



# PARADISE ISLANDS 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](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 helpful information to ensure you are properly prepared for your trip in Belize with Island Expeditions Co.

## GENERAL ARRIVAL NOTES

All IEC trips begin with a 'Day 0'. This means 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. 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 likely 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 your flight schedule corresponds with the departure date of your trip it is best to plan your flight itinerary with our office. If you are not arranging your flights through our office please ensure that you or your travel agent faxes us a copy of your proposed flight itinerary before you pay for it.

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

## DEPARTURE FROM BELIZE

You will stay on the cayes for the last night of your trip. The following morning, after breakfast, our charter boat will bring you back to the mainland - usually arriving around 9am. On your return to Dangriga the group will be taken to our Operations Base. Here you can pick up the luggage you did not take with you to the cayes, change, and then make your connections for further travel in Belize or your international flight home. Your international flight home needs to be scheduled for the day after the trip finishes and cannot depart before 11am. This is to ensure you have adequate connection time from Dangriga to the International Airport.

Please ensure we are aware of your post trip plans prior to your arrival in Belize. If you are connecting with a return flight home later in the day, most people will have already made a domestic flight reservation from Dangriga to the Belize International Airport. Flights takes about 20 minutes and flights departs approximately every 1.5 hours from Dangriga 7am to 5pm daily. On arrival from the cayes in the morning we will have a vehicle waiting to take you to the Dangriga airstrip. For those who have a little time to explore the town or travelling overland to their next destination, our Operations people can organize a taxi to the local bus depot or airstrip for your further travel arrangements. We always recommend checking with your fellow travelers to see if you can share a ride to the airport.

## 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 are able to 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 although we are more than happy to assist with any travel plans you may have separate from your trip with IEC, we 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 navigate. You will disembark your plane directly onto the airport tarmac and will be directed to the terminal building and Immigration. After your passport is stamped, you collect your bags and move through the customs

area. The whole process can take up to an hour, but is usually much quicker than that. After completing your check-in, porters are standing in clear view and are ready 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, they can be pushy and they charge 1 US dollar for each bag. You are not obligated to use their services.

## RENDEZVOUS

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

An Island Expedition’s representative will be at the International Airport to meet you on Day 0 of your tour. Meeting arrangements are based on your international flight arrival time as confirmed with our Canadian head 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 guests’ flight arrivals, however, if our driver has not yet arrived to meet you within fifteen minutes of arrival please contact our **Dangriga office at 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.

As trip participants will be arriving on different flights throughout Day 0, we have arranged transport to the Biltmore Plaza Hotel as a pleasant and comfortable place to wait for those who have arrived on earlier flights than other group participants. 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 - 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 the rests of the 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. The 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 an IEC vehicle pick-up. Any questions regarding the trip and scheduled pick-ups should be directed to our office in Dangriga, not the Biltmore front desk. 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 who have flights arriving later in the day (after 4:00 pm), you will need to arrive into Belize City the day before the scheduled Day 0 meeting day. This year we have seen some flights arriving into Belize City as late as 7:00 pm. 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 4:00 pm. 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 car.”**

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 4:00 pm or earlier on Day 0 of your tour. Our representative and vehicle will be arriving from an International Airport pickup sometime between 4:00-5:00 pm. It is difficult to give an exact time, so 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 you have in fact arrived and will be at the Biltmore Hotel on Day 0.

# 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 mandatory to obtain a short-term traveler's insurance policy** to ensure 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 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 due to 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](http://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 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 suggested. 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 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 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 \$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 and 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 that a tipping budget totaling between \$50 to \$200 US per person is a good range to consider.

On your Paradise Islands trip you will typically have 2 sets of guide teams – one for your first day inland 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 tipping before you board the charter boat in Dangriga as you will not see your guides again at the end of the trip. For the reef portion of the trip you will be with your guides for the 5 days of the paddling the reef. The final night's dinner or morning of re-packing in Dangriga are generally an opportune time to provide tips to your reef guiding team.

## GENERAL NOTES ON ADVENTURE TRAVEL IN BELIZE

Traveling along the reefs of Belize by sea kayak and down rainforest rivers are exciting events and the experiences and insights gained are unique. It is important to remember that when traveling in self-propelled craft, our day-by-day life is determined by the weather and the water 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 cayes 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.

## INSECTS

Yes, they do exist! Weather, wind conditions, and proximity to the previous rainy season affect the concentrations of biting insects found on both the cayes and the mainland. While staying on the cayes, 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.

## GARBAGE ON THE CAYES



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 fully take care of the problem, and garbage can build up quickly.

# MEALS & ACCOMMODATIONS

## MEALS



You can expect a delicious assortment of seafood, poultry, fresh vegetables, tropical fruits, and fresh baked goods. On the Paradise Islands trip, we enjoy specially prepared Belizean and international fare at lodges and local restaurants, and picnic lunches while in the field. In Central America meal service at restaurants can be slow so an extra supply of patience can go a long way. 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 pass on the information to the lodges, and advise them how to best 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 the 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.**

## WASHING AND TOILET FACILITIES

Fresh water on the cayes is at a premium. Most of the water available on the islands are from rainwater catchment systems, or have has been imported from the mainland, so water conservation is of the utmost importance to the inhabitants of the islands. Power is usually generated locally, and water is stored in large tanks at each lodge. They will have a closed water system of their own, which is controlled with generators their own water pumps. Often, generators are stopped through the night to conserve power. This can also effect water pressure and lights in the night, and early morning. Saltwater soap is recommended for bathing in the sea., and showers at the lodges can be used for rinsing off each day.



Many of the lodges that we use have a mixture of ensuite and shared bathroom facilities. Toilets on the islands are generally flushing toilets, but some islands will have composting toilet facilities. On days where we may be day tripping between islands, toilet facilities will be more limited, and we will rely on minimal impact practices as directed by your guides.

# PADDLING IN THE TROPICS

## 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. The protection of the reef wall and shallow inshore waters provides 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 socks for your feet while snorkeling are recommended.

## 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 skill or expensive equipment to accomplish. IEC guides enjoy teaching others the simple skills necessary to enjoy snorkeling. In 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 on or dropping anchor on 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 intensity. Care is taken to show all participants the coral species which should be avoided. If you get cold easily a lightweight wetsuit or a spandex/lycra dive suit is recommended to keep from getting cold when spending extended time in the water. Polypropylene or capilene long underwear works as well. In addition, this clothing 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 individual's face to ensure a watertight seal. Nothing is more frustrating for snorkelers than water leaking into their 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 the snorkel fits 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 good dive shop will gladly exchange an ill-fitting mask for one with a better fit.

**Note:** Equipment is available for rent in Belize but must be organized in advance with our Canadian office.

# 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 one medium duffel bag for check-in and a medium day pack as a carry-on. 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.

On your first evening at the Tropical Education Center your inland guides will talk to you about packing for the trip. You will be given two 20 liter and one 10 liter dry bags to pack your clothes for the kayaking portion of your trip. When you arrive in Dangriga at the boat dock your gear packed in the waterproof bags will go on the boat with you. Your luggage will be stored in our office in Dangriga until you return at the end of your trip. Ensure 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. As we load from our vehicle to the boat on Saturday evening you can leave your stay-behind bag(s) with your driver and they will be kept in a secure locked storage area at our Operations Base.

We advise you bring a small personal dry bag (5-10 liter) 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 on the boat ride to and from 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 ensure smooth and efficient transfer in airports, 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 or in a trailer. 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](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.

# PARADISE ISLANDS EQUIPMENT & PACKING LIST

## 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
- Receive a letter 2-3 weeks before departure with final rendezvous information
- Make two photocopies of passport - one to carry with you and one to 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
- 1 pair light running shoes for around camp
- 1 pair watersport sandals or water shoes (Teva's or Keens are a good choice)
- 1 or 2 pair lightweight fast-drying long pants
- Underwear
- 2-3 pairs of socks
- 2 pair nylon shorts and/or loose skirt or sarong
- 1 bathing suit
- 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.)
- 1 bandana (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\***

### Sleeping Linens

*Sleeping linens will be provided at all of the accommodations throughout the trip.*

### Extra Gear

*IEC will provide you with 2-3x 20 liter 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. 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 the sea and one dry for the evening. Also, a sturdy pair of sport sandals or water shoes is very important.*

- Shortie wet suit especially for kids – (not essential but water temperatures in Dec. and Jan. can be cooler)
- Capilene or polypropylene long underwear (great for snorkeling)
- 1 liter water bottle
- 1 towel (either a camp towel or small beach 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 - 45) - 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 - 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
- Good reading book, log book, and pen
- Wine or favorite liquor
- Small day-pack (can be handy on any of our trips)
- Mesh bag for carrying snorkel gear
- Fishing rod and 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

If you are concerned about your strength and physical conditioning the following exercises are recommended. 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.

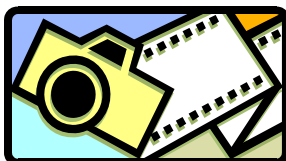
- ❑ Sit-ups: 5 to 20 per session - 1-3 times daily
- ❑ Push-ups: (min. of 10 per session - 1-3 times per day)
- ❑ Wrist-curls: 2-3 per session - 1-3 times per day. To perform: take a 2 ft. long rounded baton (a stick, dowel or cut-off broom handle will do), attach a length of sturdy rope (measuring 2-3 ft.) in the middle of the baton, 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. Furthermore, it is important to 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 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.

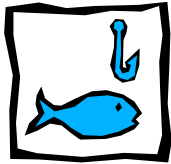
## POINT & SHOOT DIGITAL CAMERAS

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.**

# 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. If you are planning on fly-fishing for bonefish, tarpon, permit, snook etc. you should talk to your local fly-fishing shop to find out the specific tackle needed and where you can get it in your area. On the trip, there are usually a few extra "tow lines" (100 yds of 30 to 50 lb test on a stick with wire leader) available for trolling from your kayak or the motor skiff.



It is crucial 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. On the flats the sun, heat and glare can be intense. A comfortable sunhat and 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 working the reel. For footwear, rubber sport sandals, an old pair of canvas runners or neoprene reef walkers are perfect.

## 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 states 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:

- Small spin-casting rod and reel (6-12 lb test)
- 100 yds of 20-50lb test fishing line for hand-line fishing
- 5-10 wire leaders
- A small assortment of single hooks and a very large hook for trolling bait
- Silver/pink/green trolling and casting spoons, large Rapalas, or Tomic plug.
- A variety of weights
- Thick gloves to use for handling fish.

## FISHING REGULATIONS

**\*NOTE: Inside the Glover's Reef Marine Reserve all fishing is catch and release only. The Reserve boundary is not far from our island Basecamp and guides will lead fishing trips outside of park boundaries where we can catch and keep our catch.**

### South Water Caye Marine Reserve – Fishing Regulations and General Information:

There are 3 designated zones for fishing within the park boundary:

**Zone 1: GZ - General Use Zone:** Fishing is permitted with a license. Sport fishing. Recreational fishing for tourists to be consumed there. No spear fishing.

**Zone 2: CZ - Conservation Zone:** Kayaking and snorkeling in this area is ok, but no fishing permitted.

**Zone 3: PZ - Preservation Zone:** No boats, kayaks, snorkeling or fishing allowed.

# FISHING TERMS:

**Recreational fishing:** Fishing for enjoyment with the intention to eat the caught fish but not for selling.

**Sports fishing:** Catch and release fishing

## Websites with additional information:

Site: <http://www.swcmr.org/>

Map: [http://www.swcmr.org/download/download.php?file=swcmr\\_zoning\\_map.jpg](http://www.swcmr.org/download/download.php?file=swcmr_zoning_map.jpg)

Buy Fishing License Online: <http://www.coastalzonebelize.org/>

# 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, 8 or 9 weight rod, nine foot or slightly longer depending on the size of the fish and the flies you are using. A 5 or 6 weight stream fishing rod will do 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 and rubble strewn waters. 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 use 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: 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 July

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

## 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