

GLOVER'S REEF & RIVER OF CAVES

A Spectacular Escape to Glover's Reef Atoll with a Full Day of Inland Adventure!

Trip Details - 7 nights

Price - \$1849

Trip Begins - Belize City

Trip Ends - Dangriga

2011/2012 Departures

Nov 21, 28

Dec 5, 12, 19, 26

Jan 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Feb 6, 13, 20, 27

Mar 5, 12, 19, 26

Apr 9, 16, 23

Activities

Sea Kayaking
(paddling and sailing),
Snorkeling, Fishing,
Hiking, Zip-lining, Caving,
Birding, Photography,
Natural History Interpretation

Accommodations

2 nights Forest Cabana
5 nights Basecamp

7 NIGHTS



The Setting...

Our day of inland exploration takes us from the mythical limestone caverns of the Mayan underworld to a mosaic of broadleaf tropical rainforest, cohune ridge, and rolling pine savannah. Through our first day of travel we gain a sense of traditional and contemporary life of inland Belize, before heading out to our idyllic camp on Glover's Reef.

There are 4 atolls in the Caribbean Sea, three are offshore in Belize waters and the fourth is in Mexico. Glover's Reef was named after the pirate John Glover who used this remote offshore ring of islands and coral reefs as a base from which to raid Spanish merchant ships. The shallow waters with innumerable coral reefs, mangroves, and small islands were ideal waters for pirates and buccaneers to hide in after plundering Spanish galleons laden with riches pillaged from the New World. Today, the attractions found within the atoll (20 miles long by 7 miles wide) are the incredible clarity of the water and the remarkable profusion of marine life. In 1993 the atoll was declared a marine park. To further efforts to protect this extraordinary environment, the site was designated as a World Heritage Site in 1996. We travel and explore this area by sea-kayak and motor skiff, paddling and sailing the shallow 82 square mile lagoon with over 700 patch reefs. The reefs of Belize have long been known as the richest in the Caribbean, and Glover's is among the best in Belize!

A Note About the Ecology...

Flora... The Mesoamerican Coral Reef stretches from Cancun, Mexico through Belize to Honduras. It is the largest reef in the western hemisphere and second largest in the world. In Belize this reef is a well formed wall and extends 185 miles (300 km) along the coastline. Nineteen miles seaward from the eastern border of the Barrier Reef lies Belize's most spectacular atoll – Glover's Reef. These circular shaped reef systems climb from the ocean



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floor and surround a central lagoon. The surrounding reef is primarily made up of two kinds of coral, the hard hydro-coral (reef-forming coral), such as brain coral or elkhorn coral, and the soft corals, such as sea fans and feather plumes. The sheltered lagoon harbors one of the world's most diverse sea environments; an extensive community of fish, shellfish, and invertebrates living amongst countless patch reefs. One mile off the eastern shore of the atoll the reef wall quickly drops 2600 feet to the ocean floor below. The interaction between the deeper open waters of the Caribbean Sea and the sheltered lagoons of the atoll results in a diversity and abundance of marine life which is unsurpassed for sea kayaking, snorkeling, and diving.

Fauna... From our base on Southwest Caye we will have the opportunity to view a diverse range of marine life and tropical birds. While exploring and snorkeling the atoll and the many patch reefs there are opportunities to see grouper, bonefish, angel and parrot fish, stingrays, conger, moray eels, and goatfish - just to name a few. Some of the bird life includes osprey (the Billy Hawk), sea gulls, boobies, frigate birds, hawks, mangrove warblers, and white-crowned pigeons. Around the atoll and the Barrier Reef there are nesting sites for loggerhead, green, and hawksbill turtles. If we're lucky we may see them while out snorkeling or kayaking. We will definitely have a chance to see and sample the main staple for Belizean fishermen, the spiny lobster (in season) and the queen conch.

Typical Daily Itinerary:

Day 0: Arrive at the Belize International Airport, where you will be met by an Island Expeditions' representative and transferred to the Tropical Education Center, adjacent to the Belize Zoo. Here we are able to explore the surrounding savannah forest through a network of interpretative trails and wildlife viewing platforms. There is also a great Interpretive Center, which details the diverse ecology of Belize and is an ideal starting point for the adventure ahead. After checking into our rustic accommodations, we enjoy a Belizean dinner where we have a chance to meet our fellow travelers. *This day is your day to arrive before the trip starts, meet your fellow travelers, and acclimatize to your new tropical environment.* Transfers from the airport are included.

Accommodation: Lodge **Meals:** Dinner is included

Day 1: Today begins with short drive along the Hummingbird Highway toward the River of Caves area of Belize. We begin with an interpretive trail through lush rainforest to the cave entrance and then, using inner tubes, we embark on an enjoyable 2 hour float underground through a limestone cave system rich with classic formations including soda straw, flow stone, stalactites, and stalagmites. After lunch we head into the Rainforest Canopy for a unique opportunity to travel by a series of treetop platforms and zip-lines through the rainforest. In the evening we return to the Tropical Education Center to enjoy the evening in our beautiful tropical pine forest setting. After dinner we have a rare opportunity to have an exclusive nocturnal tour of the renowned Belize Zoo for an up-close experience with the wildlife that inhabits the forests, wetlands, and mountains of Belize. (please note this activity is by donation to the Belize Zoo and Conservation - we suggest \$10 US)

Accommodation: Lodge **Meals:** B,L,D



Recommended

Tour-books:

Eltringham, Peter
Belize: The Rough Guide
London Penguin
Publishers

Hidden Belize

with Catherine O'Neil (3rd
edition, revised, Berkeley:
Ulysses Press)

Reading:

Rabinowitz, Alan
Jaguar, One Man's
Struggle to Establish the First
Jaguar Sanctuary
New York Island Press

Les Belesky
Belize & Northern Guate-
mala, Interlink Books



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Day 2-6: We depart early in the morning by charter boat out past the main Barrier Reef to our private Basecamp on Southwest Caye at Glover's Reef Marine Reserve. We begin with an introduction to our new environment and settle into our tent cabanas. Once settled, the guides provide professional instruction - teaching the fundamentals of sea kayaking, snorkeling, and safety on the water in the tropics. Then we paddle out to a nearby patch reef and start to explore some of the 700 snorkel sites that Glover's Atoll has to offer.

Glover's is one of only four atolls in the Caribbean Sea, and is one of the most spectacular marine environment in Belize. Due to its isolation from the mainland, the waters are exceptionally clear with inspiring scenery and a fabulously rich reef system that offers the best kayaking, snorkeling, and diving in the Caribbean. We spend the days exploring the atoll with both single and double kayaks (rigged for sailing!). Our itinerary is flexible in order to respond to both group and individual desires and abilities. Activities include: sea kayaking, snorkeling the inner and outer walls of the reef, and learning to sail a kayak. In the mornings and the evenings we host informative sessions on a range of topics, providing an opportunity for guides to share their knowledge of Belize, the marine environments, and local culture. If all this sounds a little too busy you always have the choice of just kicking back in a hammock and relaxing with a good book and a cold drink.



Accommodation: Glover's Basecamp

Meals: B, L, D

Day 7: Many choose to rise early this morning, enjoy a coffee on the dock and, for the last time, watch the sunrise over the atoll before enjoying a hearty breakfast. Our boat charter departs mid-morning back to the mainland with an estimated arrival around noon. Trip finishes in Dangriga.

Meals: B, L

Travel Note: For those making connections home on this day, international connections departing Belize should be booked for **after 2pm**, otherwise an overnight in Belize will be required. In order to connect with the Sunday afternoon departures from Belize you will require a short domestic flight from Dangriga to the International Airport at a cost of \$75US per person. For those flying out of Belize the following day we offer a Dangriga to Belize City Flight & Biltmore Hotel Package for \$99US per person (based on double occupancy). If you are traveling on independently in Belize after the Glover's Reef trip please coordinate your arrangements with our office. We are happy to help you with travel arrangements.

Accommodation...

On Day 0 and Day 1 we spend the night at the Tropical Education Center. The Education Center has comfortable rustic accommodations in a beautiful pine savannah setting. The Center has a fantastic Interpretative Center and harbors Belize's largest collection of tropical animals, with a great network of trails and wildlife viewing platforms perfect for exploring this rare forest environment.

On Day 2 to 6 at Southwest Caye we are "base camping", sleeping in tent-walled cabanas. These spacious safari-style tents have ample headroom to walk around and are on raised wooden floors with double or single beds. On the island we have a fully equipped kitchen, fresh-water collection system for drinking water, access to fresh-water showers, and modern composting toilets, as well as a large dining area and a resource library lounge.

Equipment...

For the inland portion of the trip all caving and zip-line safety gear is provided.

While at our Basecamp on Southwest Caye guests have unrestricted use of the following equipment: Double Kayaks (outfitted with special sails), Single Kayaks, Sit-on-Top and other recreational boats, Research Library, games, etc. On the island we are in communication with the mainland via fixed cellular phone and VHF marine radio.



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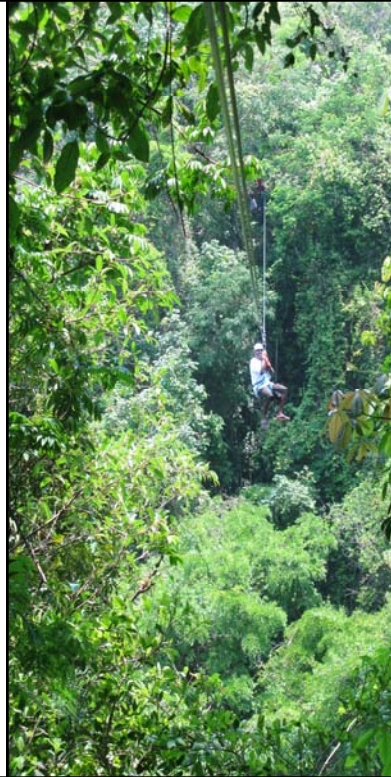
Getting back to Belize City and flying out on the last day...

This trip ends in Dangriga around noon on the last day of the trip. If you are flying out of Belize on this day (Sunday) we can book you a domestic flight to the International Airport. Please be sure to book your flight departing Belize after 2:00pm. Cost is \$75US per person.

For those departing Belize the following day (Monday) we offer a Dangriga to Belize City Flight & Hotel Package.

Flight & Hotel Package cost:

Single occupancy - \$139US
Double occupancy - \$99US per person
Triple occupancy - \$86US per person
Quad occupancy - \$79US per person



What's Included...

- All meals from dinner on the arrival day to a packed lunch on the last day
- All activities except scuba diving and optional night tour of zoo
- Unlimited use of equipment/facilities
- Professional Guide instruction
- Accommodations as per Itinerary
- Glover's Reef Marine Park fees of \$15US per person
- Belize 9% Hotel tax, Belize 12.5% Sales Tax
- Cave Entrance Fees
- Comprehensive Pre-trip Package
- Financial support for Conservation and Education Programs in Belize

Thinking about seeing other parts of Belize or the Yucatan with IEC?

The Glover's Reef & River of Caves combines well with our popular Maya World Extension, giving you a great opportunity to visit some of the ancient ruins of Belize and the Crooked Tree Bird Sanctuary. Or, experience both of Belize's spectacular Atolls in one trip to Belize! The Lighthouse Reef trip itinerary takes you even further offshore, to beautiful Half-moon Caye National Monument.

Thinking about traveling independently, before or after your trip?

With over 25 years of exploration in Belize, our very knowledgeable and experienced office staff can offer you a wealth of travel information to help you plan the best vacation possible! However, we do recommend that you read up on the country and find what interests you. Once you find an area of interest, give our office a phone call.

What's Not Included...

- International flights
- Transfer between Dangriga and Belize International Airport at end of trip
- Snorkeling/Dive gear
- Gratuities
- Extra costs due to late arrivals and other circumstances beyond our control



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