



CORAL ISLANDS & MAYAN CAVES ESSENTIAL INFORMATION PACKAGE

IMPORTANT - (This must be read.)

To help you prepare for your Belize vacation we have compiled the following information. Once you have read this pre-trip guide, any remaining questions you may have regarding your trip can be answered

by calling 1-800-667-1630 or by emailing info@islandexpeditions.com

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BELIZE ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Please take your time to read through this Essential Information. This is your guide to travel planning, full of helpful information to ensure you are properly prepared for your trip to Belize with Island Expeditions Co.

GENERAL ARRIVAL NOTES

All IEC trips begin with a 'Day 0'. This means that you will need to be in Belize City the day before your trip is scheduled to start. For Example, when the brochure trip date is Dec. 28, you need to arrive into Belize on Dec. 27. Our trips are structured so that a seven-day trip is seven-days in the field and the Day 0 is really meant for international travel and connecting with us once you arrive in Belize. We also feel that if you have the time, it is a good idea to arrive in Belize one day before the Day 0, particularly if your international flight connections are tight or you are departing from a region where it is possible that bad weather will cause flight delays. If you are traveling in Belize independently before your trip, be sure to co-ordinate alternative rendezvous arrangements with our office prior to your departure.

To ensure that your flight schedules correspond with the departure date of your trip, it is best to confirm your flight itinerary and dates with our office. If you are not arranging your flights through our office please ensure that you or your travel agent email or fax us a copy of your proposed flight itinerary prior to booking

Changes in Airport and Immigration security can make processes unpredictable, so it is important that you stay current with these issues in your originating region.

DEPARTURE FROM BELIZE

Your trip finishes in Dangriga and your accommodations and dinner on this night of the trip are included in the trip price. The following morning, however, you are on your own for breakfast and transportation unless you are connecting with another Island Expeditions trip. Depending on your international flight schedule you may have time to explore town in the morning, most people will arrange for a taxi at the hotel front desk to take them to the bus depot or the airstrip, both are just minutes by taxi from your hotel. We always recommend checking with your fellow travelers to see if you can share a ride. For those trip participants that will be traveling to other parts of Belize, from Dangriga, it is a great central point to explore the interior rainforests and visit seaside resort towns like Hopkins or Placencia in the south. If you wish to return back to Belize City, following your trip, our Canadian Office can make domestic flight arrangements for you. These flights need to be coordinated with our office prior to your departure. Please let us know your plans for post trip arrangements and we will be happy to advise you on your best options.

INDEPENDENT TRAVEL NOTES

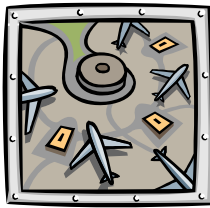


You may wish to arrive a few days before the start of your adventure or you may be traveling elsewhere in Belize after the trip. We can recommend places for you to stay and help you make reservations. We suggest that you search the internet, visit a library or travel bookstore, read up on places in Belize that are of interest to you, and then call us with any questions. A recommended reading list is enclosed at the end of this document to help. Please understand that we are more than happy to assist with your travel plans, separate from your trip with IEC, but cannot be deemed responsible for any services not actually provided by Island Expeditions Co.

ON ARRIVAL INTO BELIZE

The Belize International Airport (Phillip Goldson International Airport—airport code BZE) is small and easy to get around. You will disembark your plane directly on to the airport tarmac and will be directed to Immigration and customs. After your passport is stamped, you collect your bags and move through the customs area. The whole process can take up to, but usually less than one hour. After completing your check-in, porters are standing in clear view and are there to assist you with your bags if you wish, but it is a very short distance to where we meet you. Please be aware the porters are not employed by the Airport Authority, and they charge 1 Bze dollar for each bag.

RENDEZVOUS INFORMATION



“I will be arriving into the BELIZE INTERNATIONAL on the scheduled Day 0 of my tour.”

An Island Expeditions representative will be at the International Airport to meet you on the ‘Day 0’ of your tour based on your international flight arrival time as confirmed with our North American administration office. After passing through Customs immediately exit the Airport Building to your right. And your IEC representative will meet you just outside of the doors. Please be patient as road conditions and late arrivals of International flights may cause delays. We are aware of all our guest’s flight arrivals, however, if our driver has not yet arrived to meet you within fifteen minutes of clearing customs contact our **Dangriga office Tel 522-3328** to let us know of your status & for any rendezvous updates. Please dial the operator at 115 and request station to station collect when calling our Dangriga office.

As trip participants will be arriving in on different flights throughout the arrival day we have arranged a transport to the Biltmore Plaza Hotel as a pleasant and comfortable place to wait (we’ll be staying at the Biltmore on our last night) where those who have arrived on earlier flights can wait for the remainder of the group participants to arrive into Belize. On arrival please let the front desk know that you are with Island Expeditions and that you are not staying with them that night, There is a lovely inner courtyard with a restaurant, bar and swimming pool (so have your swimsuit handy). Typically we’ll have gathered all trip participants by 4:00-5:00 pm and be heading on our way to the Tropical Education Center.

1:00-1:30 pm - The first vehicle will depart the International Airport between 1:00 and 1:30 pm to the *Belize Biltmore Plaza Hotel* where you will be able to relax by the pool, have a drink at the outdoor bar, eat a meal and wait for all other guests to arrive. If you arrive earlier than this scheduled pickup and do not want to wait at the airport for the driver, please feel free to take a cab to the Biltmore Hotel approximate cost is \$60 Bze (\$30 USD) for a taxi into Belize City from the airport. Please be sure to call our office in Dangriga and let us know where we will find you. Please be sensitive to the needs of the hotel as their first priority is for their overnight guests, on arrival take a moment to say hi at the front desk and let them know you are waiting for a vehicle pick-up Any questions regarding the trip and scheduled pick-ups should be directed to our office in Dangriga. Departure from the Biltmore Hotel to our first night’s accommodation will be at approximately 4:00-5.00 pm.

“I have been looking for flights, and all I can find are flights arriving in the evening.”

For those people that have flights that arrive later in the day (after 4:30pm) you will need to arrive into Belize City the day before the scheduled Day 0 meeting day. We cannot meet flight arrivals after 4:30pm with enough time to bring you to the first nights accommodations. For those travelers requiring an extra night, we recommend the Belize Biltmore Plaza, so we can meet you in the lobby the following day by 4:00pm. Please contact our office for assistance with such arrangements.

“I will be arriving into Belize earlier than Day 0 or I will be arriving into Belize by road.”

Whether traveling independently before your trip or arriving by any port other than the International Airport please be at the *Biltmore Plaza Hotel* (Mile 2 ½ Northern Highway Tel 223-2302) by 4:00pm or earlier on ‘Day 0’ of your tour. Our representative and vehicle will be arriving from an International Airport pickup sometime after 4:00-5.00 pm. It is difficult to give an exact time but please be patient as late arrivals of International flights may cause delays. If you are traveling in Belize in advance of your trip we recommend you call our office in Dangriga prior to ‘Day 0’ to confirm that you have in fact arrived and that you will be at the Biltmore Hotel on ‘Day 0’ . On occasion adjustments may need to be made to rendezvous times or venues due to special guests arrangements or late international flight schedules.



TRIP PREPARATIONS

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

A current passport is required for Canadian, US and British citizens for travel in both Belize and Guatemala. For citizens of other countries you should contact your embassy for entry requirements. Carry a photocopy of your passport with you while traveling, keep it in a separate place from your passport, and also leave a copy with a friend or family member at home.



INSURANCE

On all IEC trips, **it is mandatory to obtain a short-term traveler's insurance policy** to ensure that you are covered for medical expenses in case of illness or accident while traveling. This policy should cover all medical expenses and emergency evacuation expenses while in Belize. We also highly recommend that you purchase a trip cancellation policy to cover the costs of your international flight and tour with Island Expeditions. Trip cancellation protects you in the event you have to cancel your trip in the event of personal or family illness. Your insurance should be purchased within a week of your flight payment and trip deposit.

There are many places where you can purchase your insurance. We have researched a variety of options and feel that Travel Guard overall provides the best service at competitive rates. You can find their information on our website www.islandexpeditions.com/insurance.html or call Travel Guard International toll-free at 1-800-826-4919 and quote company code 116235 for their profile of Island Expeditions to pop up.

MEDICAL

Please remember that you are responsible for consulting a medical professional prior to trip departure regarding all the above considerations.. Also, if you experience any unusual symptoms after returning home from your trip, please call our office and let us know as we may have information that will help determine your condition.



Though not rigorous, IEC trips can be physically challenging. As such, a thorough medical examination is advised. A medical questionnaire is enclosed and must be completed prior to your trip departure. The following are recommendations for your protection:

Tetanus - A current tetanus inoculation is mandatory to participate in any IEC trip. Tetanus shots are usually good for ten years. If you are unsure of your last inoculation please check with your doctor.

Hepatitis A - We recommend a vaccination to protect you against Hepatitis A: Havrix* a series of two inoculations. The first covers you for a year and the second is administered a minimum of 6 months later and is good for up to 20 years. There is also another option which covers you for Hep A & B, called Twinrix. Please contact your local physician for details.

Malaria - For those participants on the Coral Jaguar Expedition, Ultimate Adventure, or Maya World Extension, taking malaria pills (Chloroquine) is strongly recommended. A program usually starts two weeks prior to the commencement of your trip and five weeks after you return home. On our **Coral Islands**, Glovers Reef & Mayan Caves, and Paradise Islands trips taking an anti-malarial will also reduce the risk of exposure, even though we have very limited exposure to malaria-carrying mosquitoes.

Dengue Fever - Transmitted by mosquitoes, symptoms are flu-like. It is becoming more prevalent in rural and even urban areas in the tropics. The most important preventative measures are to wear pants, socks and a long sleeve shirt in the evening hours or early morning when mosquitoes are out. Also use liberal amounts of insect repellent on your clothes.

Typhoid & Polio - Consult with your physician. It is not considered a problem in Belize.

PERSONAL MONEY, SPENDING AND EXTRAS

1 US dollar = 2 Belize dollars US cash is accepted everywhere



As IEC trips are inclusive, personal spending money will depend on your own needs. A Government of Belize departure Tax of \$35US is levied on most outgoing international flights from Belize (some of the airlines include this fee in your ticket price) and is due by you at the airport in Belize before you depart the country. The opportunity to purchase souvenirs, extra alcohol, a cold drink, or a wayside snack does exist. We recommend you bring a combination of US cash and travelers cheques (a few \$50's with the majority in small denominations such as, \$20's, \$10's, \$5's, and a few \$1's). We also strongly recommend that you separate your cash so you are not carrying it all in the same place. In addition to your spending money, it is a good practice, when traveling, to carry an amount of emergency cash. A contingency fund of \$150– 300 US above and beyond what you expect to spend on incidentals will help with any additional charges that may occur due to late arrival, missed connections, lost luggage, inclement weather and other circumstances beyond yours or our control. Travelers' cheques are accepted in many places however, because of irregular banking hours, it is not always possible to cash them. VISA, MasterCard and American Express are taken in some establishments in major centers such as Belize City, but a 5% service charge to use them is customary. Cash advances can sometimes be made on Visa and MasterCard at local banks, although it is better not to depend on this. US cash is accepted everywhere. Also, drawing money from an ATM should not be part of your budget plan. Although bank machines are becoming more and more frequent in the cities and towns of Belize, many of them are not yet connected to the North American banking system.

There is also a domestic air tax of \$2 BLZ for each domestic flight from the Belize International Airport. For those exiting Belize overland, there is a departure tax of approximately \$35 US applicable to tourists 12 years and older, at all land borders.

TIPPING

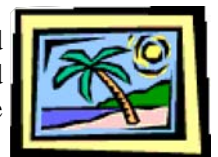
Tipping for great service and going-the-extra-mile is traditional in the adventure travel industry. We feel that a tipping budget totaling between \$50 to \$200 US per person is a good range to consider.

On your Coral Islands trip you will typically have 2 sets of guide teams – one for your first day and a half inland portion and another guide team for the reef portion of the trip. You can tip individuals for outstanding service within your guiding team or provide a general tip for the entire guiding team, whichever you feel most comfortable with.

For the inland guiding team, we suggest giving them any monies before you board the charter boat in Dangriga, as you will not see these people at the end of the trip. For the reef portion of the trip, you will have one North American Leader, and one local Belizean Guide. You will be with them for the duration of the paddling trip, and the final night's dinner is generally an opportune time to provide any tip.

GENERAL NOTES ON ADVENTURE TRAVEL IN BELIZE

Traveling along the reefs of Belize by sea kayak is an exciting event and the experiences and insights gained are unique. It is important to remember that when traveling in self-propelled craft of this nature, our day-by-day life is determined by the weather and the sea conditions we encounter on each trip.



While on the water it is necessary to shield yourself from the sun. A sunhat, sunglasses, bandana and waterproof sunscreen should always be close at hand. Sunglasses should be of good quality to protect your eyes from UV rays and a safety band (e.g. croakies) is also recommended to prevent them from being lost.

NOTE: You are undertaking an adventure vacation in *Central America* and will be traveling in remote regions. Rain and storms may be encountered at any time of the year and sand flies may be intense on the cays before or after a storm. During your trip, the itinerary may need to be adjusted to accommodate special guest arrangements because of late transportation, adverse weather or any other circumstance frequently encountered when traveling outside of North America. **Trip leaders are authorized to change or cancel any activity for safety reasons.**

WEATHER IN THE TROPICS



The climate of Belize is sub-tropical. Temperatures range from 20 to 40 degrees Celsius (70 - 105 F) during the day. Although we are traveling during the dry season, there can be the infrequent "Northerly" which blows down from the Gulf of Mexico bringing with it cooler temperatures and rain. These rarely last more than a few days. For those traveling at the beginning of the dry season (December), make sure that you bring a rain-jacket and hat and some warmer clothing. Our traveling philosophy is "all weather is good weather" - since we can't do anything to change it.

Trip schedules may need to be adjusted to compensate for inclement weather. Inland conditions can change quickly with afternoon thunderstorms and heavy rainfall common in some parts of the country. Typically, the temperatures range from 20 to 40 C (70 to 105 F) with high humidity during the day, dropping at night to 20 to 27 C (70 to 80) F. From December to May conditions are usually clear, sunny and warm, however December is generally cooler and moister than the rest of the dry season.

BUGS

Yes, they do exist! Weather, wind conditions and proximity to the previous rainy season affect the concentrations of biting insects found on both the cays and the mainland. While camping on the cays, you may need to take precautions against the sand fly, also known as "no-see-ums". These flies are jumpers and are found in the sand, being most persistent in the early morning and evening, especially when the wind is calm. They leave small, red, itchy bites. The itching can be effectively alleviated with Calamine Lotion or an After-bite stick. The most common areas affected are your feet and ankles. The most effective form of precautions are clothing to cover up, and a good deet-based repellent. Lightweight long pants and socks and a light long sleeve shirt will help in times of no wind. Quick-dry fabrics work very well in these instances. Typically, you should look for something with 20%+ deet content for optimal protection. *Deep woods* or *Ben's Insect Repellent* are both good options. The more natural citronella repellents are not as effective.



If you are extremely susceptible to bugs, you should consider a bug-shirt and/or pants (we have jackets available in Belize; please contact our office ahead of your departure to arrange one for your trip) which are available at outdoor stores, this clothing is designed to allow maximum ventilation while protecting against bugs. For inland trips, mosquitoes can be a nuisance. When camping your tent accommodations are fitted with "no-see-um netting" and should be left closed to ensure a bug-free sleep.

GARBAGE ON THE CAYS



Unfortunately, garbage (especially plastics) is found throughout the world's coastal regions. Belize is no exception. Weather, wind and currents can all cause excessive build-up of garbage to occur along the beaches and in the mangroves. The sad part is that much of this garbage is from offshore and not from mainland Belize. Besides making sure that we leave no garbage while on tour we organize frequent work crews throughout each season to remove the plastics that are washed up along the beaches of the areas where we camp. Unfortunately, this does not take care of the problem, and garbage can build up quickly.

MEALS & ACCOMMODATIONS

MEALS



Meal preparation is one of our specialties. You can expect a delicious assortment of seafood, fresh vegetables, tropical fruits and fresh baked breads. On sea kayaking adventures, both Belizean and international cuisine is prepared by your guides. Many of our main courses are gathered fresh from the sea each day, or purchased from local fishermen. On lodge-based tours, we enjoy specially prepared meals at lodges and local restaurants and picnic lunches while in the field. In Central America, meal service at restaurants can be slow. A supply of your favorite snacks comes in handy at these times. If you have any special dietary requirements please tell us in advance so that we can do our best to accommodate your needs.

HOTELS AND LODGES

We choose hotels and lodges that are situated within or close to the most spectacular natural settings in Belize and also reflect the character and ambiance of Belize. Hotels and lodges in Belize are usually rustic by North American standards and are often quaint in character. Your comfort, enjoyment and security are our first regard when choosing lodges and hotels. Accommodations vary from ensuite bathrooms and hot running water to our more remote lodging where running hot water and ensuite bathrooms are a rarity. Lodging is based on shared accommodation, two to a room. If you are traveling alone we will do our best to put you in with someone compatible. Often, for a nominal fee, single rooms can often be arranged but we must know of this at time of booking your trip. Please contact our office for details.



Note: From time to time, because of unforeseen circumstances, hotels or lodges listed on your itinerary may need to be changed. These changes will be made at the trip leader's discretion and may be done without prior notice.

TROPICAL CAMPING

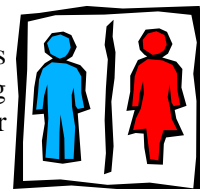
While on the cayes, we will be sleeping in traditional pop-tents, which are quality, expedition-ready manufactured by MSR (Mountain Safety Research). Presently, we use the Super Fusion 3 tent, which has more than enough room for 2 people plus gear.



You will need to bring your own bed-roll. A good quality sleeping pad is essential to your comfort and enjoyment of your trip. The Therm-a-rest inflatable pad has become very popular over recent years. There are others available, but it is important that you find something that is comfortable to your body type. Most traditional sleeping bags are considered too hot for tropics. From our experience a fleece blanket and cotton sheet works well. There are tropical sleeping bags which are more like sleeping sacks made of silk or other wicking fabrics. If the weather is cooler at night, the fleece blanket works well to keep off the chill. If the weather is hot, the fleece blanket can easily be rolled up to make a comfortable pillow.

WASHING AND TOILET FACILITIES WHEN CAMPING

All the fresh water while on the cayes has been imported from the mainland or from water catchments on the islands, so water conservation is of the utmost importance. We use Hand Sanitizer for washing hands around camp, and most washing is done with salt water. Saltwater soap is recommended for bathing in the sea. A small mirror is also helpful for contact lenses, shaving, etc.



Each camp has an outhouse facility with a proper toilet seat, and is a modern composting system, which is managed by our staff. Each "deposit" is assisted with a scoop of sawdust to help with composting of the waste. This is an alternative to the pit toilet system, and protects the water lens of each island. This method is approved by the Coastal Zone Management Unit of Belize and is in keeping with the tenets of minimal impact camping.

PADDLING IN THE TROPICS

SEA KAYAKING IN THE TROPICS

Kayaking trips in the tropics differ from northern climates in that much of our exploration is under the water amongst the coral reefs. A typical day will include paddling/sailing from one island to another or to patch reefs within the atoll. Whenever possible we take advantage of the northeasterly trade winds to fill our sails as we travel within the atoll. The protection of the reef wall and shallow inshore waters provide one of the best places in the world for sea kayaking. Our main concerns while on the water are protection from sun (both above and reflected off the water), dehydration, and the effects of salt. Protection from the sun and dehydration are easily managed by wearing a wide brimmed hat, using a good, waterproof sunscreen (SPF 15-35), wearing light colored clothing and, of course, drinking plenty of fluids. As for salt, the high salinity of the Caribbean Sea can dry your skin and cause blisters on hands (paddling) and feet (snorkeling). Skin lotion or moisturizer for your skin, gloves to protect your hands (cotton garden gloves or cycle gloves work very well) and a polypro socks for your feet while snorkeling can be more comfortable.



SNORKELING IN THE TROPICS



For many, the highlight of their trip is the time spent exploring the wonders of the underwater world. This does not require great levels of skill or expensive equipment to accomplish. IEC guides enjoy teaching others the simple skills necessary to enjoy snorkeling. Amongst many of the areas we explore, the water is shallow enough to stand. Initially, we enter the water from a beach but as our skill level increases we will learn to enter and exit from our kayaks. This will enable us to experience longer and deeper dives as well as drift dives, floating along a patch of coral with our boats drifting behind us. To ensure that the reefs are protected for future generations, we avoid damaging the coral by not touching, standing, kicking up silt or dropping anchor on or near coral. As a living organism, many corals rely on nematocysts to sting their prey. These same nematocysts can sting humans, ranging from mild to strong in intensity. Care is taken to show all participants the coral species which should be avoided. If you get cold easily, a lightweight wet-suit (best option) or even a spandex / lycra dive suit to keep from getting cold when spending extended time in the water, is recommended. Polypropylene, capilene or silk long underwear work as well. In addition, this method also protects against sunburn. We highly recommend wet suits for children.

PURCHASING SNORKEL EQUIPMENT

Knowing how to snorkel and what to watch for are all well and good, but inadequate equipment can spoil the best of conditions. Therefore, it is highly recommended that you purchase equipment that fits comfortably. Borrowing a friend's gear is okay for fins and snorkel but a mask must conform to the individuals face to ensure a watertight seal. Nothing is more frustrating for snorkelers than water leaking into your mask. When shopping for a mask check for the following:

- ❑ A smooth seal around the mask. Both rubber and silicone work well. Check that the material is not cracked, brittle or stiff, all signs of an old mask.
- ❑ Press mask to face and inhale through your nose. **DO NOT PUT THE STRAP AROUND YOUR HEAD** but leave it off in front of the mask. If the mask seals, it will stay on your face even if you tilt your head down. Check that no hair gets between the mask and your face to break the seal.
- ❑ Make sure the front of the mask does not press against the bridge of your nose. This will get worse the deeper you dive. Vaseline around the edge of the mask helps for a better seal for men with beards or moustaches.
- ❑ Make sure snorkels fit comfortably in your mouth. With fins, a snug fit is best. Complete foot fins rather than those with a strap around the heel are preferred. Leave enough room for socks if you wish.
- ❑ Above all else, try the mask in water (pool, bathtub, etc.) before you arrive in Belize. A dive shop will gladly exchange an ill-fitting mask for one with a better fit.

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP



When traveling to Belize it is best to travel with one larger check-in bag and one carry-on bag. We recommend a medium duffel bag and a medium day pack as carry on per person. These bags are easy to move around, can be toted easily fit in boats, small planes and van/bus roof racks. Backpacks can work too; do try to avoid large suitcases as they do not fit into the bow hatches of our water taxi and tend to get damaged in transit more often. While on tour with Island Expeditions, our staff will instruct you on how to prepare for travel between locations and we will provide storage for extra bags in our Dangriga office, when necessary. Most airlines have reduced the weight maximums for each bag to 50 pounds. Be sure to check with your airline for weight restrictions.

It is required that you bring one small (5-10 liter) waterproof bag for your documents, camera, etc., that you can carry in the cockpit of your kayak and have handy on motorboat trips. It is especially important that electronic equipment such as digital cameras, video cameras etc are fully waterproofed especially on the boat ride to and from the reef.

The night before we drive to Dangriga, and board the motor boat charter to the cayes, your inland guides will talk to you about packing for the kayaking portion of your trip. You will be given 3 x 20 liter dry bags to pack all of your clothes for the kayaking portion of your trip. These bags will travel with you out to the cayes, and your luggage will be stored in our office in Dangriga.

NO NEED TO CARRY ALL YOUR LUGGAGE OUT TO THE CAYES: Please leave at our operations base in Dangriga, one bag with a change of clothes and other items you will not need with you while are kayaking. As we load from our vehicle to the boat on Saturday evening you can leave your stay-behind bag with your driver and will be stored in a secure locked storage area at our operations base. Once you come off the reef this bag will be waiting for you in the hotel lobby. Ensure that your name is clearly marked on your bag and that you do not leave any passports, money or other valuables in your bag these items should travel with you on the reef.

PLEASE NOTE: we cannot be deemed responsible for people's personal property while travelling. There are a variety of luggage and personal property insurance policies available to purchase.

GENERAL

As a general rule, don't bring more than you can carry. This will help to ensure smooth and efficient transfer in airports, though customs, hotels and loading vans. Please follow the Personal Equipment List as closely as possible. When traveling in Belize, luggage is placed on the roof rack of our vehicle and in storage compartments. Soft luggage is preferred over hard-cased luggage. This allows for easier transport onto roof racks or into stowage compartments on boats. Try to keep your gear in one main bag, preferably a backpack or duffel bag. Also carry a daypack to keep things handy that you will need during each day.

CARRY-ON LUGGAGE

With heightened security and busy airports it pays to pack wisely to make your airport travel run smoothly. For a complete list of important packing tips please visit www.tsatraveltips.us. Also, make sure everything you have is labeled, don't put any metal objects in your carry-on baggage or wear metal jewelry, clothing etc. and have all your luggage unlocked for inspection. Recent changes to carry-on luggage restrictions may disallow carrying any liquids on the plane with you, check your airport authority for most recent updates. If you purchase any duty-free liquids, previous to your trip into Belize, please check them into your main luggage, or you will have to surrender them to the airport authority. Also, if you have any special dietary needs contact your airline 48 hours or more prior to departure and plan to arrive at least 2 hours in advance for your international flight to Belize.

CORAL ISLANDS & MAYAN CAVES EQUIPMENT & PACKING LIST

TO DO LIST

- check passport expiry date (be sure that your passport expiry date is at least three weeks after you are scheduled to return home.)
- reserve international flights
- fax or mail flight itinerary to IEC office
- reserve hotel (*if overnight en route to or from Belize i.e.. Miami, Houston, LA)
- pay flights and hotel
- send final payment
- fax medical form and waiver, completed and signed, to IEC office
- receive air tickets and double check flight itinerary
- receive a letter 2 weeks before departure with final rendezvous information
- make two photocopies of passport-one to carry with you and one leave with family or friends
- required inoculations up to date
- gloat as friends and family members look on with envy

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT LIST

- passport
- photocopy of passport
- air tickets
- favorite snacks for between meals
- personal spending and emergency funds
- 1 extra set of clothes for flight home
- Sleeping pad and bedding (see sidebar)
- 1 pair light hiking shoes (will get wet and muddy in the cave)
- 1 pair light running shoes for around camp
- 1 pair watersport sandals, teva's are a good choice
- 1 or 2 pair lightweight, fast drying long pants
- underwear
- 3 - 4 pairs of socks
- 2 pair nylon shorts and/or loose skirt or sarong
- 1-2 bathing suits
- 3 T-shirts
- 2 long sleeved shirts preferably with a collar (for protection from the sun & bugs) Silk shirts work well and dry quickly.
- 1 fleece jacket or wool sweater (this will keep you warm even when wet)
- 1 good quality rain jacket
- 1 wide brimmed sunhat (to keep the sun off your face and neck)
- sunglasses with band (Chums, Croakies, etc.)

Actun Tunichil Muknal

A pair of protective, closed toes shoes with good tread to wear into the underground creek is mandatory. It is cool and wet in the cave so wear your capilene/polypro long underwear. Bring dry clothing to change into afterward (this can be left in the van). A headlamp is provided for this day.

Sleeping Linens

While you are out on the cays you will need to have your own sleeping linens. Don't forget:

 Sleeping pad (i.e. thermarest)

 Light-weight sleeping bag or a sleep sheet and light weight fleece blanket

 Nylon stuff sac

Extra Gear

IEC will provide you with a large dry bag for the paddling portion of your trip. Since all your gear is being packed into the kayaks, extra plastic bags are useful for water-proofing. All the gear will be divided between everyone's kayaks. And your guides will assist you in allocating what should go where!

Expedition Trips

Generally in the field you should have at least two sets of clothing: one wet for river and sea and one dry for the evening. Also, a sturdy pair of sport sandals or water shoes is very important.

- 1-3 bandanas (handy for sun protection)
- spare set of eyeglasses (even if you wear contact lenses) and contact lens solution
- 1 headlamp and spare batteries
- mask, fins, snorkel ***IMPORTANT***
- shortie wet suit especially for kids – (not essential but water temperatures in Dec. and Jan. can be cooler water)
- capilene, polypropylene or silk long underwear (great for snorkeling and in the cave)
- 1 liter water bottle
- 1 towel
- personal toiletries
- personal medication and prescriptions
- small personal First Aid Kit: i.e.. Band-Aids, aspirin/Tylenol, scissors, tweezers, safety pins
- sunscreen (non-Paba-based, SPF 15 - 35) waterproof for kayak trips-eg. Ombrelle
- Vaseline or skin care cream
- Caladryl/ After Bite/ Benadryl Cream or lotion to ease itching from bug bites
- Aloe Vera lotion
- insect repellent (20 - 100% Deet)

OPTIONAL

- camera equipment and film / waterproof or waterproof throw-away camera
- binoculars
- bug jacket
- Skin-So-Soft Avon used as repellent
- Handy Wipe - moist tissues for hands and face and/or waterless bacterial cleanser
- Toilet paper (for emergency travels)
- lighter(s)
- 2 candles *Candle Lantern (available at outdoor stores) (Oil Lantern provided in each tent)
- good reading book, log book and pen
- white wine (nice for sea kayaking trips, very hard to find in Belize-great with fish and seafood!)
- liquors
- personal coffee for extreme coffee drinkers (i.e.. special blends)
- clothes line and pegs
- small day-pack (can be handy on any of our trips)
- mesh bag for carrying snorkel gear
- fishing rod & tackle
- art supplies, sketching tools or water-colors
- 1 pair light cotton gloves /bike gloves (for protection from the sun/blisters when paddling)
- Aquasocks
- Foot Powder

TRIP CONDITIONING

In order to best prepare for an IEC trip, the following exercise plans are helpful. It is good to begin exercises a minimum of two weeks before your scheduled departure. To facilitate paddling, the following is a list of exercises for wrist, arm and upper body strength.

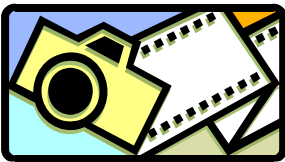
- ❑ Sit-ups: 10 to 20 per session, 1-3 times daily
- ❑ Push-ups: (5- 10 per session, 1-3 times per day)
- ❑ Wrist-curls: 2-3 per session, 1-3 times per day. To perform: take a 2 ft. long rounded baton (a stick, dowel or cut-off broom handle will do), attach a length of sturdy rope (measuring 2-3 ft.) in the middle of the baton and to this, tie a light weight bag filled with sand or a rock (approx. 2lbs) to the end of the rope. Grasp baton with both hands on either side of rope, straight out from your body, and wind the weight up and down, turning the baton alternately in one hand and the other, until the rope is wound around the baton and then unwound
- ❑ To improve your snorkeling ability, some time at a swimming pool is encouraged. Practice swimming not only lengths but, also legs-only. Also try out your snorkeling equipment in the pool to ensure comfort if you have not used the equipment before.



PHOTOGRAPHY

There are no limits to the types of cameras you can bring along. **Please note your camera gear must be waterproofed for any boat rides out to the cays.**

FOR THE SERIOUS: cameras with a wide angle and zoom (28-70 mm) or telephoto lenses (70-210 mm) are good combinations. A "universal lens" 28-150 mm zoom with macro is very useful. A wide-angle coverage flash is very useful for filling in shadows and reducing high light contrast. For wildlife photographers, a 300 mm or longer lens is needed. Because of the nature of our travel, a waterproof system such as the "Pelican" case to keep your camera dry is highly recommended. For kayak and river trips, this plastic hard-shell box can be mounted on the deck of your sea kayak or in your river boat and will give the best protection from the elements, as well as allow you quick access to your camera. Bring along a few silica gel



packs to absorb moisture within your camera box. Waterproof cameras are especially suitable for reef and river trips. It is advisable to have your camera equipment insured.

DIGITAL CAMERAS: Bring enough memory storage cards and extra batteries as you will not be able to charge your batteries while out on the islands. We can charge batteries when we stay at lodges or hotels on the mainland. It is important to keep these cameras in an air and water tight storage container. The salt air and sea water will penetrate the housing and affect its performance. For kayak trips, a separate waterproof box or bag is highly recommended.

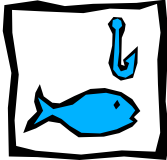
FILM: Purchase all the film that you need before leaving home, For slide film, use Fuji Velvia 50 ASA for the water, Astia Fuji Provia & Sensia 100 & 200 ASA for general photography in the jungle Fujichrome 400. For print film, we recommend Fujicolor and Kodak Gold 100 & 200 for most days and Kodak and Fuji NPH 400 for overcast days and inland shots Don't forget extra batteries for both your camera and flash!

VIDEO: Remember to bring enough film for the length of your stay. In addition, you may wish to bring 1 or 2 more battery packs than usual. It will be very difficult to charge batteries out on the cays. While on inland trips some lodges use electricity on a limited basis. For kayak trips, a separate waterproof box or bag is highly recommended.

NOTE: Camera equipment and other electronics must be waterproofed for all boat transfers and while in the kayaks. Hard cases such as Pelican cases are the best, but a small dry bag with some kind of padding also work well.

FISHING

Opportunities for fishing on the sea are exceptional. Barracuda, grouper, jacks, snapper, mackerel and tarpon are some of the more prized fish we catch with spin-casting gear or simple bait-trolling rigs. Fly-fishing for bonefish (catch and release only, please!) is unmatched for light tackle challenge and excitement. For spinning rods a medium stiff rod and reels that can hold at least 10 lb line. On the trip, there are always a few extra "tow lines" (100 yds of 30 to 50 lb test on a stick or float with wire leader) available for trolling from your kayak or the motor skiff, just ask your guide and they will fix you up so you can try your hand at some Belizean style fishing.



It is crucial that you have light-weight and fast-drying clothes to protect you from the sun. Much of the time while fishing (particularly when fly-fishing), you will be wading or walking the reef flats, and the sun, the heat and glare can be intense. A comfortable sunhat, good sunglasses (Polarized lenses work best for being able to see through the reflection off the water) are necessary. A pair of light, cotton, fingerless gloves work well to protect the back of your hands from the sun and allow minimal interfere with your working the reel. For footwear; rubber sport sandals, an old pair of canvas runners or neoprene reef walkers are perfect.

SPIN CASTING TACKLE

The type of tackle that you bring with you will depend on what type of fish you want to catch and how serious you are about fishing. They say in Belize that you don't go "fishing", you go "catching". Popular wisdom is that: if you put your line into Belizean waters you will catch something! With many hundreds of miles of unspoiled fishing grounds, Belize is a superb sport-fishing destination. In Belize, bonefish, tarpon, barracuda, jacks and king mackerel are plentiful. Permit are also a prime catch but can be very difficult to find. If you are bringing your own equipment the following list of items may be useful:

- Spin-casting rod and reel (10-20 lb test)
- 100 yds of 20-50lb test fishing line for hand-linefishing
- 5-10 wire leaders
- Assortment of single hooks and a very large 1"-3" bait-hooks
- Silver/pink/green trolling and casting spoons, large Rapalas, or Tomic plug.
- A variety of weights
- Thick glove to use for handling fish.

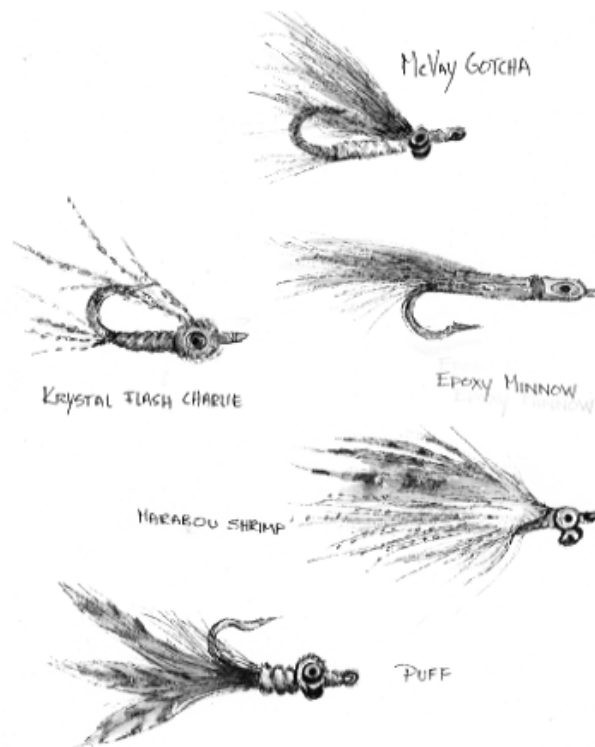
FLYFISHING



Although our kayak adventures are not designed as exclusive sport-fishing trips, we are traveling through some of the richest bonefish and tarpon waters in the western hemisphere. Often the best fishing is done right from where we are camping, particularly if there are accessible sand flats, mangroves or abrupt drop-offs. When paddling or sailing your kayak you can troll a weight forward or sinking line. This is a good way to catch barracuda, grouper or snapper. You never know - you may even hook into a tarpon!

For bonefish you want to have a 7 or 8 weight rod, nine or ten foot depending on the size of the fish and the flies you are using. A 5 or 6 weight stream fishing rod will do just fine for smaller bonefish and can be great fun but you will wish you had heavier gear if you hook into a 3 or 4 pound fish. Effective bonefish flies are Crazy Charlies #4, #6, #8 in gold, tan & pink. Horror's # 4, 6, 8 in orange, and Snapping Shrimp # 4, 6 in tan. A heavier tippet of 10-12 lb will hold up well in the shallow coral & rubble strewn waters which are the most common fishing for Bones at Glovers. The heavier rod weights will work for jacks, and barracuda as well. If you plan to fish for tarpon we suggest 10, 11 or 12 weight rods.

Apart from matching the right reel to the type of fish you are going after, the most important thing is a reel that can handle the harsh saltwater conditions. You need to be religious about washing your reel in freshwater each day, particularly if you are using the reel you bought for trout fishing at home. Many of the fish you will hook are fast and unbelievably strong, therefore, your reel should hold a minimum of 150 yards of backing, and 20 to 30 pounds test or more for tarpon. A weight-forward, tapered floating line is good for bonefish, you will want a sinking line as well for tarpon. If you are serious about your fly-fishing you should bring an extra line with you. Nine to twelve foot leaders are fine, heavier and shorter leaders are easier to fish within the difficult, windy conditions that are often encountered on the Belize reef. 2X & 4X for calm conditions in shallow waters and 1X, 0X, or 02X are also okay.



RECOMMENDED READING LIST



General

Diving & Snorkeling Belize: 3rd Edition, Mark Webster, Lonely Planet June 2002

Guatemala Belize Map, Rough Guides, ROUGH GUIDES November 2003

Adapter Kit: Belize: A Traveler's Tools for Living Like a Local, Lan Sluder, Avalon Travel Publishing August 2001

Politics & Culture

Belize in Focus: A Guide to the People, Politics and Culture, Ian Peedle, Interlink Publishing May 1999

The Making of Belize: Globalization in the Margins, Anne Sutherland, Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated January 1998

Timber, Tourists & Temples: Conservation & Development in the Maya Forest of Belize, Richard B. Primack, Island Press January 1997

Maya Culture

The Maya World: Yucatec Culture and Society, 1550-1850, Matthew Restall, Stanford University Press January 1999

Maya for Travelers & Students: A Guide to Language & Culture in Yucatan, Gary Bevington, University of Texas Press January 1995

Maya History & Religion, J. Eric Thompson, University of Oklahoma Press January 1990

Household Ecology: Economic Change & Domestic Life among the Kekchi Maya in Belize, Richard R. Wilk
Published By: Northern Illinois University Press January 1997

Archaeology & History of Belize

Mystery Cities of the Maya: Exploration & Adventure in Lubaantun & Belize; Harmonic, Thomas Gann, Adventures Unlimited Press January 1997

An Archaeological Guide to Northern Central America: Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, & El Salvador, Joyce Kelly, University of Oklahoma Press January 1996

Kayaking

Basic Essentials: Sit-on-Top Kayaking, Shelley Johnson, The Globe Pequot Press

Expedition Kayaking, Derek C. Hutchinson, The Globe Pequot Press June 1999

The Complete Book of Sea Kayaking, Derek C. Hutchinson, A & C Black November 2003

Mangroves & Coral Reefs

The Biology of Mangroves, Peter J. Hogarth, Oxford University Press UK December 1999

The Ecology Of Fishes On Coral Reefs, Peter F Sale, Academic Press August 1993

Coral Reefs, Sylvia Earle, Simon & Schuster April 2003

Living Mirrors: Coral Reefs of the World, Jack Stephens, Jean-Michel Cousteau, Powerhouse Books March 2003

World Atlas Of Coral Reefs, Mark Spalding, University Of California Press April 2001

Flora & Fauna

Orchids Of Guatemala And Belize, Oakes Ames, Dover Publications, Incorporated January 2004

Birds of Belize, Lee H. Jones, University Of Texas Press January 2004

Fishes of the Continental Waters of Belize, David E. Greenfield, Jamie E. Thomerson, University Press of Florida January 1997

A Guide to the Reptiles of Belize, Peter J Stafford, Walter A Meyer, Academic Press November 1998

A Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of the Maya World: The Lowlands of Mexico, Northern Guatemala, and Belize, Julian C. Lee-Cornell University Press April 2000