

NORTH AMERICA · DIVING · ISLANDS · BEACHES · WILDLIFE · HISTORY · ADVENTURE



Belize

Belize fits the longest stretch of the world's second-largest barrier reef system, Maya cities swallowed by rainforest and a slow Caribbean coast into a country roughly the size of Wales. Dive the Great Blue Hole, wade through the skeleton-strewn ATM cave and eat Garifuna hudut in Hopkins. English is the official language and US dollars are taken everywhere, though prices run higher than elsewhere in Central America.



Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Belize and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 12 June 2026.

 CAPITAL Belmopan	 CURRENCY Belize dollar (BZD) £1 ≈ BZD 2.67	 LANGUAGE English, Spanish Belizean Creole	 BEST TIME Dec–Apr
 DAILY BUDGET £55–£250 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type A, B, G 110V · UK plugs fit	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 15h via Miami, Houston or Atlanta ~£700–£1,250 return	 TIME ZONE UTC-6 standard time

Belize divides neatly into three: the cayes and reef offshore, the jungle-covered Cayo District in the west, and the quieter, more Garifuna and Maya south. Most first trips spend a few days on Caye Caulker or Ambergris Caye for snorkelling and a Blue Hole dive day, then head inland to San Ignacio for Maya ruins, caves and rivers. With a second week, add Hopkins for drumming and seafood, the long sandy Placencia peninsula, or the jaguar country of the Cockscomb Basin. Distances are short, and Tikal, just over the Guatemalan border, is an easy day trip from San Ignacio.

Belize is the easiest country in the region for English speakers: it was British Honduras until 1973, and signs, menus and radio are in English, with Kriol, Spanish, Garifuna and Maya languages heard alongside. It is also noticeably pricier than Guatemala or Mexico, as imported goods, taxes and island accommodation push costs up; budget travellers lean on street food, guesthouses and chicken buses. The cayes run on unhurried island time, while Cayo suits active travellers who like caving, tubing and early starts. Sandflies, humidity and the June–November hurricane season are the main surprises.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

WILDLIFE

Hol Chan Marine Reserve and Shark Ray Alley

Belize's first marine reserve protects a cut through the reef off southern Ambergris Caye, busy with turtles, eagle rays and groupers. At neighbouring Shark Ray Alley, snorkellers drift among nurse sharks and southern stingrays in shallow water.
- 2

ADVENTURE

Actun Tunichil Muknal (ATM cave)

Swim into a river cave in the Tapir Mountain reserve, then wade and scramble, in socks, to chambers holding Maya pottery and calcified human remains, including the 'Crystal Maiden'. Entry is only with licensed guides, usually from San Ignacio.

3

HISTORY

Caracol

Deep in the Chiquibul Forest, this Classic Maya city may have housed 100,000 people at its peak. Its Caana pyramid, about 43 m high, is still the tallest building in Belize. Allow two to three hours on rough roads from San Ignacio.

4

BEACH

Caye Caulker

A car-free island of sandy lanes and clapboard guesthouses, cut in two by the Split, where everyone gathers to swim and watch the sunset. It is the cheapest base for reef snorkelling, manatee trips and full-day dive excursions to the Great Blue Hole.

5

WILDLIFE

Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary

Created in the 1980s as the first protected area for jaguars, this forested basin in the Maya Mountains has waterfall swims, river tubing and rainforest trails. Jaguars are rarely seen, but tracks, toucans and howler monkeys are common.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Belize City

≈ 64,000 people

The former capital is mostly a transit hub for water taxis and flights, but the hand-cranked Swing Bridge, the Museum of Belize and St John's Cathedral, begun in 1812, fill a morning.

2ND LARGEST CITY

San Ignacio

≈ 21,000 people

Twin towns either side of the Macal River and the obvious base for Cayo: Xunantunich, the ATM cave, Mountain Pine Ridge and day trips to Tikal are all within easy reach.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Belmopan

≈ 21,000 people

Built inland after Hurricane Hattie wrecked Belize City in 1961, the quiet planned capital has little to see itself but lies close to St Herman's Cave and the inland Blue Hole.

Figures are rounded 2022 census counts. San Ignacio's includes its twin town, Santa Elena, across the Macal River; counted alone, it would rank behind San Pedro and Orange Walk.

When to go to Belize

Best time: **Dec–Apr**.

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

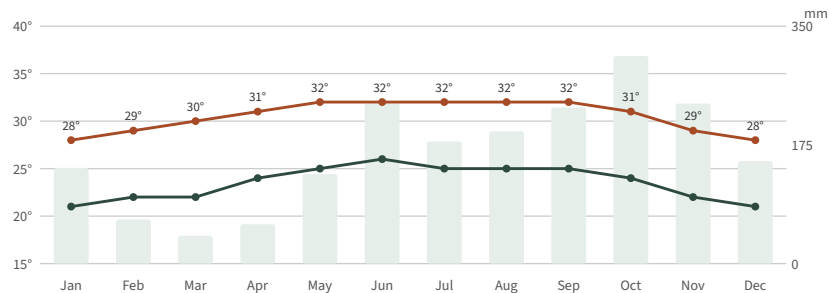
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Belize City

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jun–Jul	Lobsterfest The opening of lobster season on 15 June sets off weekend festivals in San Pedro, Caye Caulker and Placencia, with grilled lobster stalls, live music and beach parties.
Sep	September Celebrations Between St George's Caye Day on 10 September and Independence Day on the 21st, Belize City and other towns hold parades, a carnival road march and street parties.
Nov	Garifuna Settlement Day On 19 November, Dangriga and Hopkins re-enact the arrival of Garifuna settlers by dugout canoe in 1832, followed by drumming, punta dancing, church services and feasting.

How much does Belize cost?

SHOESTRING £55 per person / day ≈ BZD 147 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £120 per person / day ≈ BZD 321 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £250 per person / day ≈ BZD 668 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Rice and beans with stew chicken

Red kidney beans and rice cooked in coconut milk, served with chicken stewed dark in red recado spice paste, potato salad and fried plantain: Belize's everyday lunch.

Hudut

Garifuna mashed plantain, pounded in a wooden mortar and served with sere, a fish soup made with coconut milk; best in Hopkins and Dangriga.

Fry jacks

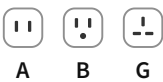
Puffy triangles of deep-fried dough eaten at breakfast with refried beans, eggs and cheese, or simply drizzled with honey.

Getting around

Water taxis run from Belize City to Caye Caulker in about 45 minutes and San Pedro in about 90. Tropic Air and Maya Island Air fly small planes to the cayes, Dangriga, Placencia and Punta Gorda. Cheap buses, many of them retired US school buses, ply the main highways, and shuttles link San Ignacio with Flores in Guatemala. Hire a car for Cayo and the south: main roads are paved, but watch for unmarked speed bumps.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



110V — UK plugs fit

DIALLING CODE

+501

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Telephone: **911** or **90** (ambulance, fire, police)

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONE

UTC-6 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Varies — bottled or filtered is safer

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Check bills for a service charge; if there is none, leave 10–15% in restaurants. Tip dive crews and tour guides, who rely on it.

ETIQUETTE

Belizeans are easygoing but courteous: say good morning or good afternoon before asking anything. Cover up away from the beach, and ask before photographing people, especially in Maya and Mennonite communities.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Philip S. W. Goldson International Airport (BZE), Belize City

Visas & entry for Belize

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can visit Belize without a visa for 30 days.

If you want to extend your stay, it will cost 200 Belize dollars for each additional 30 days. You should go to the nearest office of the Belize Immigration and Nationality Department and request a new stamp.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya

Dengue

Rabies

Typhoid

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Belize

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Thu 19 Nov 2026

Garifuna Settlement Day

Fri 25 Dec 2026

Christmas Day

Sat 26 Dec 2026

Boxing Day

Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Fri 15 Jan 2027	George Price Day
Mon 8 Mar 2027	National Heroes and Benefactors Day (observed)
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sat 27 Mar 2027	Holy Saturday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Mon 2 Aug 2027	Emancipation Day (observed)
Fri 10 Sep 2027	Saint George's Caye Day
Tue 21 Sep 2027	Independence Day
Mon 11 Oct 2027	Indigenous Peoples' Resistance Day (observed)

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Know before you go

The Belize dollar is pegged at two to one with the US dollar, which is accepted everywhere; always check which currency a price is quoted in before agreeing to it.

Cameras have been banned in the ATM cave since a visitor dropped one on an ancient skull in 2012, so leave yours behind and bring socks for the dry chambers.

Sandflies on the cayes and southern beaches bite hardest at dawn and dusk, so pack repellent; some cayes businesses close for a break during the September–October storm peak.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.