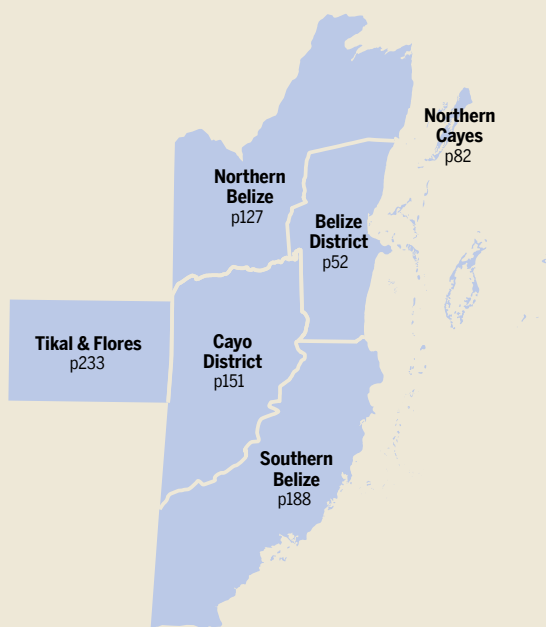




Belize



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

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PLAN YOUR TRIP

Welcome to Belize	4
Belize Map	6
Belize's Top 22	8
Need to Know	18
If You Like	20
Month by Month	23
Itineraries	26
Diving & Snorkeling	31
Belize Outdoors	38
Travel with Children	44
Regions at a Glance	48

ON THE ROAD

BELIZE DISTRICT... 52

Belize City	54
Northwest of Belize City	68
Burrell Boom	68
Community Baboon Sanctuary	69
Rancho Dolores	71
Crooked Tree	71
Old Northern Highway	73
West of Belize City	75
Old Belize	75
Hattieville	76
Belize Zoo	77

Monkey Bay	79
Along the Coast Road ..	80
Gales Point	80

NORTHERN CAYES 82

Ambergris Caye & San Pedro	84
Caye Caulker	108
Other Northern Cays ..	122
Cayo Esperanto	122
Turneffe Atoll	123
Lighthouse Reef	124
Long Caye	125



ANCIENT MAYA RUINS,
CARACOL P180



DIVING, LIGHTHOUSE REEF
P124



HALF MOON CAYE NATURAL
MONUMENT P126

Contents

UNDERSTAND

NORTHERN BELIZE.....127

Orange Walk District .. 129

Orange Walk Town 129

Lamanai 135

Rio Bravo Conservation
& Management Area 139

Corozal District..... 140

Corozal Town..... 141

Cerro Maya &
Copper Bank..... 147

Sarteneja..... 149

CAYO DISTRICT151

Belmopan..... 154

Around Belmopan..... 158

Hummingbird
Highway..... 160

West of Belmopan 162

Actun Tunichil Muknal... 164

San Ignacio..... 165

Southeast of San Ignacio..... 173

Cristo Rey &
Chiquibul Roads 174

Mountain Pine
Ridge Area..... 178

Caracol..... 180

Northwest of San Ignacio..... 182

Bullet Tree Falls 182

Southwest of San Ignacio..... 183

San José Succotz
& Around 185

Benque Viejo
del Carmen 186

SOUTHERN BELIZE..... 188

Stann Creek District .. 190

Dangriga 190

Mayflower Bocawina
National Park 195

Central Cayes 195

Hopkins 199

Sittee Point..... 203

Sittee River..... 205

Maya Center..... 205

Cockscomb Basin
Wildlife Sanctuary 206

Placencia..... 208

Toledo District (The Deep South)..... 217

Punta Gorda 218

Around Punta Gorda 225

Around the
Deep South..... 227

TIKAL & FLORES, GUATEMALA 233

Tikal 234

Yaxhá 240

Uaxactun 241

El Remate 241

Flores &
Santa Elena..... 243

Belize Today..... 254

History..... 256

Ancient Maya 266

People of Belize 273

Rhythms of a Nation .. 277

Beyond Rice & Beans.. 280

Wild Things 284

Land & Environment .. 290

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Directory A–Z 296

Transportation 305

Index..... 313

Map Legend..... 319

SPECIAL FEATURES

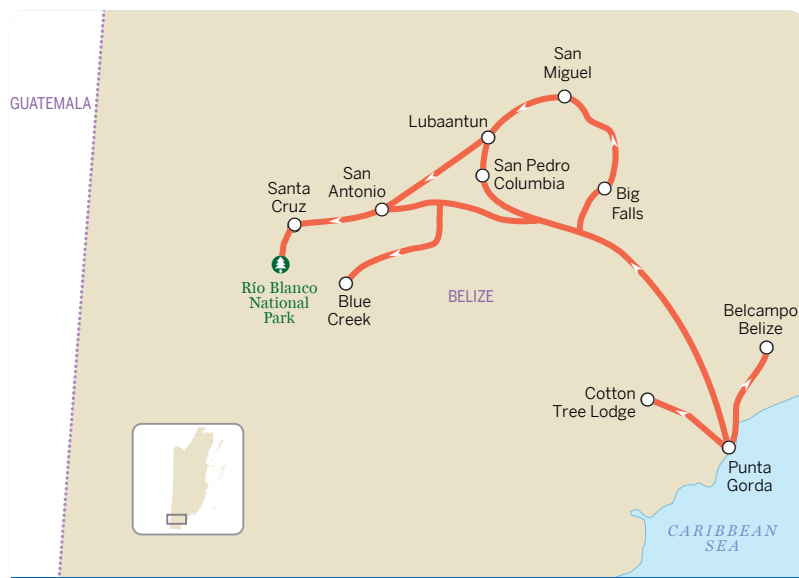
Diving & Snorkeling... 31

Outdoor Activities 38

Ancient Maya 266

Wildlife-Watching..... 284

Itineraries



Deep South

Exploring Belize's Deep South can take just a couple of days, but to truly appreciate the village life, allow five days.

Punta Gorda (PG) is a chilled-out, slightly ramshackle coastal town and a natural spot to begin your trek. There are budget digs in PG but if you'd like to experience some luxury, book yourself in at **Cotton Tree Lodge**, **Belcampo Belize** or Lodge at Big Falls within **Big Falls** among the finest ecolodges in Southern Belize.

The true beauty is in exploring the villages, chocolate-making enterprises and cultural tours out of PG. One of the best circuits is from **Big Falls**, then head off the highway to **San Miguel**, where you can sleep cheap, then move on to **San Pedro Columbia** and use it as a base to explore nearby **Lubaantun**. Later, head further still to the small Maya village of **San Antonio**, detouring for a hike and a swim at beautiful **Río Blanco National Park**, or caving at **Blue Creek**.



The Whole Enchilada: Corozal Town to Punta Gorda

Belize is small enough that you can see the whole country in a month at express pace. In two months you're practically a resident! This itinerary leads the way, starting in the quaint *mestizo* town of **Corozal Town**, south of the Mexican border. Spend one day in **Orange Walk Town** to cruise the New River and explore the Maya ruins at **Lamanai**, then head east to the fishing village of **Sarteneja** for amazing wildlife watching at **Shipstern Nature Reserve**.

From Sarteneja, catch the fast ferry to **San Pedro**. Stay on either **Ambergris Caye** or **Caye Caulker**, but allow yourself at least four days to chill out in a hammock, kayak out to the reef, frolic with the fish and feast on fresh seafood. When you head back to the mainland, don't bypass the animal-lovers' sights outside **Belize City** in the Belize District, including the **Community Baboon Sanctuary** and the **Belize Zoo**. If you're into birds, spend a night or two around the **Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary**. Further west in Cayo, base yourself in or around **San Ignacio** and take four or five days experiencing regional adventures, whether it be delving deep into the caves at **Actun Tunichil Muknal** or **Barton Creek**, horseback riding at **Mountain Equestrian Trails**, climbing the tall temples at **Caracol** or **Xunantunich**, or all of the above. Backtrack east to the beautiful Hummingbird Hwy, which carries you south across the thickly forested northern foothills of the Maya Mountains. Stop at **Ian Anderson's Caves Branch Jungle Lodge** for some cave exploration, jungle expeditions and abseiling down bottomless sinkholes.

By now you have been away from the Caribbean for way too long, so spend a few days in the coastal village of **Hopkins** to absorb some Garifuna rhythms. From here, you can hike the beautiful jungle trails at **Mayflower Bocawina National Park** or **Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary**.

If you're still thirsting for sun and fun, head south to **Placencia** to enjoy lovely sandy beaches, lively bars and lots of water sports, or indulge your tropical-island fantasies at **Glover's Reef**, which has an irresistible low-key vibe and brilliant diving and snorkeling. Finish up in **Punta Gorda**, the southernmost town in Belize from where you can explore the Deep South.



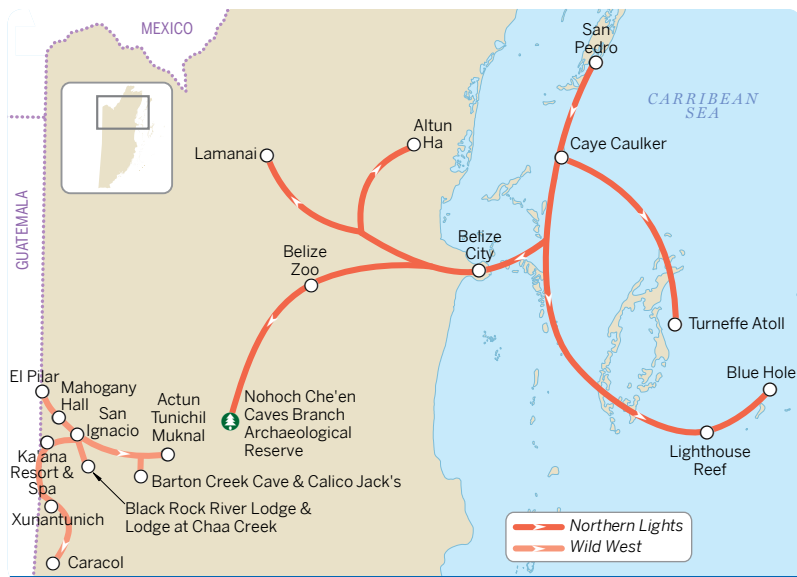
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Above: San Pedro
(p84)

Left: Maya site of
Xunantunich (p185)

1
WEEK

Northern Lights

If you only have a week to spare, make a base on one of the Northern Cayes, where you have access to an impressive array of activities on land and sea.

Choose **Caye Caulker** or **San Pedro**, as they are closest to the mainland. (We prefer Caye Caulker – not only for its easy-going vibe, but also for its easy access to **Belize City**, which is only 45 minutes away by water taxi.) From here, you can take snorkel or dive trips to **Turneffe Atoll** and **Lighthouse Reef**, the latter home to the amazing **Blue Hole**.

You can also use either of these islands as a base for day trips to the mainland. Spend a day in the Belize District to visit **Belize Zoo** or the Maya ruins at **Altun Ha**.

It's also an easy trip to eastern Cayo District, where you can go cave-tubing in the **Nohoch Che'en Caves Branch Archaeological Reserve** or zip-lining through the forest canopy. You can also head north to the Maya ruins at **Lamanai**, enjoying a peaceful boat ride on the New River along the way.

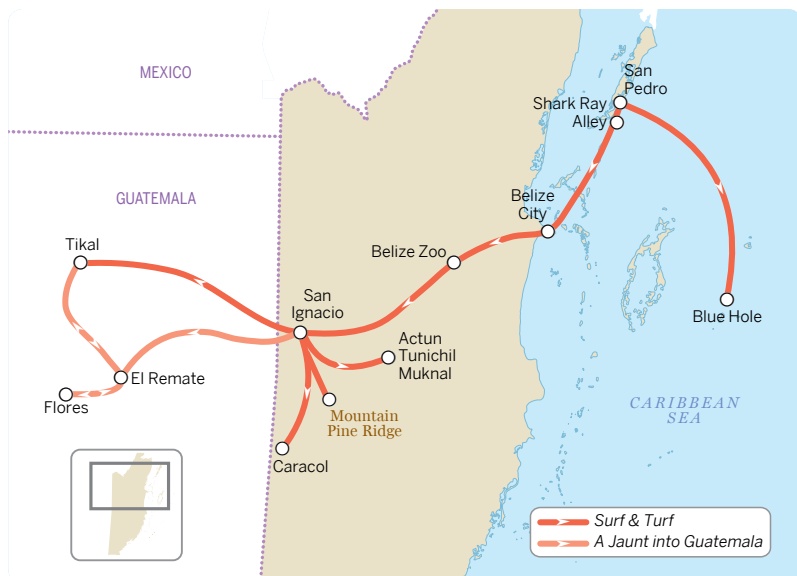
3
DAYS

Wild West

On day one head to traveler-oriented **San Ignacio** to get a feel for the town, and visit the Maya site of Cahal Pech and the green iguanas at San Ignacio Resort Hotel. San Ignacio has plenty of good budget hotels and restaurants, so save your money for a night at one of the excellent ecolodges in the region.

Arrange a tour to explore the amazing ritual cave of **Actun Tunichil Muknal**, or the superb Maya ruins at **Caracol**, either of which will take up all of your second day. A third option is canoeing through **Barton Creek Cave** and zip-lining at **Calico Jack's**.

On your third day, wake up early and do a half-day trip to either **Xunantunich** or **El Pilar** before checking into one of the better hotels or ecolodges in western Cayo: **Mahogany Hall** is closest to El Pilar, while the fabulous **Ka'ana Resort & Spa** is closer to Xunantunich. Other stand-outs include **Black Rock Lodge** and the **Lodge at Chaa Creek**.

2
WEEKS

Surf & Turf

This traditional Belize sampler gives you the best of both worlds – a taste of the jungle and a glimpse of the sea – all within your two weeks of vacation time.

Start your trip at holiday central: **San Pedro** on Ambergris Caye. Snorkel or dive among coral gardens and observe the inhabitants of **Shark Ray Alley**. Use San Pedro as your launching pad for dives at **Blue Hole** and other atoll sites.

After a week of sun and fun, make your way to dry land at **Belize City** and head out along the George Price Hwy. Stop on the way to visit the recovering and rescued animals at the **Belize Zoo**.

In Cayo, base yourself at a luxurious jungle lodge or a more affordable hotel in **San Ignacio**. From here, you can explore caves loaded with ancient remains, such as **Actun Tunichil Muknal**; travel by canoe or inner-tube along jungle rivers; dip beneath the waterfalls of the **Mountain Pine Ridge**; or explore Belize's greatest Maya site, **Caracol**. If you have the time and inclination, venture over the border into Guatemala, where you can visit the region's most significant Maya archaeological site at **Tikal**.

5
DAYS

A Jaunt into Guatemala

Across the border and within easy reach lie the glory and splendors of the ancient Maya world: scores of ancient ruins surrounded by lush rainforests, and a few really lovely towns thrown in for good measure. Taking it all in would take months, so we suggest a five-day compromise.

Leaving San Ignacio on the morning of the first day, head directly to **El Remate**. The lakefront town makes a lovely base and has accommodations in all budget ranges. Head to **Tikal** early the next morning and spend the day exploring this fascinating ancient Maya city. Having made arrangements to spend the night at one of Tikal's three hotels, you can enjoy the sunset from the top of Temple IV at your leisure. Spend the first half of the third day exploring Tikal further (it's worth it) before heading back to El Remate to relax.

On your remaining days, hang out in **Flores** and soak up the town's island ambience, perhaps taking a half-day trip to one of the parks, villages or smaller ruins that are in the area.

Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkeling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway/Subte station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Alex Egerton

Belize District, Northern Cayes, Northern Belize A journalist by trade, Alex has been coming to Central America for almost two decades and has spent extended periods residing in colorful towns along the Caribbean. He has a keen interest in the unique culture of the region, especially in the expressive music and dance of traditional communities, and is constantly working on polishing up his *punta* moves. When not on the road for work, Alex can probably be found at home in

the mountains of Colombia planning his next escape to the Northern Cayes and craving fryjacks smothered with habanero sauce. Alex also wrote the Understand and Survival Guide sections.



Paul Harding

Cayo District, Southern Belize As a writer, photographer and person with chronic itchy feet, Paul has traveled a good part of the world in the past two decades, usually in search of adventure, islands and beaches. Belize ticks all the boxes: Caribbean coast and cays on one side, remote jungle on the other. On this research trip, Paul river-tubed through caves, zip-lined over jungle canopies, explored Mayan ruins, snorkeled on the reef, sampled hot sauces and inspected

many cabanas. He has contributed to more than 50 Lonely Planet guides to countries as diverse as Australia, Iceland, Vanuatu and India. Paul also wrote the Plan section.



Daniel C Schechter

Guatemala A native New Yorker, Daniel has been poking around Latin America for so long it sometimes makes more sense to him than his place of birth. After living in Colombia and Puerto Rico, he called Mexico home for more than a decade. During that time he spanned the Mundo Maya on various forays, discovering and writing about such places as Campeche, Calakmul and Tikal, and cultivating an enduring interest in Classic Maya history. Daniel currently lives in

the Netherlands, where he blogs on cycling (<http://netherlandsbikeways.blogspot.nl>).

Published by Lonely Planet Global Limited

CRN 554153

6th edition – October 2016

ISBN 978 1 78657 110 6

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

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