



My Beautiful Belize

TRAVEL PUBLICATION

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FREE



From the jungle to the sea...welcome to Belize

From the Editor: Tamara Sniffin

In all my 40+ years of exploring Belize, my wild encounters have been many. Some have been close encounters, and others respectfully from afar. From swimming with sharks and dolphins to howling with the monkeys, photographing hundreds of breathtaking birds, helping rescue countless American Crocodiles back in the day, to relocating wayward tarantulas and pesky boa constrictors to spotting a jaguar near Gallon Jug, I have been blessed with the best of Belizean beasts.



On my latest adventure to the Cayo District, I had an unexpected encounter of the critter kind. I know you will think it silly, but I took great delight in feeding carrots to an adorable donkey and scratching his tufty ears. You may say it's not very exotic, but unique experiences like this can make your stay memorable, which is why traveling in Belize is so special. Expect the unexpected, even if it's just feeding a donkey a carrot!

Another treat on the same trip was the garden I toured, which sustains much of the onsite restaurant. I made fast friends with Abraham, the Maya gardener who was delighted to share his love for growing things. Thanks to him, I was lucky to come home with a handful of fresh habanero peppers! Score!

While exploring our country, you will indeed have unique encounters that mean something special to you and leave you wanting more of My Beautiful Belize. We welcome you!

About the Front Page:

A black-headed trogon (found in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala) perches high in the jungle canopy near Table Rock Jungle Resort in the Cayo District, while the insert photo showcases a giant anemone (named for its thick tentacles) flanked by a small sergeant major fish at Hol Chan Marine Reserve off the coast of Ambergris Caye.



My name is Wally Nuñez, Mayor of San Pedro Town, and I extend the most heartfelt welcome to the beautiful island of Ambergris Caye.

Our island is home to the most heartwarming and welcoming people. We have a rich and colorful history that captivates every adventurous traveler that comes our way. Discover the natural beauty of our enchanting island and make lifelong connections as we share Our Island, Our Home.

Our council is at the end of its first term in office and we are proud of the transformation we have made for our people. We built a new bridge that forever joins our island. We launched a street paving program that connects each of our residential areas. We upgraded our fleet of machinery and added new trucks to our fleet. These improvements bring prosperity to our residents and enable us to bring enhanced services and experiences to our guests.

We invite you to roam the landscape and become part of our story. We are a happy community, and we boast a sense of economic stability like never before. We face adversities every day and take them on with a fortitude that is exemplary of the vibrance of our history. Our residents will charm you every second of your visit and keep you coming back time and time again.

Our island is also your home. We invite you to explore our reefs and the natural landscape. Every experience and memory you make is directly linked to our island's prosperity and we are pleased to be part of your Belize adventure.

Our San Pedro Town Council keeps working to make our island accessible and embracing on each visit. We thank you for the opportunity to be part of your visitor experience and wish you the most memorable and exceptional visit.

Where do you Read

Antarctica!



While on holiday with family in Antarctica, Caye International Bank Chairman Joel Nagel and the penguins read the November 2023 issue of *My Beautiful Belize*.

Brian Shirts from Smithfield, Virginia, reads the August 2023 copy of *My Beautiful Belize* inside the Lincoln Monument in Washington DC, USA.

Have a great picture of you reading *My Beautiful Belize*?
Send it to us at hello@mybeautifulbelize.com to be featured!



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Snorkeling 101:

BE PREPARED FOR YOUR AQUATIC ADVENTURE!

Snorkeling is more like floating than swimming and offers an easy and relaxing alternative to diving. It's a perfect way to discover our Meso-American Reef System's magical underwater world, abundant with marine life and stunning coral formations.

By Tamara Sniffin

They say it's good to occasionally step out of your comfort zone and challenge yourself to do something new. For many visiting our beautiful Belize, exploring our stellar underwater world is a must. If you've never donned a snorkel mask and fins, or it's been a while, making your first jump off the side of a boat into the deep blue can be a tad intimidating. Why not do a little homework before making the most of your aquatic adventure?

Wherever you are staying, chances are your accommodations rent/loan snorkel gear or a dive shop nearby. Being prepared and comfortable in your gear can prevent annoying, if not stressful, distractions and allow for a more enjoyable experience.

Continued on Page 5



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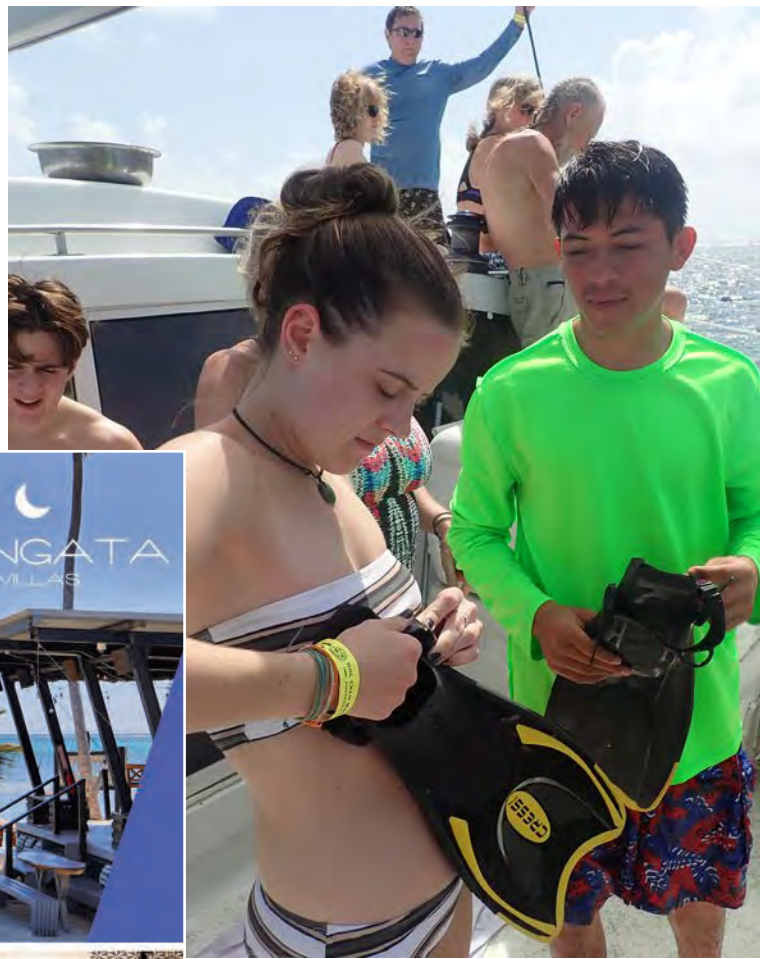
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SNORKEL MASK

Testing the snorkel mask for proper fit is crucial. Your goal is to have an airtight seal, and you should be able to see everything around you clearly while maintaining comfort.

- To get that airtight fit, push your hair back, place the mask firmly onto your face, inhale through your nose, and then let go. If the mask stays on without you holding on, then it is properly sealed, and water will not enter your mask.
- If water is still coming in when fully submerged, adjust the straps on the back of the mask. If your mask is too tight after adjusting the band behind your head, you may need a larger mask. A too tight mask can hurt after a while (and you want to be out there for hours having fun). Keep testing masks until you find one with a proper fit.



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- After determining which mask is a proper fit, wash the mask thoroughly with biodegradable soap and freshwater; this prevents your mask from fogging during your swim.
- Did you know many dive shops provide prescription snorkel masks? If you depend on glasses for better vision, these can be a game changer in your submerged adventure.
- Another mask option is a full-face mask, eliminating the snorkel tube.

SNORKEL TUBE

The tube is attached to the side of your mask and moves flexibly. Gently bite on the snorkel's mouthpiece, letting your lips seal around it, holding it in place. Breathe slowly and deeply through your mouth. No need to panic, you can always lift your head above water! You can hear your breathing through the snorkel and get into a rhythm while you gently kick your feet.

FINS

Make sure you find fins that fit just right; do not compromise! If the fins are too large, you will have trouble keeping them on during your swim, and if they are too small, you'll be so uncomfortable you won't enjoy the swim either! It is best to put your fins before getting into the water. If you must walk in them, turn around, and move backward, it's much easier than putting the first flipper forward!

Continued on Page 6



Snorkeling 101 Continued from Page 5

TIME TO GET IN THE WATER

Once your equipment fits properly and is comfortable, it's time for a test drive! Using a swimming pool or wading into the shallow beachside is a good start if you are a beginner. If you don't have that option, take a practice snorkel close to the boat to test all the equipment before venturing out.

ALWAYS REMEMBER

Just relax. Sometimes, first-timers will panic a bit, and that will cause you to over-exert yourself and wear out too quickly. Snorkeling is a safe way to enjoy your vacation, and you will find that the more you relax and let yourself glide through the water, the more enjoyable time you will have.

- Always stay with your group; do not stray from your guide.
- Do not stand on or break the coral.
- Do not pick up shells for souvenirs; they could be someone's home.
- Always go with a certified tour guide and operator.



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Belize Barrier Reef Watch

Many who enjoy the underwater experience, be it diving or snorkeling, are eager to learn more about this submerged world of beauty and be a part of protecting it. Here's one way to help: be a Belize Barrier Reef Watch Citizen Scientist by documenting reef health and diversity!

The Belize Barrier Reef Watch is one of many programs within Belize dedicated to protecting the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System, which was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its Outstanding Universal Value in 1996.

Founded initially as the Mesoamerican Coral Reef Watch Program in 2008, the program responded to numerous observations of coral bleaching in Mexico, Belize, and Honduras. The Nature Conservancy and the World Wildlife Fund led the initiative. In Belize, the program is coordinated by ECOMAR, a Belize Coral Watch Network member organization.

In 2022, the Belize Coral Watch Program was revitalized as the Belize Barrier Reef Watch Program. The restored program has several goals, one being the Citizen Science program, where everyone from tourists, coastal residents, fishers, tour guides, resorts, dive and snorkel centers, non-governmental organization researchers, and government departments can submit reports based on the Belize Barrier Reef Watch List.

The "Watch List"

The Belize Barrier Reef is a diverse ecosystem that has supported Belize for centuries. Scientists and rangers are in the field daily monitoring use and health, but many sites are not regularly monitored. The Watch List includes critical attributes of the marine ecosystem in Belize. The level is geared towards the Citizen Scientist, but field reports from fishers, tourism industry representatives, NGOs, and researchers are welcome.



BELIZE Barrier Reef WATCH **WATCH LIST** **Citizen Science Program**

<https://www.belizebarrierreef.org/submit-report.html>

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE TYPES OF OBSERVATIONS YOU CAN REPORT. STAY TUNED FOR DETAILS ON EACH ITEM!

OBSERVATION	DETAILS
Unhealthy coral	bleaching & disease
Healthy coral	elkhorn, staghorn, pillar, deformities
Spawning aggregations	snappers/groupers
Conch nurseries	fields of juvenile conch
Sharks & Rays	hammerheads, manta rays
Manatees	tail shots
Dolphins & Whales	dorsal fins
Crocodiles	any observed
Sea Turtles	any observed, tail length, leatherbacks
Foraging Megafauna	Individuals that frequent
Parrotfish	rainbow, midnight
Uncommon/Rare	not regularly observed
Invasive species	lionfish, halophila
Diadema urchin	sites with many, or dead
Fish Disease/Kills	species affected
Algal Blooms	color & type
Discolored Water	location, odor
Vessel Groundings	damage to reef
Anchor Damage	damage to reef
Marine Debris	try to remove or notify
Historical Wrecks	anchors, cannon, vessels
Unusual sightings	anything out of the ordinary

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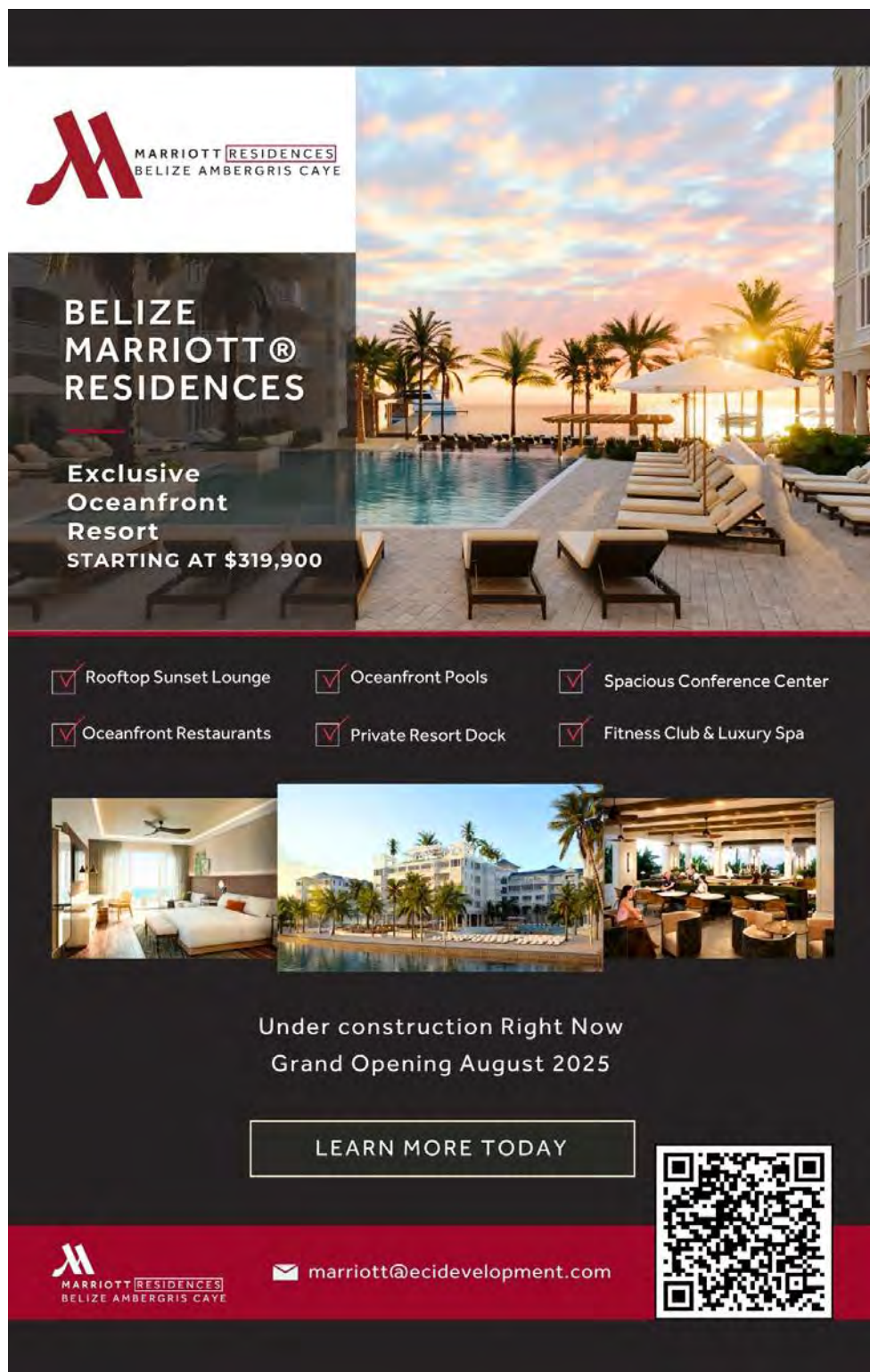
Twenty-four categories are monitored and documented. The list includes marine life, marine debris, commercial fishery products, and iconic megafauna, from the shore to the reef, through the ocean, to the territorial borders of Belize.

February - April 2024

As a Citizen Scientist, you can report on all categories or select your favorites, the ones you are most passionate about, and share those reports.

The information received is used to create the Belize Barrier Reef Annual Report, identifying resilient reefs or Hope Spots, document rare species, document nesting turtles, and engage coastal residents on how to support the efforts of the dedicated personnel charged with managing and monitoring the Belize Barrier Reef.

To submit a report, please go to Belize Barrier Reef Watch <https://www.belizebarrierreef.org/submit-report.html>. Once you submit a report of your reef observations, a team member will reach out with any additional questions. Thank you for your support and concern for the Belize Barrier Reef Ecosystem and for volunteering with ECOMAR and the Belize Barrier Reef Watch Program!



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Edward “Papo” Alamilla’s realism art depicts Belize’s natural beauty



The winning painting is incredibly detailed, and includes well-known island fisherman, Wilfredo Alamilla Sr. Papo said he wanted to highlight his fishing practices, while also capturing breathtaking vistas such as the Lighthouse Reef Atoll area and the mesmerizing Great Blue Hole. The painting also included a Maya Archaeological site, a cultural gem drawing tourists to its historical allure. Other features include the great Belize Barrier Reef and mangrove system, both havens for numerous fish species. The artwork also portrayed the magnificent Grand Slam related to fly-fishing, along with the untainted splendor of the jungle, the majestic jaguar, the vibrant Macaw, and Belize’s national bird, the Toucan. The artwork also pays homage to the nation’s agricultural abundance, portraying the cane industry and a local woman proudly displaying her bountiful harvest from the fertile land.

By Janelle Gonzalez

With countless talented painters across Belize, island artist Edwardo “Papo” Alamilla stands out as a master of realism. Throughout the years, Papo has amazed the art community with his interpretation of the Belizean lifestyle. He paints what he sees daily, recreating memories of his past on canvas. From gorgeous marine life to lush jungles and scenes of San Pedro in its early days, Papo’s art comes alive under his tools of choice.

As the son of a fishing family, Papo grew up surrounded by the beauty of the Belize Barrier Reef. From a young age, he developed a passion for painting. He is self-taught and versatile, creating commissioned pieces or painting his ideas. Most of his work is acrylic, but he also paints with oils. Papo’s art is sold not only in Belize but carried by collectors and galleries around the world.

Papo’s talent has not gone unrecognized; in September 2023, he claimed the top prize in the Belize Tourism Through Art competition. His award-winning masterpiece, ‘Our People, Our Landscapes, Our Tourism,’ captivated an esteemed panel of judges well-versed by showcasing the country’s tourism landscape in all its beauty, including flora, fauna, and iconic attractions. Papo competed among 40 other artists nationwide and was one of the 19 submissions shortlisted.



Papo has even passed down his skills to his children, who have followed in his footsteps. The family’s paintings are displayed for purchase at his art studio on Tarpon Street in downtown San Pedro. The island artist welcomes art lovers and even works on customized paintings at his shop.

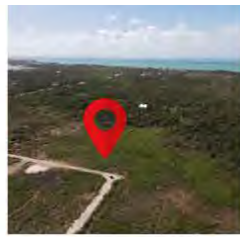
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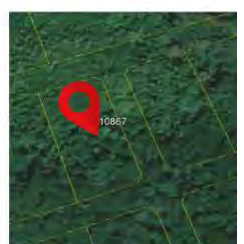
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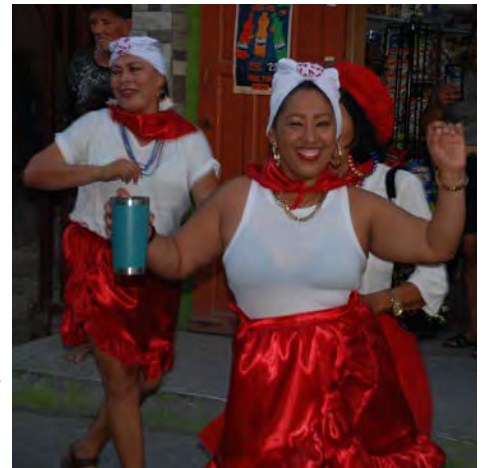
By Janelle Gonzalez



It's that time of year when San Pedro's island traditions come alive during the El Gran Carnival. Painting, dance, and music fill the streets as we celebrate the five days before the Lenten Season.

Carnival is one of the most joyful, fun, and entertaining festivals on Ambergris Caye, and this year, it kicks off on Saturday February 10th, with a grand Market Day at the Honorable Louis Sylvestre Sporting Complex. The following three days, from Sunday, February 11th to Tuesday, February 13th, the front street (Barrier Reef Drive) will see an explosion of color with the traditional painting and comparsas. If you are new to El Gran Carnival de San Pedro, prepare yourself to turn into a human canvas, as during this time, participants paint one another in colorful hues of water and powder paint.

Most entertaining is enjoying the vibrant performances by the comparsas (dance groups) who parade around town performing choreographed original dances and songs. I am eager to see what the Cholo's Barbies have prepared this year! The Barbies, grown men dressed as women in heels, are always a hit! The last day of painting is always extra fun, with a DJ entertaining the crowd at Central Park.



The festival will end on Ash Wednesday, February 14th, with the traditional burning of Juan Carnival. Culturally, the burning of Juan Carnival signifies the cleansing of the community's sins and is believed to protect the island from misfortune during Lent.

Easter in La Isla Bonita

It isn't Easter in Belize without a good dose of sun, sand, and sea! The long holiday weekend starts on Holy Thursday, March 29th, and runs to Easter Monday, April 1st. Easter is Belize's most extended public holiday, and everyone flockes to the many coastal communities to relax or party with family and friends.

Here in San Pedro Town, it is one of the busiest times, with visitors from mainland Belize and abroad looking for clear skies, white beaches, and cool waters. Beach parties, concerts, and other social events happen throughout the weekend; everyone is invited. If you want to dance your holidays away, San Pedro is the place to be!

Table Rock Jungle Resort

IS ALL THINGS

uniquely Belize

The Cayo District is a treasure trove of hidden gems. At the end of canopied roads, you discover resorts as singular as hand-crafted jewels, nestled within dense jungles teeming with brilliant birds and vibrant foliage. Table Rock Jungle Lodge is one of these hidden nuggets, synonymous with all things uniquely Belize.

To get there, you drive through the picturesque village of Cristo Rey, turning off at mile five on Cristo Rey Road south of the community. A corridor of majestic royal palms line the driveway leading to the resort, flanked by the expanse of orange orchards where donkeys and fluffy sheep peacefully graze. Along the way, Sammy's Play Park and picnic tables bask under Ceiba tree shade, inviting families with youngsters to come and play. As the foliage thickens, Table Rock Jungle Resort lies within the lush embrace of the jungle.

The intimate resort keeps it cozy with ten eco-friendly cabañas scattered along cobbled pathways under dense treetops. Nature beautifully borders the walkways, popping with colorful flowers and buzzing with hummingbirds. Squawking parrots and the howl of monkeys can be heard in the distance; all embraced within the warm hush of the jungle. The stage is set for a perfect getaway.

Continued on Page 16

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Home is thatched cabañas cheerfully decorated with colorful Guatemalan textiles accented with dark woods. Screened windows are abundant, showcasing the wild landscape, with quaint porch areas to sit and commune with nature. A kerosene lantern illuminates the evening veranda, charming the dusky ambiance and shedding light on your door.

They say mountain air makes you hungry, but that also applies to the jungle! The inviting covered dining area is perched overlooking treetops and the ravine to the Macal River below. There's also a view of the bridge to the infinity pool that showcases a seamless illusion of cascading waters over the edge into the ascending jungle. With a tasty variety of tropical libations at the bar and a menu full of farm-to-table local and international options, your thirst and hunger will be happily satiated. Each evening, a special menu is offered in addition to the house menu, offering fresh, seasonal dishes, such as citrus and beetroot salad, chaya tarts, spiced rubbed pork chops, and plantain-crusted fish. With home-made desserts, locally made ice cream, and wines recommended by your server, your meal is the pinnacle of a perfect day. The super-friendly staff is attentive and happy to accommodate special dietary needs.



Although the leisure of the compound begs for a lazy day around the pool or in a hammock with a good book, many adventures are waiting right on site. With the Macal River just a short pathway away, guests can enjoy canoeing or river floating, with guided options for more extensive water journeys. There are more than two miles of well-marked hiking trails to explore, with different levels to match your fitness. There's even a guided night hike offered for the brave at heart.

Continued on Page 17




The Palmilla Restaurant & Admiral Nelson's Bar
Dinner Reservations 226-2067



The area also has world-class birding, with many to spot along your hikes. Birding guides are available to target birds you may not even notice and are well worth it for those passionate about their feathered friends.

Looking for just a pleasant stroll while learning more about the property? The Farm Walk is for you! Before heading out, ask the kitchen for a bag of veggie scraps to feed the tethered donkeys that graze within the orange orchards; stop and say “hi” to the resident chickens and rabbits, and tour their vast garden where much of your meals originate. After all this excitement, perhaps a therapeutic massage to top off the day is in order?




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<https://www.tablerockbelize.com>.



Ambergris Caye

Tips for visiting on a budget

By Janelle Gonzalez

We all dream of an island vacation, and there is no need to break the bank to get it. Even with limited resources, an adventure still awaits you in Belize. Here are some tried and tested tips to help you plan an affordable holiday on Ambergris Caye.

Share accommodation expenses with friends

There is no need to stay at a fancy resort; try inexpensive hotels, hostels, or short-term rentals. Additionally, sharing a room with a travel buddy will divide the costs. Shared accommodations also offer the opportunity to meet people who might be keen to explore with you.

Try affordable transportation options

It may take you a bit longer to get from point A to point B, but it will save you a pretty penny. Instead of hopping on a 15-minute flight from the mainland to San Pedro Town, catch the water taxi; it will be a scenic ride and the most affordable way to get to the island. Once on the island, renting a golf cart is unnecessary; try biking instead or an occasional cab ride when necessary. Depending on your location, walking is an option too.

Eat Local



Dining out can quickly exhaust your traveling funds. Instead, eat where the locals eat! Belize is a melting pot of cultures, which shows in its food. Street food is not fast food; it is your best way to get authentic Belizean cuisine. From Johnny cakes stuffed with beans, ham, and cheese for breakfast to hearty plates of rice and beans with stew chicken, these meals won't cost more than a few dollars. Ask for recommendations of the best local eateries from local people, such as your bartenders.

Go on group tours

A trip to San Pedro is incomplete without a snorkeling trip to the barrier reef. While chartering a private tour will cost you hundreds of dollars,

other options exist. Many tour companies offer group trips for a more affordable per-person cost. We recommend contacting the local tour companies in person to secure the best deal.

Enjoy like the locals

You don't have to spend much to have fun in Ambergris Caye. The gorgeous Caribbean Sea is free; you can enjoy it anytime. Go swimming off a dock or just lounge by the beach with a good book. Enjoy drinks during happy hours; almost every bar has one. Take part in local events and celebrations, and you will be immersed in local customs and traditions that are truly priceless. Engaging with locals offers a unique insight into our way of life and provides opportunities to form meaningful connections and lifelong memories.

Where in Belize?



Despite our small square mileage, a lot of Belize remains a mystery. There are so many places yet to be discovered! 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 wonderfully rustic. If you're up for the adventure, who knows where you will end up!

To join our guessing game, follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @mybeautifulbelize, using #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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OWN A PIECE OF PARADISE

WHO WE ARE?

Caye International Bank (CIB) is an award-winning bank located in Ambergris Caye, Belize. We specialize in serving international clients and are committed to providing exceptional service to help our clients achieve their financial goals. Whether you're looking to invest in real estate or buy a home in Belize, we're here to help you every step of the way.

WHAT WE DO?

At CIB, we provide a wide range of financial services to help our clients manage their money and achieve their financial goals. Our services include private and corporate banking, investments, international wire transfers, and mortgage loans for properties in Belize, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama.

We understand that investing in a foreign market can be challenging, which is why we offer personalized support to our clients.

We can provide the banking services you need to succeed financially offshore.

CONVENIENT

With a wide range of services, including mortgage loans, wire transfers, debit cards, and the option to bank in multiple currencies, Caye International Bank seeks to be a convenient option for clients.


DEPENDABLE

Regarding the stability of Caye, Belize has one of the highest liquidity ratios in the world and has been in business for over 20 years. CIB started off as a mortgage company in 1996 and became an international bank in 2003.


CONTACT US


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Tick-Tock: Enjoy your last lobster tail!



If you didn't enjoy a succulent lobster tail by the end of February 2024, you are out of luck for the next few months. The Spiny Lobster Fishing Season will close on March 1, 2024, and remain closed until July 1, 2024. During this time, fishing, cooking, or eating lobster is illegal. Without this protection, the lobster population in Belize would most certainly disappear, not only having a detrimental effect on our marine ecosystem but also diminishing the livelihood of local fishermen and culinary tourism.

Of course, we celebrate the return of lobster season in July with festivals on Ambergris Caye, Caye Caulker, and Placencia!

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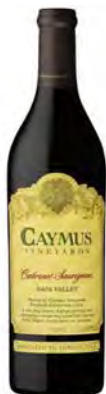
Many Spirits to choose from incl Buffalo Trace, 1792, Bakers 7, Basil Hayden, Woodford Reserve, Whistlepig Rye, Elijah Craig, Buchanan 12, Bulleit, Glenfiddich Select, Hendricks, Angels Envy, Makers Mark, Garrison Bros, TX Yellow Rose, Four Roses, Titos, Grey Goose, Gentleman's Jack, Beam Black, Monkey Shoulder, Macallan 12, Weller.

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ASK US ABOUT OUR CLASSES, EVENTS AND YOUR FAVORITE WINE!



Traditions rooted in religion:

Hot Cross Buns for Easter

Easter is a religious time for many Belizeans, especially Catholics, who see it as a time to strengthen their faith and family bonds through traditional activities.

From Sunday, March 24th to Sunday, March 31st, Christians across the country observe the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The week begins with the Palm Sunday Procession. Roman Catholic Churches in several municipalities re-enact Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Holy Monday's Procesion del Silencio and Holy Tuesday's Procesion de Encuentro reflect Christ's teachings. Good Friday features the Live Passion Play as streets are transformed into the Stations of the Cross, with local actors dramatizing Christ's trials, tribulations, and crucifixion. Masses are then held throughout the weekend on Saturday and Sunday to celebrate Christ's resurrection.

Another time-honored Easter tradition in many Belizean households is baking. Serving hot cross buns on Good Friday is a beautiful (and delicious) way to enjoy the day with family, filling the kitchen with sweet and fruity aromas! Do you feel like putting on an apron and breaking out the mixing bowls? Here is our simple recipe for Cross Buns.

Ingredients:

Dry

- * 3lbs flour
- * 2 packs of yeast
- * Spice seeds
- * Raisins
- * ½ lb shortening
- * 1 cup brown sugar

Wet

- * Lukewarm coconut milk
- * Vanilla (about one tablespoon)
- * Essence of your choice

Preparation Method:

- Add flour, yeast, spice seeds, and raisins into a mixing bowl.
- Add in the ½ lb of shortening, followed by 1 cup of brown sugar.
- Mix everything until incorporated.
- Pour in the lukewarm coconut milk until the dough starts coming together smoothly. You don't want too much milk to make the dough wet and sticky or too little milk that will make the dough stiff and dry.
- While kneading the dough, add vanilla and whatever essence you have chosen and knead well.
- Continue kneading until the dough is smooth and pliable.
- Roll dough into medium-sized balls and set them on a baking sheet.
- From the excess dough, cut two thin strips and make a cross across each bun.
- Let the dough balls rise – about 20 minutes.
- When the dough has risen, place the baking sheet into the oven at 375oF and let bake for 20-25 minutes.

From attending Easter mass to joining a procession and even just relaxing at home, Easter brings loved ones together as they celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Visit our online calendar of events (www.mybeautifulbelize.com/events/) for more details on all Easter events happening on the island.



DESTINATION WEDDING

GET MARRIED IN BELIZE

By Janelle Gonzalez

On October 9, 2021, I married my partner of ten years in a backyard ceremony in mainland Belize. With family and friends present, it was a magical moment I will treasure forever.

Over the years, Belize has become a popular destination for weddings. Whether on the beach, in the jungle, or at an ancient Maya ruin, tying the knot in an exotic Caribbean paradise makes your special day more enchanted.

But, as anyone planning a wedding knows, research is vital, and getting married in a different country requires a little more work.

What to know before getting hitched in Belize?

Weddings in Belize are recognized and legal in most parts of the world. A marriage license at the cost of \$100 USD must be obtained before the ceremony, and the couple must be in the country at least three days before applying for the marriage license. However, it is possible to receive a Special License up to the day before the ceremony for \$250 USD. Ensure you have all your original legal documents, such as your passport and birth certificate. If previously married, have your divorce or spouse's death certificates on hand to prove you are eligible for remarriage. You will also need a Senior Justice of the Peace and two witnesses. Don't feel overwhelmed by the application process; wedding planners usually assist with this process so you can relax and prepare for your big day.

With all the procedures in place, all that is left is to get married! In Belize, either a Senior Justice of the Peace who has the authority to carry out wedding ceremonies or a priest, pastor, or minister of a registered church can perform a marriage. After the ceremony, the marriage will be registered at the Belize Registry Department, and you will receive your legally binding Marriage Certificate.

With year-round perfect weather, Belize is a dream wedding destination for many. With the resources to cater to every couple's style and budget, each wedding in Belize is unique. Do you need your wedding to be 100% planned for you? Belize has many experienced wedding planners who can deal with every detail from officiant to photographer, flowers, food, drinks, location, transport, hair, makeup, and all the fun stuff for the party.

Belize is a magical place to make your dream wedding come true. Pick your location, make the trip, and say, "I Do!"



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Exploring the Advantages of International Lending - How You Can Benefit

Submitted by Luigi Wewege, President, Caye International Bank

Part of your strategy for maximizing the use of your offshore accounts is to make the most of all the available financial services. That includes looking into options for offshore lending. The purpose of the loan may be to finance the purchase of real estate, obtain seed money to open a business, or just to finance some other purchase you will need in the future.

You could use domestic financing for all of these and any other project you have in mind. What's different are the benefits that can come your way by using financing opportunities through your offshore bank or institution.

Here are some of the advantages to consider before you make any decisions about where to finance your project.

Favorable Banking Laws and Policies

International banking regulations and laws do vary from one nation to another. You can use that to your advantage by learning more about banking laws in any nation where you want to set up international bank accounts. As you look over those laws and regulations, make sure you understand how they apply to non-citizens or even to expats who may choose to retire in those nations.

Dig a little deeper and look at the policies that specific international banks have in place. While all policies must comply with banking laws and regulations in that nation, there may still be some flexibility in how they are applied. Your goal is to understand how the laws and policies in each nation might be more favorable than what domestic lending would provide.

Tax Breaks Not Available in Home Country

The issue of taxes is always something you want to consider, even with international loans or mortgages. You already know what to expect from the tax structure at home. What remains to be determined is the type of tax obligation you would assume by using international financing.

As with banking laws and policies, tax laws vary between nations.

You may find that you owe little to no tax on that international loan. There may or may not be an annual fee due by specific dates of the year. Identify all taxes and fees that would apply in a particular nation and compare the resulting figure to any annual tax obligation at home. You're likely to find that international lending would result in less of an obligation.

Finance in a More Conducive Political and Economic Climate

In today's world, it's impossible to ignore the political and economic activity taking place in different nations. What happens in some nations exerts significant influence in other parts of the world. Keeping that in mind, you may find that what's currently happening at home has a minimal impact on the economy or the political status in the nations where you have based your offshore accounts.

In other words, you may find that opting for international lending would allow you to enjoy a more stable setting regarding political issues and even the state of the economy. Notice what's happening now and the projections for the next decade or so. Back that up by looking at how the nation fared in years past. Basing your lending activity within that country may be more than a practical financing decision; it might give you more peace of mind.

The team at Caye International Bank can help you explore these options and come up with a plan that's to your advantage. Contact the Caye team today and learn more about what international lending can do for you.



SPONSORED CONTENT

Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY

11th - 13th: El Gran Carnaval de San Pedro



Carnaval is one of the most joyful, fun, and entertaining festivals on Ambergris Caye as painting, dancing, and music fill the streets. Look out for the comparsas (dance groups) as they parade around town performing choreographed original dances and songs.

24th: Maya Wedding Reenactment

Join in an evening of cultural immersion as they reenact the birth of the Mestizo Culture. Held at the Santa Rita Archaeological Site in Corozal Town, starts at 7PM



MARCH

8th - 11th: La Ruta Maya River Challenge



Four days of intense paddling, 170 miles of breathtaking views, and pure adventure. The race kicks off from San Ignacio Town in the Cayo District.

30th: Cross Country Cycling Classic

The Holy Saturday Cross Country Cycling Classic is an annual tradition that attracts cyclists from across the country and region. Starting from Belize City, with a lead out to mile 3 on the George Price Highway, cyclists journey the 144-mile-long journey to and from San Ignacio Town.

APRIL

26th - 28th: National Agriculture and Trade Show

The largest fair showcasing Belize's diverse agriculture and food industry is held in the capital city of Belmopan.

For more details on these events, visit our My Beautiful Belize Calendar of Events at <https://mybeautifulbelize.com/events/>



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