



# MAYA WORLD EXTENSION 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 the 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](mailto:info@islandexpeditions.com)*

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# BELIZE ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Please take your time to read through this Essential Information Package. This is your guide to travel planning - full of pertinent information that will help ensure you are properly prepared for travel in Belize with Island Expeditions (IEC).

## ON ARRIVAL INTO BELIZE

An Island Expeditions/Maya World 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. 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 guests' flight arrivals however, if our driver has not yet arrived to meet you within fifteen minutes of arrival, please contact our **Dangriga office Tel 522-3328** to let us know of your status and for any rendezvous updates. Please dial the operator at 115 and request station to station collect when calling our Dangriga office.

## DEPARTURE FROM BELIZE

For those of you who will be ending your Belize vacation with the Maya World Extension, the driver will drop you off at the International Airport at a time coordinated with your flight departure time. For those who will be continuing on with another Island Expeditions trip, you will be dropped off at the Belize Biltmore Plaza, 2 1/2 miles north of Belize City, before 4pm. If you are dropped here earlier than 4pm simply speak with the front desk of the hotel and explain you are awaiting an Island Expeditions group in the lobby for a 4-5pm pickup. They will gladly offer the use of their courtyard pool, change rooms, and restaurant area.

# TRIP PREPARATIONS

## PASSPORTS AND VISAS



A current passport is required for Canadian, American, and British citizens for travel in both Belize and Guatemala. For citizens of other countries, you should contact your embassy or consulate for entry requirements. We suggest you 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 highly recommended to obtain a short-term traveler's insurance policy. This policy should cover baggage, accident/life, flight, and trip cancellation and must be purchased once your flight and trip schedule are confirmed. Trip cancellation insurance also covers you for land costs in the event of personal or family illness. Flight insurance should be purchased within a few days of paying for your airfare.

In the USA, you can contact your travel agent or Travel Guard Insurance 1-800-826-4919 (company code: 116235) for trip cancellation insurance. In Canada you can contact your local Travel Guard office at 1-866-878-0191 (company code: 2329). You may also book these online by visiting <http://www.islandexpeditions.com/insurance.html>

## MEDICAL

Please remember you are responsible for consulting a medical professional prior to trip departure regarding your health considerations. Also, if you experience any unusual symptoms after returning home from your trip please call our office and let us know what's happening 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 required 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 Hepatitis A & B, called Twinrix. Please contact your local physician for details.

**Malaria** - For those participants on the Ultimate Adventure or Maya World Extension, taking anti-malaria pills (Chloroquine) is an option. A program usually starts two weeks prior to the commencement of your trip and five weeks after you return home. Please contact your physician or local travel clinic for details.

**Dengue Fever** - An illness transmitted by mosquitoes with flu-like symptoms. 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. These are not considered a problem in Belize.

## PERSONAL MONEY, SPENDING AND EXTRAS

**1 US dollar = 2 Belize dollars and US cash is accepted everywhere in Belize**

The amount of personal spending money you bring will largely depend on your own needs. The opportunity to purchase souvenirs, extra alcohol, a cold drink, or a wayside snack does exist. When we are in the remote Maya villages of the south you will have an opportunity to purchase village made crafts and having small denomination US bills will enable you to participate. We recommend you bring a combination of US



cash (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 you separate your cash so you are not carrying it all in the same place. In addition to your spending money, it is good practice when traveling to carry an amount of emergency cash. A contingency fund of \$100- 200 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 your or our control. 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 may apply. Cash advances can sometimes be made on Visa and MasterCard at local banks, although it is better not to depend on this. Also, drawing money from an ATM should not be part of your budget plan. Although bank machines are becoming more frequent in the cities and towns of Belize, many of them are not yet connected to the North American banking system.

A Government of Belize departure tax of \$37.50US is levied on many outgoing international flights from Belize and is due by you at the airport in Belize before you depart the country (some of the airlines include this fee in your ticket price so you do not pay at the Belize airport). There is also a domestic air tax of \$5 BLZ for each domestic flight from the Belize International Airport. For those exiting Belize overland, there is a departure tax of approximately \$20 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 a tipping budget totaling between \$20 to \$50 US per guide is a good range to consider.

## GENERAL NOTES ON ADVENTURE TRAVEL IN BELIZE

Remember that while exploring ruins and 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 at times you may be in remote wilderness regions. 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 you bring a rain-jacket, 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.

## INSECTS

Yes, they do exist! Weather, wind conditions, and proximity to the previous rainy season affect the concentrations of biting insects found on the mainland. Mosquitoes and some small no-see-ums are the main nuisance along the inland waterways and wetlands of Belize. Generally, a good deet based repellent (such as Ben's Insect Repellent or Deep Woods) is the best protection in Belize. Lightweight long pants and socks and a light long sleeve shirt will help in times of no wind or times closer to sun up and sun down. If you are extremely susceptible to bugs you should consider a bug-shirt and/or pants which are available at outdoor stores. This clothing is designed to allow maximum ventilation while protecting against bugs.



## MEALS & ACCOMMODATIONS

### MEALS

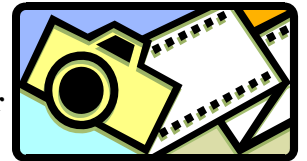


Meal preparation is mainly handled by the Bird's Eye View Lodge in Crooked Tree, where we enjoy specially prepared home-made Belizean-style meals. We may also eat at local restaurants or have picnic lunches while in the field. You can expect a delicious assortment of poultry, fresh vegetables, tropical fruits, and fresh baked breads. 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 we can do our best to accommodate your needs.

## WASHING AND TOILET FACILITIES

Washing and toilet facilities at the Lodge are ensuite. The lodge has flushing toilets, much like we use at home.. Often, in Belize, toilet paper is deposited into a refuse bag next to the toilet instead of being flushed down the drain. When we are out in the field an extra roll of toilet paper is a handy tool to have when visiting public facilities.

## 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 Cayes.**

### FOR THE SERIOUS

DSLR cameras with a wide angle (24 mm, 28 mm) and zoom (28-70 mm) or telephoto lenses (35-80 mm, 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.

### POINT & SHOOT 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. 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.

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

## 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 duffle bag and a small day pack. These bags are easy to move around, can be toted easily on boats, small planes, and van/bus roof racks. Suitcases or backpacks can work too however, suitcases get damaged in transit more often and backpack straps can get caught on airport conveyers.

## PACKING... GENERAL

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](http://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 the 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. Lastly, plan to arrive at least two hours in advance for your international flight to Belize.



# MAYA WORLD EXTENSION EQUIPMENT & PACKING LIST

**NOTE: IF YOU ARE ALREADY PARTICIPATING IN AN ISLAND EXPEDITIONS TRIP YOU WILL ALREADY HAVE ALL OF THE ITEMS ON THIS LIST AS PART OF YOUR OTHER TRIP PACKING LIST. HOWEVER, IF YOU ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE MAYA WORLD EXTENSION INDEPENDENT OF ANOTHER IEC TRIP, PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING LIST TO HELP YOU PREPARE.**

### GENERAL TO DO LIST

Check passport expiry date (be sure your passport expiry date is at least three weeks after you are scheduled to return home.)

Reserve international flights

Complete Travel, Medical and Waiver form and submit to IEC office. [Click Here](#)

Print e-tickets and double check flight itinerary

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**

1 pair of good quality walking shoes  
1 pair lightweight, fast drying, long pants  
Binoculars  
Small day-pack  
1 liter water bottle  
Personal toiletries  
Underwear  
1-2 pairs of socks  
2 t-shirts  
1 long sleeved shirt preferably with a collar (for protection from the sun and bugs). Silk shirts work well and dry quickly  
1 good quality rain jacket  
1 wide brimmed sunhat (to keep the sun off your face and neck)  
Sunglasses with band (Chums, Croakies, etc.)  
1 bandana (handy for sun protection)  
Spare set of eyeglasses (even if you wear contact lenses) and contact lens solution  
Insect repellent (20 - 100% Deet)  
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  
Favorite snacks for between meals  
Headlamp and spare batteries  
Caladryl/After Bite/Benadryl Cream or lotion to ease itching from bug bites  
Aloe Vera lotion

## **OPTIONAL**

Camera equipment and waterproof throw-away camera  
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  
Good reading book  
Log book and pen  
Small gifts for kids, guides etc.

# RECOMMENDED READING LIST



## General

Diving & Snorkeling Belize: 4th Edition, Tim Rock, Lonely Planet

Guatemala Belize Map, Rough Guides, ROUGH GUIDES

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

Insight Guide Belize Huw Hennessy

Belize: Reefs, Rainforests, and Mayan Ruins Dick Lutz.

## Politics & Culture

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

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

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

## Maya Culture

The Ancient Maya: New Perspectives, Heather McKillop.

Belize: A Concise History, P.B.A Thomson.

Time Among the Maya: Travels in Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico, Ronald Wright.

-The Popol Vuh: The Mythic and Heroic Sagas of the Kiches of Central America, Lewis Spence & Paul Tice.

-Popol Vuh: A Sacred Book of the Maya, Victor Montejo, Luis Garay & David Unger.

## Archeology & History of Belize

In the Realm of Nachan Kan: Postclassic Maya Archaeology at Laguna De On, Belize. Marilyn A Masson, University Press Of Colorado

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

## Kayaking

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

Sea Kayaking: A Manual for Long-Distance Touring, John Dowd.

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

Paddling with Kids: AMC Essential Handbook for Fun and Safe Paddling, Bruce Lessels & Karen Bloom, The Globe Pequot.

## Flora & Fauna

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

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

A Neotropical Companion: An Introduction to the Animals, Plants, and Ecosystems of the New World Tropics, 2nd Edition, John Kricher

An Introduction to the Animals, Plants, & Ecosystems of the New World Tropics, John Kricher.

Neotropical Rainforest Mammals, A Field Guide, Second Edition, Louise H. Emmons.

Jaguar: One Man's Struggle to Establish the World's First Jaguar Preserve, Alan Rabinowitz.

Belize & Northern Guatemala: Traveller's Wildlife Guides. Les Beletsky.

Bird of Belize, H. Lee Jones.

## Mangroves & Coral Reefs

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

Coral Reefs, Sylvia Earle, Simon & Schuster

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

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