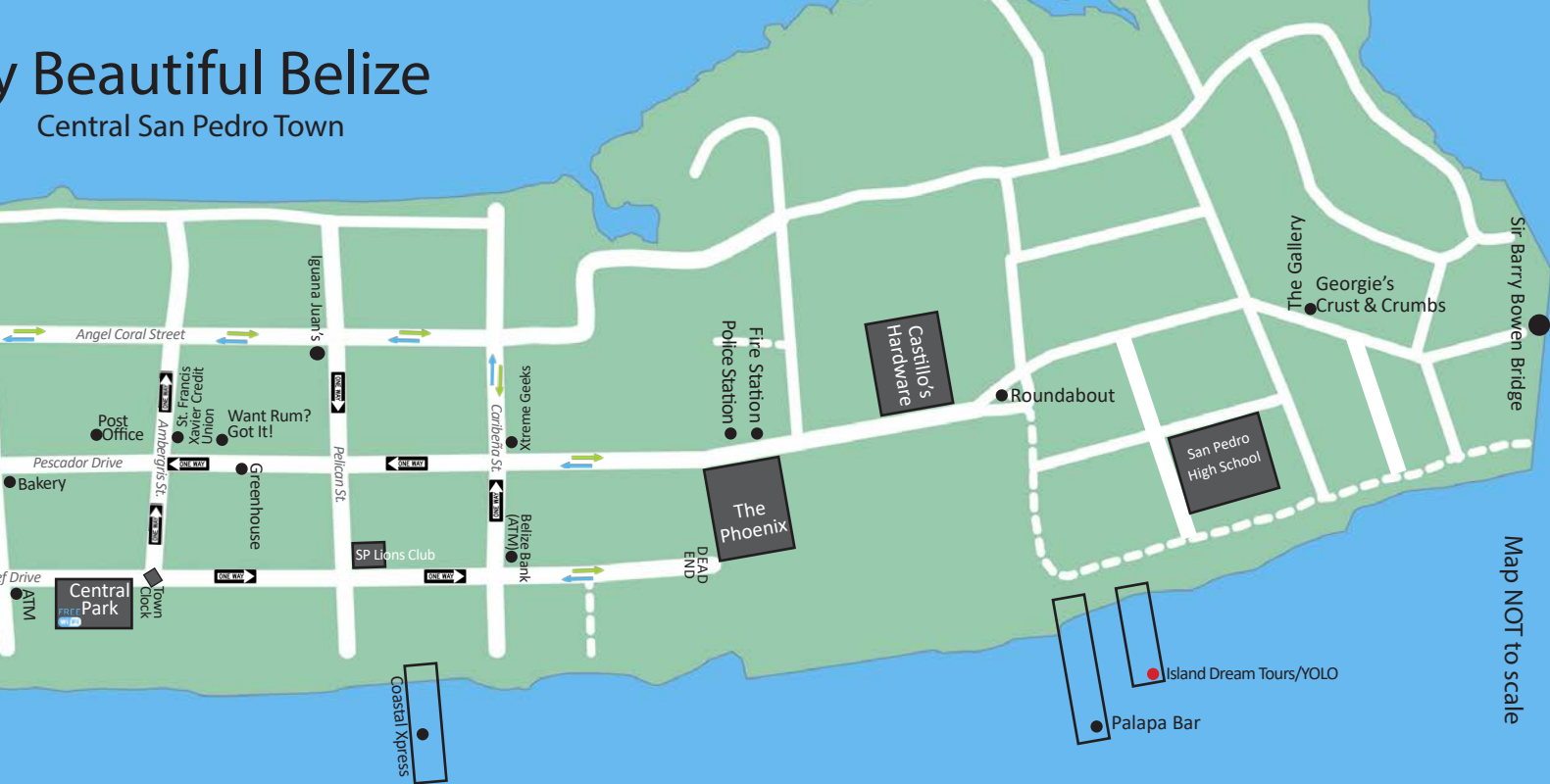


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# My Beautiful Belize

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## EATS & TREATS



**CASA PICASSO RESTAURANT:** Artfully creating Belizean inspired cuisine with local products for a farm to table experience. Open Tuesday - Saturday, Happy Hour 2pm-5pm, appetizers, dinner service 5pm- 9pm. Full bar with global wine list. 226-4443 for reservations. Located just south of town on Coconut Drive.



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

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

**BLACK ORCHID RESTAURANT & LOUNGE:** Come visit us; just a quick Golf Cart Ride 2 1/2 miles South of Town after the Croc Pond Lagoon and well before the Marco Gonzalez Maya Site. Reservations Recommended (501) 206-2441. [www.blackorchidrestaurant.com](http://www.blackorchidrestaurant.com).



## UNIQUE OFFERINGS



**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)

## PARTY PARTY!

**CRAZY CANUCKS BEACH BAR:** Beach bar located at Exotic Caye Beach Resort. Open daily 11am-midnight. Bar food and daily drink specials. Mondays: Live reggae @8pm Tuesdays: Live Music & Hermit Crab Racing @6:30pm Thursdays: Paint n Splash @2pm Fridays: Trivia @7pm Karaoke @8:30pm Sundays: Live music/horseshoes @3pm Follow us on Facebook. Phone: 670-8001

## 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



## Handmade shopping bags are a great alternative to single-use plastic ones



While at the Corozal Graffiti Festival, I chanced upon a booth that contained an array of colorful, eye-catching handmade purses and bags. From cell-phone carriers, wristlets, funky envelope-style bags, makeup bags, diaper bags and pretty handbags, I couldn't decide which to grab. Owner of Chill's Creations Cecelia Lanza showed me how one of the envelope bags folded up and I realized it was the perfect shopping bag. We chatted a while, reminiscing about old shopping days gone by, and I knew it would be the best purchase for me.

When I was a child (30 years or so ago – yikes!), shopping meant taking re-usable plastic containers in a sturdy bag with me, my shopping list written in pen and paper and ready for purchase. Our main grocery shop was often bustling with people buying flour, beans, rice and more. My container was specially reserved for buying the lard used to make fluffy flour tortillas. One by one, as we stood in line, the store owner would take our containers, tare the scale and add in the lard as requested. Into the sturdy shopping bag it went, to be joined by the rest of the groceries, and off I would go to take the groceries home.

That was a routine that seems a complete lifetime ago (fine, 30 years could be considered a lifetime). I cannot pinpoint to you when plastic bags became the norm, but even for us at home in the village and in towns, we found ways to re-use those black plastic bags. The clear plastic bags in which our other groceries came would be wiped down and re-used to flatten out tortillas, but eventually, as with all things, our kitchens overflowed with these items. Somehow, we stopped taking our containers to buy lard. We began buying the packed containers, discarding them when they ran out. You see where this is going...eventually, without truly meaning to, many of us added to the issue of single-use plastic pollution.

On January 14, 2020, the Government of Belize officially signed into law the Environmental Protection (Pollution from Plastics) Regulations, 2020, bringing it into force on January 15th. It is a law aimed at reducing plastic and Styrofoam pollution by phasing out single-use plastics that include shopping bags, Styrofoam and plastic utensils. We are at a crucial moment on our planet, and small changes and efforts add up to big rewards. By eliminating these single-use items, we can reduce the amount of pollution in our terrestrial and marine environment – because let's face it, we can try and dispose of our garbage properly, but the ingredients can be harmful, leaching into the ground and spreading throughout to hit our waters. Plastic bags float away quickly, landing in the waters, mistaken for jellyfish by turtles and other creatures, and quickly harm our marine animals. It's time for change, and yes, perhaps a return to our olden ways.

Even if it's just switching from plastic shopping bags to cloth or canvas, it's a step in the right direction. It becomes the easiest thing if you have something fun and sturdy, but foldable and ready to toss in your general use purse or backpack. Pull it out when your groceries start adding up at the counter, and you eliminate the need for a plastic bag.

I've used my Chill's Creations bag countless times – it is strong, folds right back up, and easily washable so it can be used time and again. It doesn't feel like going back to the old days, it just feels right! Chill's Creations can be contacted via 622-0357, where Cecelia lives in Corozal Town.

Another excellent source for re-usable and recycled bags is 12 Belize, here on our island home of Ambergris Caye. The awesome Lara Goldman has taken on the task of upcycling scrap materials – chips/cracker bags, wrappers, Tetra Paks, dog food bags, and more, crafting them into funky, colourful and useful bags. From coin purses, to makeup bags, mini and full-sized totes, you can certainly find a creative one for your everyday use! All items are available for purchase at Lara's gorgeous little shop 12 Belize, located at Vilma Linda Plaza (Purple building across from the local primary school).

Be on the lookout for local entrepreneurs throughout your travels. Items made with recycled scraps of fabric and materials are often the best purchases, and you make a difference in your part of the world.



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# Are you ready for the Easter Holidays?

From Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup> to Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, the Easter holidays in Belize's coastal communities bring in the crowds. The holiday is one of the busiest times in the tourism industry for Belize, as a bustling number of visitors from around the world seek out a tropical destination. With plenty of fun entertainment and the usual 'sun, sand and sea' attraction, places like Ambergris Caye, Caye Caulker and the Placencia Peninsula are key destinations. To make the most of your holiday getaway, we recommend some early planning.

Book your accommodations far in advance. Resorts, hotels and even rental apartments are usually full this time of year. If you do manage to find a place to stay, you may experience price inflation as accommodation prices tend to rise the closer it gets to the holiday. If you will be renting a golf cart or car during your stay, it's best to reserve these far in advance as well.

Your actual travel time may also be affected during the Easter holidays. With thousands of visitors flying and even boating into the country, things may be delayed at the border entrances. Ensure that your passage tickets are bought far in advance and that all necessary documents are in order to prevent any unwanted delays.

Once you are in Belize, it's time to unwind and enjoy a much-deserved getaway!

Whether you are looking for a relaxing quiet trip or reveling in the many beach parties held, Easter in Belize has much to offer. Beachfront



Janelle Cowo

bars host parties with special DJ performances and live music throughout the weekend. One of Ambergris Caye's most popular Easter parties takes place at the San Pedro Holiday Hotel downtown of the island. The two-day celebration from Saturday to Sunday brings a high energy atmosphere to those looking to party the day (and night) away! Another popular destination during Easter is the popular Secret Beach north-west of Ambergris Caye. However, if you prefer a relaxing beach atmosphere, we suggest making your own beach time along Boca del Rio or south of San Pedro Town.



While Easter sure is a fun time to party, it's also the biggest religious holiday in Belize so there are some regulations surrounding the Holy Days. Called Semana Santa, the religious celebration starts on Palm Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup> and though out the week special masses and vigils are held at the local churches. There are also processions around town on Palm Sunday and Good Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup> that interfere with the flow of traffic. Good Friday is also considered a Dry Day in Belize, meaning no alcohol is to be sold during the entire 24-hours of that day. Some exceptions are made at resorts; guests can consume alcoholic beverages while on the resort's private property. Throughout the country, Easter is celebrated with elaborate and much-anticipated processions, ceremonies, and rituals, and everyone is welcomed to join (even visitors).

For full more Easter events check out our My Beautiful Belize Calendar at

<https://mybeautifulbelize.com/events/>



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# *The wears her heart on her sleeve*

*"Why did you choose the Xtabai?"*

My forearm was still smarting and tingling, the swelling finally down, but the skin super sensitive to the touch as my latest ink addition settled in. My best friend, who had no ink of his own, was highly curious about my new tattoo. As Belizeans who grew up steeped in rich folklore and storytelling, we both had knowledge of the Maya story of the Xtabai (pronounced eesh-tah-bai).

The folk tale essentially speaks of this beautiful woman with long black hair, a long white dress that hid her chicken feet (I know...right?!). Slender and beguiling, she only ever appeared to drunk men stumbling along dark roads near bushes, luring them deep into her forest home. Upon embracing her, the men would quickly realize their mistake, as she would turn into a prickly tree, piercing their skin and making them sick. If after three days, the victim wasn't found or couldn't make his way out of the forest to be treated by the bush doctor, his fever would eventually cause him to die.

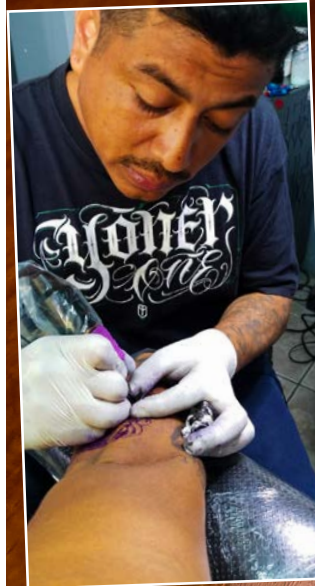
The feminist in me always wondered why it is that the women were always luring men and getting that bad reputation. As I grew older, I realized that the lessons we learned at the feet of our grandparents can be layered and much more meaningful. What if the Xtabai was being chased into her own forest by drunken, leering men. Her reaction – freezing and turning prickly – sounds pretty natural for someone cornered until she has to fight back. With my own history, this felt more like a lesson, and I have admired the Xtabai ever since. Thus, when I suddenly began itching to cover my left arm with ink, I opted to go full Belizean style.

My Maya heritage is full of intricate details (just look at our archaeological sites!) and rich folklore that could be converted into skin art. So, I did it. My artist, Wimpas Sosa of Belizean Ink Tattoo Shop, is a phenomenally talented artist who can take a stick figure attempt at an idea, and find a way to bring one's dream into reality. I chose to make the Xtabai half-woman, half-tree, then nestled the Tata Duende inside her trunk.

Another character of our folklore, the Tata Duende has a bad rap for luring children away into his forest. Then there is the version of his child-like heart, a love of guitar music, and intense desire to play, seeking playmates who won't make fun of him for his lack of thumbs and backward feet. Again, feeling the need to embrace the negative and make it a positive, I made the Xtabai maternal, allowing the Duende refuge in her trunk. Over the years, perhaps things might change, but at the moment, I look down and feel an immense pride that I have permanently encapsulated a big part of my background on ink, on my skin. My grandmother's stories travel with me, remind me to be stronger than I ever thought capable, and when asked, to share proudly what our Belizean heritage teaches us daily.

To get your very own Belizean ink souvenir, check out Wimpas at Belizean Ink - Wimpas Tattoo Shop on Facebook. Message them for an appointment.

Mary Gonzalez



## **Note:**

I am fully aware that tattoos are not everyone's cup of tea. But I also embrace the amazing Belizean pride items that have sprung forth via young entrepreneurs. ID7 Belize has some fun clothing lauding praises of the fry jack, hudut and more. Culture Apparel has its iconic 'ripped' Belize emblem on a variety of clothing items in fun styles and colors. Beyond the keychain or beer koozie, there are tons more ways to showcase Belizean pride. Mine's just a little more permanent.





# Giving your child the gift of travel!

Janelle Cowo

Vacationing has evolved, especially for families, and many are choosing to travel with their children at a young age. As a first-time mom, I took my child on her first in-country trip at five months and on her first vacation to another country at 15 months. There is a joy to traveling with your children, but it does come with its challenges and additional expenses.

I have found that traveling with my child within Belize is rather smooth. We are a tiny nation where we can easily traverse from the northernmost to the southernmost town in less than a day. From short plane flights, to bussing it on land and taking a water taxi to the cayes, traveling in Belize with my toddler is often a breeze.

## Here are a few tips for families traveling with children:

**Infants ride free** – If your toddler is still under two or can comfortably sit on your lap; your precious bundle will probably save you a few dollars on travel fees. Your baby is sure to ride free at this age on a bus or water taxi, the local airline will still charge a rider's fee, normally around \$6BZ.

**Children are normally charged at half the rate** – Children between the ages of four to ten are charged half the ticket price when traveling by bus or water taxi. As a paying customer, your child will have a seat of their own – after all at that age, children aren't that light anymore.

**Teens definitely pay full price** – while they may still be a baby in your eyes, your teen is charged as an adult by all forms of transportation.

Be sure to plan your trip well in advance and leave room for last minute changes. Bring along snacks and some entertaining toys to avoid cranky kids along the way. Most importantly, don't forget to sit back and enjoy every moment seeing new destinations and creating lifetime memories with your little one.

## Coming up in March:

**March 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>**

**La Ruta Maya Belize River Challenge,**  
more info at  
<http://www.larutamaya.bz>



**March 8<sup>th</sup>**

**Live concert with Fran Scuderi at Palapa Bar and Grill, San Pedro Town**  
starting at 6PM

**March 8<sup>th</sup>**

**92<sup>nd</sup> Baron Bliss Harbor Regatta at BTL Park, Belize City**  
starting at 9AM

**March 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Kite Festival, Charlie Burton Park, Gibnut Street, Belize City**  
starting at 10AM and runs till 5PM

**March 17<sup>th</sup>**

**– 8<sup>th</sup> Annual St. Patrick's Day Bash at Crazy Canucks Beach Bar, San Pedro Town**  
starting at 1PM

**– St. Patrick's Day Party at Crocs Sunset Sports Bar, north Ambergris Caye**  
starting at 3PM



**March 21<sup>st</sup>**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Annual Lionfish**

**Derby at Barrier Reef Sports Bar and Grill, Caye Caulker Village**  
starting at 8AM

**Every Tuesday**

– Hermit Crab Race at Crazy Canucks starting at 6:30PM

**Every Thursday**

– Wine Down Social Mixer at Marbucks Coffee House starting at 4:30PM

– Trivia Contest at The Truck Stop, north Ambergris Caye starting at 7:30PM

**Every Thursday, Friday, Saturday** – Sing along with the Coconut Trio at Palapa Bar and Grill starting at 6PM

**Every Friday** – Chase the Ace at Crocs Sunset Sports Bar, north Ambergris Caye starting at 6PM

**Every Sunday**

– Live Reggae Band at the Truck Stop starting at 5:30PM

– Brunch at Marbucks Coffee House starting at 8AM



For More Information  
on Trips and Overnight Charters:  
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[XsiteBelize@yahoo.com](mailto:XsiteBelize@yahoo.com)



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### STUDIO | 540 SQ.FT

1ST OR 2ND FLOOR CANAL-FRONT LAGOON VIEW STUDIO

All glass front floor to ceiling windows from corner to corner, fully appointed kitchenette, in-room washer/dryer, generous bathrooms and king bedrooms.

*First units already under construction to be completed in early 2020.*

### KING | 810 SQ.FT

1ST OR 2ND FLOOR CANAL-FRONT LAGOON VIEW 1 BEDROOM CONDO

All glass front floor to ceiling windows from corner to corner, fully appointed kitchenette, in-room washer/dryer, double sink bathrooms and the option for 1 king or 1 double beds in each unit. 1 bedroom condos can have private bedrooms or the option to keep the entire unit open as a large studio.

Boat access and parking  
Balconies on the water

### IMPERIAL | 1050 SQ.FT

1ST, 2ND OR 3RD FLOOR WATERFRONT 2 BEDROOM CONDOS

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Optional Lock-Off rooms

Boat access and parking  
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