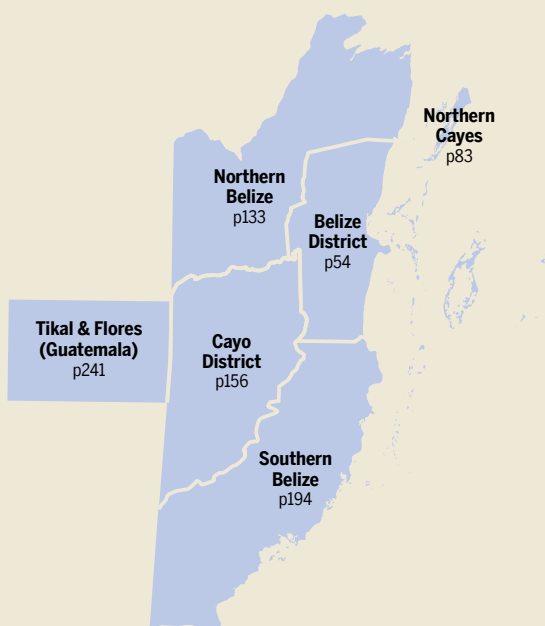




Belize



Paul Harding, Ray Bartlett, Ashley Harrell

PLAN YOUR TRIP

Welcome to Belize	4
Belize Map	6
Belize's Top 22	8
Need to Know	18
First Time Belize.....	20
If You Like.....	22
Month by Month.....	25
Itineraries	28
Diving & Snorkeling....	33
Belize Outdoors	40
Travel with Children....	46
Regions at a Glance....	50

ON THE ROAD

BELIZE DISTRICT... 54	NORTHERN CAYES 83
Belize City	56
North of Belize City....	69
Burrell Boom.....	70
Community Baboon Sanctuary	71
Crooked Tree.....	73
Old Northern Highway....	75
West of Belize City..... 77	
Old Belize.....	77
Monkey Bay.....	78
Along the Coastal Road..... 81	
Gales Point	81
Ambergris Caye	85
Caye Caulker.....	112
Other Northern Cayes..... 128	
Cayo Espanto	128
Turneffe Atoll.....	128
Lighthouse Reef.....	129
Half Moon Caye	130
Long Caye	131



RED-FOOTED BOOBY BIRD,
HALF MOON CAYE P130



MASK TEMPLE (P142),
LAMANAÍ



CAYE CAULKER P112

Contents

UNDERSTAND

NORTHERN

BELIZE 133

Orange Walk District .. 135

Orange Walk Town 135

Lamanai 140

Rio Bravo Conservation
& Management Area 144

Corozal District 145

Corozal Town 146

Cerro Maya &
Copper Bank 152

Sarteneja 153

CAYO DISTRICT ... 156

Belmopan 157

Around Belmopan. 163

Hummingbird Highway 164

Belmopan to San Ignacio 167

Spanish Lookout 170

San Ignacio 170

Southeast of San Ignacio 179

Mountain

Pine Ridge Area 184

Caracol 186

Northwest of San Ignacio 188

Bullet Tree Falls 188

Southwest of San Ignacio 189

San José Succotz
& Around 191

Benque Viejo
del Carmen 192

SOUTHERN

BELIZE 194

Stann Creek District 196

Dangriga 196

Mayflower Bocawina
National Park 200

Central Cays 201

Hopkins 205

Sittee Point 210

Sittee River 212

Maya Center 212

Cockscomb Basin
Wildlife Sanctuary 213

Placencia 215

Red Bank 225

Toledo District (Deep South) 225

Punta Gorda 225

Around
Punta Gorda 232

Big Falls &
Indian Creek 235

San Miguel 237

San Pedro

Columbia 237

San Antonio 238

Blue Creek 240

TIKAL & FLORES, GUATEMALA 241

Tikal 242

Yaxhá 247

El Remate 249

Flores & Santa Elena 251

Belize Today 258

History 260

Ancient Maya 270

People of Belize 277

Rhythms of a Nation .. 280

Belize Cuisine 283

Wildlife 286

Land & Environment .. 292

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Directory A–Z 298

Transportation 306

Index 314

Map Legend 319

SPECIAL FEATURES

Diving & Snorkeling... 33

Belize Outdoors 40

Ancient Maya 270

Wildlife 286

Itineraries



1
WEEK

Belize in a Week

If time is short you can either spend it relaxing in one place or plan carefully and experience the best of Belize. This short itinerary covers the best of Belize, allowing time for beaches, islands and inland adventure.

Start in **Belize City** but head straight to the water taxi terminal and book a ticket to laid-back **Caye Caulker** or more upbeat **San Pedro** on Ambergris Caye. Either place makes a good base for exploring the reef. After two or three days on the cays, return to Belize City and catch the bus straight to **San Ignacio**. This relaxed traveler town in Cayo District is the base for visiting Actun Tunichil Muknal cave, Caracol, Xunantunich, Barton Creek Cave and more. If you only have time for one, we recommended **Actun Tunichil Muknal cave**. Track back down the Hummingbird Hwy to **Hopkins** for some beach time and Garifuna drumming. Finish with a tour up to **Mayflower Bocawina National Park** for a day of hiking to waterfalls and ziplining through the jungle. Alternatively, visit the chocolate factory at **Maya Center** and make the excellent detour into the 'jaguar reserve' of **Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary**.



4
WEEKS

The Whole Enchilada: From Corozal to Punta Gorda

This itinerary starts in the quaint mestizo town of **Corozal**, just south of the Mexican border. Spend one day in **Orange Walk Town**, where you can cruise the New River and explore the Maya ruins at **Lamanai**. Then head east to the small fishing village of **Sarteneja** for some amazing wildlife watching at **Shipstern Conservation & Management Area**.

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, climbing the tall temples at **Caracol** or **Xunantunich**, or all of the above.

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**. From **Dangriga**, arrange a boat out to **Tobacco Caye** for a day of snorkeling on the reef.

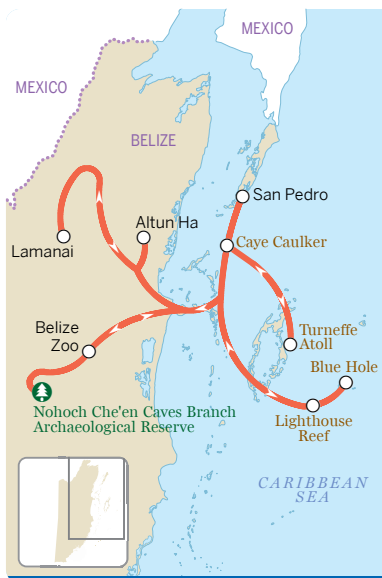
Head south to **Placencia** to enjoy lovely sandy beaches, lively bars and lots of water sports. If time permits, indulge your tropical-island fantasies with a week-long stay at **Glover's Reef**, which has an irresistible low-key vibe and brilliant diving and snorkeling. Finish up in **Punta Gorda**, the southernmost town in Belize from where you can explore the Deep South.



DANIELLE MONT / ALAMY ©

Top: Caye Caulker
(p112)

Bottom: Hiking trail
to Blue Creek Cave
(p240)

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 range of activities on land and sea.

Choose laid-back **Caye Caulker** or busier **San Pedro**, as they are closest to the mainland. 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**.

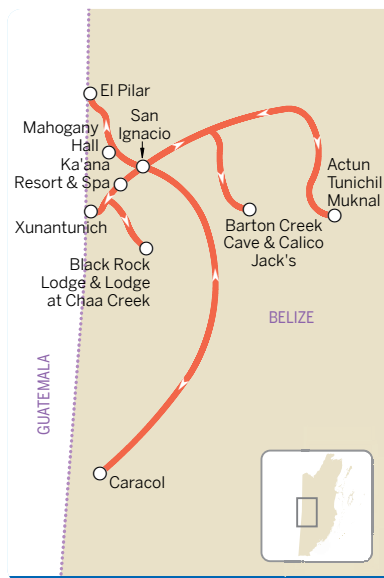
It's an easy trip to eastern Cayo District, where you can go cave-tubing in the **Nohoch Che'en Caves Branch Archaeological Reserve** or ziplining through the forest canopy. You can also head north to the Maya ruins at **Lamanai**, enjoying a peaceful boat ride on the New River along the way.

5
DAYS

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 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** or **Copal Tree Lodge**. 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 stay with a local family before moving on to **San Pedro Columbia**, which you can use as a base to explore nearby **Lubaantun**. Later, head to the small Maya village of **San Antonio**, detouring for a hike and a swim at beautiful **Rio Blanco National Park**, or caving at **Blue Creek Cave**.

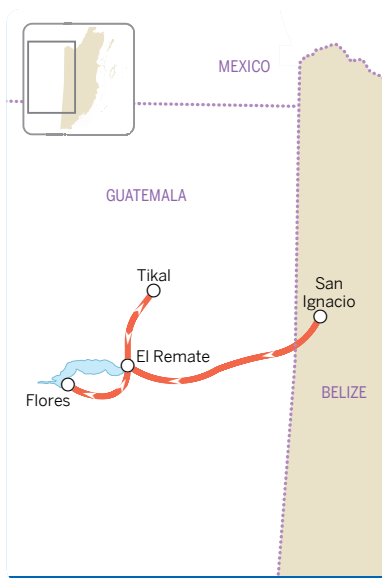
3
DAYS

Wild West

If beaches and diving aren't your thing, head west to the caves, hikes and Maya ruins of Cayo district.

Start at the traveler-oriented **San Ignacio** to get a feel for the town, visiting 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**, and/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 ziplining 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**.

5
DAYS

A Jaunt Into Guatemala

Across the border and within easy reach lie the glory and splendors of the ancient Maya world: 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.

Behind the Scenes

SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK

We love to hear from travelers – your comments keep us on our toes and help make our books better. Our well-traveled team reads every word on what you loved or loathed about this book. Although we cannot reply individually to your submissions, we always guarantee that your feedback goes straight to the appropriate authors, in time for the next edition. Each person who sends us information is thanked in the next edition – the most useful submissions are rewarded with a selection of digital PDF chapters.

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Destination Editor

Alicia Johnson

Senior Product Editor

Saralinda Turner

Regional Senior Cartographer

Corey Hutchison

Product Editor

Alison Ridgway

Book Designer Fergal Condon

Assisting Editors

Katie Connolly, Bruce Evans, Jodie Martire, Sarah Stewart

Assisting Cartographers

Alison Lyall, Katerina Pavkova

Cover Researcher

Naomi Parker

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Index

A

accessible travel 298
 accommodations 298-9, *see also individual locations*
 activities 23-4, 25-7, 40-5,
see also individual activities, individual locations
 Actun Tunichil Muknal 168
 air travel
 to/from Belize 306
 within Belize 308
 Altun Ha 11, 76, **76, 11**
 Ambergris Caye 10, 85-111,
86, 96, 10, 35, 48
 accommodations 95-103
 activities 87-94
 drinking & nightlife 107-8
 entertainment 108-9
 festivals & events 95
 food 103-7
 shopping 109
 sights 85-7
 tourist information 110
 tours 94-5
 travel to/from 110-11
 travel within 111
 animals 286-7, *see also individual species*
 area 259
 area codes 19
 art galleries, *see museums & galleries*
 ATMs 303

B

bargaining 21
 bathrooms 304
 Baymen 262-3
 beaches 22
 Ambergris Caye 91, **10**
 Caye Caulker 112, **114, 30**

Map Pages **000**
 Photo Pages **000**

Hopkins 205
 Koko King 112
 Kukumba Beach 78
 Placencia 15, 215, **15**
 Secret Beach 104
 The Split 113
 beer 285
 Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System 289
 Belize Central Prison 77
 Belize City 56-69, **58, 62**
 accommodations 60-4
 activities 58-9
 drinking & nightlife 66
 entertainment 66
 festivals & events 60
 food 64-5
 history 56
 medical services 67
 shopping 66-7
 sights 56-8
 tourist information 67
 tours 59
 travel to/from 67-70
 travel within 69
 Belize District 50, 54-82, **55**
 accommodations 54
 food 54
 highlights 55
 travel seasons 54
 travel to/from 56
 Belize Zoo 16, 80, **16**
 Belmopan 157-63, 162,
160-1
 accommodations 157-60
 entertainment 162
 food 160-2
 history 157
 sights 157
 tourist information 162
 travel to/from 163
 Benque Viejo del Carmen 192-3
 bicycle travel, *see cycling*
 Big Falls 235-7
 birds 288-9

birdwatching 23
 Bacab Adventure & Eco Park 70
 Caye Caulker 112, 118
 Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary 41
 Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary 13, 73, **13**
 Gales Point Wildlife Sanctuary 82
 Guanacaste National Park 163
 Half Moon Caye 17, **17**
 Río Blanco National Park 239
 Río Bravo Conservation & Management Area 144
 Shipstern Conservation & Management Area 153-4
 black howler monkeys 72, 286
 Belize Zoo 80
 Blue Creek 240
 Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary 214
 Community Baboon Sanctuary 16, 71-3, **16**
 Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary 73
 Mayflower Bocawina National Park 201
 Monkey Bay 78
 Bliss, Henry Edward Ernest Victor 60
 Blue Creek 240, **30**
 Blue Hole Natural Monument 9, 130, **8-9**
 boat travel
 to/from Belize 308
 within Belize 308-9
 Boca del Río 90, **38**
 books 258
 border crossings 306-8
 breakdown 281-2
 budgeting 19
 Bullet Tree Falls 188-9
 Burrell Boom 70-1

bus travel
 to/from Guatemala 308
 to/from Mexico 307
 within Belize 309
 business hours 19, 303
 butterfly farms
 Chaa Creek Natural History Center & Butterfly Farm 189
 Community Baboon Sanctuary 72
 San Pedro Columbia 238
 Shipstern Conservation & Management Area 154
 Tropical Wings Nature Center 192

C

cabañas 298
 cacao 231
 calendar system, Maya 275-6
 camping 298
 canoeing 43-4
 car travel
 to/from Mexico 307
 to/from the US 309
 within Belize 309-10
 Caracol 14, 186-7, **187, 14**
 Carnival 12, 60, **12**
 cathedrals, *see churches & cathedrals*
 caves 22
 Actun Tunichil Muknal 168
 Barton Creek Cave 179-80
 Blue Creek Cave 240, **30**
 Che Chem Ha 193
 Cuevas de Ak'tun Kan 251
 Nohoch Che'en Caves 15, 163, **15**
 Río Frio Cave 185
 St Herman's Blue Hole National Park 164-5
 Tiger Cave 237
 caving 41, 47, 79, 163

Caye Caulker 11, 112-27, **114, 2, 5, 11, 30**
 accommodations 120-4
 activities 113-18
 drinking & nightlife 126
 entertainment 126
 festivals & events 119
 food 124-6
 history 112
 shopping 126
 sights 112-13
 tourist information 127
 tours 118-19
 travel to/from 127
 travel within 127
 Cayo District 51, 156-93, **158-9**
 accommodations 156
 food 156
 highlights 158-9
 travel seasons 156
 travel to/from 157
 Cayo Espanto 128
 cell phones 18, 304
 Central Cayes 201-5
 Cerro Maya 152-3
 Chan Chich Lodge 145
 child sex tourism, prevention 302
 children, travel with 46-9
 chocolate 26, 231
 Ajaw Chocolate 171, 173
 Che'il Chocolate Factory 212
 Chocolate Festival of Belize 26, **26**
 Eladio's Chocolate Adventure 238
 Ixcacao Maya Belizean Chocolate 233
 Christ of the Abyss 90, **38**
 churches & cathedrals
 Lamanai 142, 143
 Nuestra Señora de los Remedios 251
 St John's Cathedral 57
 climate 18, 25-7, **18**
 climate change 307
 Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary 213-15
 coffee 285
 Community Baboon Sanctuary 16, 71-3, **16**
 Consejo 150
 consulates 300
 Copper Bank 152-3
 Corozal Town 146-52, **147**
 accommodations 148-9
 drinking & nightlife 150

festivals & events 148
 food 149-50
 history 146
 shopping 151
 sights 146-8
 tourist information 151
 tours 148
 travel to/from 151-2
 costs 19
 counting system, Maya 274
 credit cards 303
 Creole people 277-8
 crime 259
 crocodiles 93, 288
 Crooked Tree 73-5
 Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary 13, 73, **13**
 cruise ships 258
 crystal skulls 239
 currency 18, 303
 customs regulations 300
 cycling 308
 Ambergris Caye 92-3
 Caye Caulker 118
 Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary 214
 Cypress Garden 91

D
 dangers, see safety
 Dangriga 196-201, **198**
 accommodations 197-9
 activities 197
 drinking & nightlife 199
 festivals & events 197
 food 199
 shopping 199-200
 sights 196-7
 tourist information 200
 travel to/from 200
 Deep South, see Toledo District
 deforestation 293
 diarrhea 301
 disabilities, travelers with 298
 diving & snorkeling 22, 33-9
 Ambergris Caye 87-91, **35, 48**
 Belize City 59
 Blue Hole Natural Monument 9, 130, **8-9**
 Boca del Rio 90, **38**
 Caye Caulker 113
 Central Cayes 34
 Cypress Garden 91
 Gladden Spit 36
 Glover's Reef 39, 204

Half Moon Caye 131, **38**
 Hol Chan Marine Reserve 34, 86
 Hopkins 205
 Laughing Bird Caye 36-7
 Lighthouse Reef 39, 129-32
 Long Caye 131
 Mexico Rocks 90
 Northern Cayes 33-4
 Placencia 215
 Plum Caye 203
 Punta Gorda 226-7
 San Pedro 87-8, **48**
 Silk Cayes Marine Reserve 36
 Sittee Point 210
 Southern Cayes 36-7
 South Water Caye 202
 Thatch Caye 203
 Tobacco Caye 202, **35**
 Turneffe Atoll 37-9, 128
 drinks 285
 driver's licenses 310
 driving, see car travel
 drugs 302
 drumming, Garifuna 10, 279, 280, **10, 26**
 Hopkins 205
 Punta Gorda 227

E
 East Snake Caye 233
 economy 258-9
 ecotourism 24, 292-3, 299
 El Gran Carnaval de San Pedro 25
 El Mirador 248
 El Remate, Guatemala 249-51
 electricity 300
 embassies 300
 emergencies 19
 energy 293, 296
 environment 292-6
 environmental issues 258, 293
 Esmerelda 91
 ethnic groups 277-9
 etiquette 21
 events 25-7, see also *individual locations*
 exchange rates 19

F
 family travel 46-9
 festivals & events 25-7, see also *individual locations*
 films 258

first-time travelers 20-1
 fish 287-8
 fish feeding 94
 fishing 44-5
 Ambergris Caye 91-2
 Belize City 59
 Caye Caulker 118
 Gales Point Wildlife Sanctuary 82
 Glover's Reef 204
 Placencia 216
 Punta Gorda 227
 Turneffe Atoll 129
 Flores, Guatemala 52, 251-6, **242, 252**
 accommodations 253-5
 activities 251-2
 drinking & nightlife 256
 food 255-6
 sights 251
 tourist information 256
 tours 251-2
 travel to/from 256
 food 283-5, 300, see also *individual locations*
 Frenchman Caye 233
 fuel 310

G
 Gales Point 81-2
 gardens, see parks & gardens
 Garifuna people 10, 278-9, **10, 26**
 Dangriga 196-201, **198**
 drumming 10, 205, 227, 279, 280, **10, 26**
 food 284
 Garifuna Settlement Day 27, **26**
 Hopkins 205-10, **10, 16**
 music 281
 gay travelers 302
 gribnuts 287
 Glover's Reef 9, 204-5, **9, 42**
 Goff's Caye 56
 golf carts 311
 Guatemala 52, 241-56, **242**
 accommodations 241
 border crossings 307-8
 Flores 52, 251-6, **242, 252**
 food 241
 Santa Elena 251-6, **254**
 territorial disputes 268
 Tikal 52, 242-7, **242, 244-5**

Guatemala *continued*
travel seasons 241
travel to/from 307-8
Southern Highway 240
guesthouses 298-9

H
Half Moon Caye 17, 130-1,
2, 7, 17, 38

Harvest Caye 224

health 300-2

heraldophysics 273-4

hiking 13, 40-1

Bacab Adventure & Eco
Park 70

Caye Caulker 118

Cockscomb Basin
Wildlife Sanctuary
214

Mayflower Bocawina
National Park 13,
201, **13**

Rio Blanco National
Park 239

history 260-9

British settlement 262-5
independence 266-7

Maya 260-1, 270-6

recent 267-9

US relations 265

hitchhiking 311

Hol Chan Canyons 91

holidays 303

honeymoons 116

Hopkins 16, 205-10, **206**,
10, 16, 26

horseback riding 41, 43

Belmopan 164

Hopkins 205

San Ignacio 181, 189

Stann Creek District
205, **42**

hot sauce 200

howler monkeys, see black
howler monkeys

Hummingbird Highway 15,
164-7, **15**

hurricanes 71, 259

I
iguanas 288
Ambergris Caye 102
Belize Zoo 80
Blue Creek 240
Caye Caulker 112

Cockscomb Basin
Wildlife Sanctuary 214
Community Baboon
Sanctuary 72
Crooked Tree Wildlife
Sanctuary 73
Green Iguana
Conservation Project
171
Half Moon Caye 131
Lamanai 143

immigration 304-5, 306

independence 266-7

Indian Creek 235-7

insect bites 301

insurance

car 310

health 300

travel 302

internet access 302

internet resources 19

itineraries 28-32, **28, 29**,
31, 32

J
jabiru storks 289
jaguars 16, 80, 286, **16**

johnnycakes 284

K
kayaking 43
Dangria 197
Glover's Reef 9, 204,
9, 42
Nohoch Che'en Caves
Branch Archaeological
Reserve 163
Placencia 218
Punta Gorda 227
Sibun River 79
Kekchi people 278
Big Falls 235
Blue Creek 240
San Miguel 237
San Pedro Columbia 237
kungo muzik 282

L
La Isla Bonita 95
La Ruta Maya Belize River
Challenge 25, 44
Lamanai 12, 140-3, **141**,
2, 12
languages 18, 259
legal matters 302
lesbian travelers 302
LGBT+ travelers 302
Lighthouse Reef 129-30

Lime Caye 233
literature 258
Little Belize 155
live-aboard boats 34
lobster season 26-7
local transportation 311
lodges 299
Long Caye 131-2
Lubaantun 237-8, 239, **238**

M
macaws 289
Madonna 95
maize 274
manatees 287, **23**
Ambergris Caye 86,
91, 95
Belize City 59, 61
Caye Caulker Marine
Reserve 113, 115,
117, 119
Frenchman Caye 233
Gales Point Wildlife
Sanctuary 81
St George's Caye 89
Swallow Caye Wildlife
Sanctuary 113
Temash-Sarstoon
National Park 233
maps 303
marine reserves 294-5

Bacalar Chico National
Park & Marine Reserve
85-6
Blue Hole Natural
Monument 9, 130, **8-9**
Caye Caulker Marine
Reserve 113, **114, 30**
Hol Chan Marine Reserve
34, 86
Port Honduras Marine
Reserve 233
Sapodilla Cayes Marine
Reserve 233
Silk Cayes Marine
Reserve 36
South Water Caye
Marine Reserve 34

Mask Temple 12, 142-3,
2, 12

Maya calendar system
275-6

Maya Center 212-13

Maya Mountain Research
Farm 237

Maya people 278
calendar system 275-6
counting system 274
food 274, 284
history 260-1, 270-6

Living Maya Experience
235

Maya Center 212-13

medicine 290

music 282

Toledo District 14,
236, **14**

Maya sites 24, 270

Actun Tunichil Muknal 168

Altun Ha 11, 76, **76, 11**

Barton Creek Cave
179-80

Blue Creek 240

Cahal Pech 171

Caracol 14, 186-7,
187, 14

Che Chem Ha 193

El Mirador 248

El Pilar 188

Lamanai 12, 140-3, **141**,
2, 12

Lubaantun 237-8, 239,
238

Nim Li Punit 235, **235**

Pacbitun 181

Tikal 52, 242-7, **242**,
244-5

Uxbenka 239

Xunantunich 11, 191-2,
191, 11, 23

Yaxhá 247-9

Mayflower Bocawina
National Park 200-1, **13**

measures 303

medical services 300-1

Mennonites 155, 279

Mess, Florencio 282

mestizos 262, 277

Mexico

Chetumal 111, 151

travel to/from 306-7

Mexico Rocks 90

mobile phones 18, 304

money 18, 19, 303

Monkey Bay Wildlife
Sanctuary 78-81

monkeys, see black howler
monkeys

mosquitoes 301

motorcycle travel

to/from Mexico 307

within Belize 309-10

mountain biking, see
cycling

Mountain Pine Ridge Forest
Reserve 184-6

museums & galleries

Benque Viejo House of
Culture 193

Corozal Museum 146

George Price Center for Peace & Development 157
 Gulisi Garifuna Museum 196
 House of Culture 171
 Image Factory 57
 Lamanai Museum 141
 Museo Santa Bárbara 251
 Museum of Belize 57
 Pen Cayetano Studio Gallery 196
 Poustinia Land Art Park 192-3
 Sa'c Tunich 180
 Traveller's Heritage Center Museum 57
 music 24, 280-2

N

Nabor, Paul 282
 national parks & nature reserves 292, 294-5, see also marine reserves, wildlife reserves
 Bacab Adventure & Eco Park 70
 Bacalar Chico National Park & Marine Reserve 85-6
 Blue Hole Natural Monument 9, 130, **8-9**
 Caye Caulker Forest Reserve 112-13
 Chaa Creek 189
 Columbia Forest Reserve 237
 Guanacaste National Park 163
 Half Moon Caye Natural Monument 17, 130-1, **2, 7, 17, 38**
 Mayflower Bocawina National Park 200-1, **13**
 Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve 184-6
 Río Blanco National Park 239
 Río Bravo Conservation & Management Area 144-5
 Shipstern Conservation & Management Area 153-4
 St Herman's Blue Hole National Park 164-5
 Temash-Sarstoon National Park 233
 newspapers 303
 Nim Li Punit 235, **235**

Nohoch Che'en Caves 15, 163, **15**
 Northern Belize 51, 133-55, **134**
 accommodations 133
 food 133
 highlights 134
 history 135
 travel seasons 133
 travel to/from 135
 Northern Cayes 51, 83-132, **84**
 accommodations 83
 food 83
 highlights 84
 travel seasons 83
 travel to/from 85

O

oil 259, 296
 Old Belize 77-8
 Old Northern Highway 75-7
 opening hours 19, 303
 Orange Walk Town 135-40, **137**
 accommodations 138-9
 drinking & nightlife 140
 festivals & events 139
 food 139-40
 sights 136
 tourist information 140
 tours 136-40
 travel to/from 140
 outdoor activities, see activities

P

paranda 281
 parks & gardens
 Bacab Adventure & Eco Park 70
 Belize Botanic Gardens 189
 Branch Mouth 171
 Poustinia Land Art Park 192-3
 passports 305, 306
 Peters, Wilfred 282
 Petro Caribe 259
 petroleum 259
 Placencia 15, 215-25, **216, 15**
 accommodations 218-21
 activities 215-17
 drinking & nightlife 222-3
 festivals & events 218
 food 221-2
 shopping 223-4
 tourist information 224

tours 217-18
 travel to/from 224
 travel within 224-5
 planning
 Belize basics 18-19
 Belize's regions 50-2
 budgeting 19
 calendar of events 25-7
 children, travel with 46-9
 first-time travelers 20-1
 internet resources 19
 itineraries 28-32, **28, 29, 31, 32**
 travel seasons 18, 25-7, **18**
 plants 290-1
 Plum Caye 203-4
 politics 259, 266-9
 population 259
 postal services 303
 poverty 259
 public holidays 303
punta 280
 Punta Gorda 225-32, **228**
 accommodations 228-30
 activities 226-7
 drinking & nightlife 231-2
 festivals & events 228
 food 230-1
 shopping 232
 tourist information 232
 tours 227
 travel to/from 232
 travel within 232
punta rock 280

R

radio 303
 Red Bank 225
 red-footed booby birds 17, 130-1, **2, 17**
 religion 271-2, 273, 278
 reptiles 288
 river-tubing 45
 Angel Falls 165
 Big Falls 235
 Bullet Tree Falls 188
 Cockscorn Basin Wildlife Sanctuary 214
 Hopkins 207
 Maya Center 213
 Nohoch Che'en Caves 15, 163, **15**
 road rules 310
 ruins
 Altun Ha 11, 76, **76, 11**
 Cahal Pech 171
 Caracol 14, 186-7, **187, 14**
 Cerro Maya 152
 El Mirador 248
 El Pilar 188
 Lamanai 12, 140-3, **141, 2, 12**
 Lubaantun 237-8, 239, **238**
 Nim Li Punit 235, **235**
 Pacbitun 181
 Río Bravo Conservation & Management Area 144
 Tikal 52, 242-7, **242, 244-5**
 Uxbenka 239
 Xunantunich 11, 191-2, **191, 11, 23**
 Yaxhá 247-9
 rum 171, 285

S

safety 259, 304
 caving 41
 hitchhiking 311
 road 310
 women travelers 305
 sailing 44
 Ambergris Caye 92
 Caye Caulker 117
 Placencia 216
 San Antonio 238-9
 San Ignacio 17, 170-9, **172, 180-1, 17**
 accommodations 174-5
 activities 171-3
 drinking & nightlife 178
 entertainment 178
 food 175-8
 shopping 178
 sights 171
 tourist information 178
 tours 173-4
 travel to/from 179
 travel within 179
 San José Succotz 191-2
 San Miguel 237
 San Pedro Columbia 237-8
 Santa Elena, Guatemala 251-6, **254**
 accommodations 253-5
 activities 251-2
 drinking & nightlife 256
 food 255-6
 sights 251
 tourist information 256

Santa Elena, Guatemala
continued
tours 251-2
travel to/from 256
sargassum seaweed 98
Sarteneja 153-5
Secret Beach 104
Seine Bight 223
September celebrations 27
Shark Ray Alley 12, 91, **12**
sharks 12, 287-8, **12**
Sharp, Marie 200
Sittee Point 210-11, **206**
Sittee River 212
smoking 303
snakes 288
snorkeling, *see* diving &
snorkeling
South Water Caye 34,
202-3
Southern Belize 52, 194-
240, **195**
accommodations 194
food 194
highlights 195
travel seasons 194
travel to/from 196
Spanish Lookout 170
spas
Ambergris Caye 93-4
Caye Caulker 118
Chaa Creek 189
Old Northern Highway 75
stand-up paddleboarding 45
Stann Creek District 196-
225, **42**

T
Tackle Box Canyons 90
tap water 302
tapirs 286-7
taxes 303
taxis 311
telephone services 19, 304
Thatch Caye 203-4
theft 304
Three Kings of Belize 282

tick bites 301
Tikal, Guatemala 52, 242-7,
242, 244-5
accommodations 246-7
food 246-7
sights 243-6
tourist information 247
tours 246
travel to/from 247
time 18, 304
tipping 21, 303
Tobacco Caye 201-2, **35**
toilets 304
Toledo District 225-40,
226, 14
Toledo Ecotourism
Association 230
toucans 289
tourism 258
tourist information 304,
see also individual
locations
transportation 306-11
travel seasons 18, 25-7,
18, *see also individual*
locations
travel to/from Belize 306-8
travel within Belize 19
trekking, *see* hiking
Tres Cocos 90
Tuffy Canyons 91
Turneffe Atoll 128-9
turtles 288
Ambergris Caye 86
Caye Caulker Marine
Reserve 113
Gales Point Wildlife
Sanctuary 81
St George's Caye 89
TV 303

U
unemployment 259
Uxbenka 239

V
vacations 303
vaccinations 301

visas 18, 304-5
volunteering 305
Arcas 251-2
Belize Bird Rescue 167
Belize Wildlife & Referral
Clinic 167
Northern Cayes 89

W

walking, *see* hiking
water 302
waterfalls
Big Drop Falls 201
Big Rock Falls 184
Billy Barquedier
Waterfall 165
Bocawina Falls 201
Five Sisters Falls 184-5
Peck Falls 201
Rio Blanco Falls 239
Rio On Pools 185
Thousand Foot Falls
185
weather 18, 25-7, **18**
websites 19
weddings 116
weights 303
West Snake Caye 233
whale sharks 287
wi-fi 302
Wild Cane Caye 233
wildlife 22-3, 286-91, *see*
also individual species
wildlife conservation
Belize Bird Rescue 167
Belize Wildlife & Referral
Clinic 167
Green Iguana
Conservation Project
171
wildlife reserves, 294-5, *see*
also butterfly farms,
marine reserves, national
parks & nature reserves
Aguacaliente Wildlife
Sanctuary 233
American Crocodile
Education
Sanctuary 93

Cockscomb Basin
Wildlife Sanctuary
213-15
Community Baboon
Sanctuary 16,
71-3, **16**
Crooked Tree Wildlife
Sanctuary 13, 73, **13**
Gales Point Wildlife
Sanctuary 81-2
Monkey Bay Wildlife
Sanctuary 78-81
Swallow Caye Wildlife
Sanctuary 113
wildlife-watching 22-3,
see also individual
animals
windsurfing 45
women travelers 305
work 305
World Heritage sites
289

X

Xunantunich 11, 191-2, **191**,
11, 23

Y

Yaxhá, Guatemala 247-9
yoga
Ambergris Caye 93-4
Belize City 59
Caye Caulker 118
Placencia 217

Z

ziplining 43
Big Falls 235
Hummingbird Highway
165
Maya Center 213
Mayflower Bocawina
National Park 201
Nohoch Che'en Caves
Branch Archaeological
Reserve 164
San Ignacio 181
zoos 16, 80, **16**

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
- Hut/Shelter

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, Dublin, 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



Paul Harding

Southern Belize, Cayo District, Northern Belize As a writer and photographer, Paul has been traveling the globe for the best part of two decades, with an interest in remote and offbeat places, islands and cultures. He's an author and contributor to more than 50 Lonely Planet guides to countries and regions as diverse as India, Belize, Vanuatu, Iran, Indonesia, New Zealand, Iceland, Finland, Philippines and – his home patch – Australia. Paul also wrote the Plan, Understand and Survival Guide sections.

Understand and Survival Guide sections.



Ray Bartlett

Guatemala Ray has been travel writing for nearly two decades, bringing Japan, Korea, Mexico, Tanzania, Guatemala, Indonesia, and many parts of the United States to life in rich detail for top industry publishers, newspapers and magazines. His acclaimed debut novel, *Sunsets of Tulum*, set in Yucatán, was a Mid-west Book Review 2016 Fiction pick. Among other pursuits, he surfs regularly and is an accomplished Argentine tango dancer. Ray Bartlett currently divides his time between homes in the USA, Japan and Mexico.

his time between homes in the USA, Japan and Mexico.



Ashley Harrell

Belize District, Northern Cayes After a brief stint selling day-spa coupons door-to-door in South Florida, Ashley decided she'd rather be a writer. She went to journalism grad school, convinced a newspaper to hire her, and starting covering wildlife, crime and tourism, sometimes all in the same story. Fueling her zest for storytelling and the unknown, she traveled widely and moved often, from a tiny NYC apartment to a vast California ranch to a jungle cabin in Costa Rica, where she started writing for Lonely Planet. From there her travels became more exotic and farther flung, and she still laughs when paychecks arrive.

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