

LIGHTHOUSE REEF SHORT

Tropical Wildlife & Hidden Coral Reefs!

Trip Details

5 days / 6 nights

Price

\$1369 USD - Contact us for current CDN prices

Departures 2010

Dec 20

Departures 2011

Feb 12,16 - Mar 31

Activities

Sea Kayaking
 (paddling & sailing),
 Snorkeling, Fishing,
 Hiking, Birding,
 Photography,
 Natural History

Accommodations

1 night Lodge
 4 nights at Halfmoon
 Caye Basecamp (safari-
 style tent)
 1 night Hotel



The Setting...

We begin our trip with an introduction to the inland waterways of the *Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary*. Here we experience the astounding diversity of birds and wildlife for which Belize is renowned. Located 33 miles northwest of Belize city the sanctuary provides both the abundant food sources and the safe resting areas necessary to support a large and diverse population of birds.

Our journey to Lighthouse Atoll takes us 60 miles offshore to Belize's most remote and spectacular atoll. On our way to Lighthouse we weave our way through channels and picturesque islands within Belize's Barrier Reef then, after crossing the reef wall, we enter a keyhole passage and wind through narrow mangrove lined channels to reach the eastern Coral Wall of Turneffe Atoll and then continue another 20 miles to the world renowned Lighthouse Reef Atoll and Half Moon Caye. One of only four coral atolls in the Caribbean, Lighthouse is home to the famous Blue Hole. In 1972, Capt. Jacques Cousteau and the intrepid crew of the *Calypso* explored and filmed this incredible atoll, exposing its amazing underwater diversity to the world for the first time.

In partnership with the Belize Audubon Society, Island Expeditions Co. has established an Adventure Camp within the Half Moon Caye Marine Reserve, opening up for the first time this spectacular wilderness to kayakers, snorkelers, and adventurers.

A Note About the Ecology...

Belize's Barrier Reef is the largest reef in the northern hemisphere, second largest in the world, extending 185 miles along the coastline. Approximately 35 miles beyond the Barrier Reef lies one of Belize's most spectacular atolls – Lighthouse Reef Atoll. These circular shaped reef systems climb up from the ocean floor and surround a central lagoon.



LIGHTHOUSE REEF ADVENTURE

The reef structure 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 lagoon shelters one of the world's most diverse sea environments; harbouring an extensive community of fish, shellfish, and patch reefs. One mile off the eastern shore of the atoll and the shallow waters of the lagoon the reef wall drops precipitously over 3000 feet to the ocean floor below. The interaction between the deeper open waters of the Caribbean 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...

On Half-Moon Caye, there is a diverse range of marine-life and tropical birds. While exploring and snorkeling the atoll and the surrounding 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, royal terns, red-footed boobies, frigate birds, hawks, and mangrove warblers. Half Moon Caye has one of the Caribbean's most important nesting colonies of red-footed boobies. Around the atoll and the Barrier Reef there are nesting sites for loggerhead, green and hawksbill turtles, and often we see them while out snorkeling or kayaking.

Day 0: Arrive at the Belize International Airport where you will be met by an Island Expeditions' representative and transferred to the Bird's Eye View Lodge in the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. After checking into our accommodations we have a chance to meet our fellow travelers and enjoy a fine meal and, as time permits, explore Crooked Tree Village, one of Belize's oldest Creole Settlement. Transfers from the airport, dinner, activities, and lodging are included. *This day is your day to arrive before the trip starts, meet your fellow travelers and acclimatize to your new tropical environment.*

Accommodation: (Lodge)

Meals: Dinner

Day 1: Coffee is served at sunrise, and with binoculars in hand, we enjoy the waking wilderness and many hundreds of birds feeding right in front of the lodge along the shores of the Crooked Tree lagoons. After a healthy Belizean breakfast we'll embark by boat to explore the area. Throughout the sanctuary we have tremendous birding and wildlife opportunities: iguana, turtle, parrot, ibis, and Morlet's crocodile are frequently seen. Later in the morning we'll drive along the old Belize Road to the sea where we board our motor charter that takes us through white sand cayes and mangrove ranges, then past the main Barrier Reef to Lighthouse Reef Atoll at the furthest edge of the Belize Reef System, 60miles offshore of the mainland. On reaching Half-Moon Caye your guide team will orient you to our new island setting and settle you into your accommodations and camp. Then we enjoy a late lunch and an afternoon snorkel or kayak around Halfmoon Caye.

Accommodation: (Half-moon Basecamp)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 2: Perhaps an early swim or, before breakfast, participate in a yoga session with our resident yoga instructors (yoga is not available on all departures please check our website or call the office for a current schedule of trips with yoga instructors). After a healthy Belizean breakfast we gather to plan the day's activities. To begin our ac-



Recommended Tour-books:

Eltringham, Peter
Belize: The Rough Guide
London Penguin
Publishers

Perottet, Tony
Belize: Insight Guide
Singapore Houghton
Mifflin Publishers
-Great photographs and
written by a Belizean!

Recommended Reading:

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



LIGHTHOUSE REEF SHORT

tivities the guides provide instruction; teaching the fundamentals of sea kayaking, snorkeling, and water safety on the sea. From this point we venture forth into a world that most of us can only dream of - turquoise waters, solitary beaches, and a remarkable abundance of marine life surrounds us wherever we are. Over the next few days we have many options to explore, including a shipwreck that looms just north of the Caye. In 1971 a ship named the Ermlund lost power during a storm and was deposited on the reef by a large wave. This 4000 ton wreck sits silent due to its isolation from the mainland. The waters of Lighthouse Reef Atoll are exceptionally clear with a fabulously rich reef system that offers some of the best kayaking, snorkeling, and diving in the Caribbean.

Accommodation: (Half-moon Basecamp) **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3: The "aquarium" is today's big adventure. We pack a hearty lunch and our snorkel gear in our kayaks and paddle with motor support. This dive spot is known for its profusion of fish and towering coral formations. We return home, stopping at the Half-Moon Wall for a spectacular drift snorkel over the undersea cliff of the atoll.

Accommodation: (Half-Moon Basecamp) **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4: Today we paddle along the protected waters of the southern reef to Long Caye, where we have a chance to snorkel some of the atoll's best patch reefs. After a full day of exploring we return just in time for a wonderful seafood dinner prepared by our cooks.

Accommodation: (Half-Moon Basecamp) **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5: For our last morning at Lighthouse the choice is yours - don a mask, snorkel, and fins for a visit to a favorite patch reef, enjoy walking the island trails, or beach comb along the island beaches before the motor charter arrives to pick us up for the return boat trip back to the mainland. We transfer to the Belize Biltmore Plaza Hotel where the trip finishes.

Accommodation: (Hotel) **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

***NOTE: Due to the remoteness of the Lighthouse Basecamp, the activities on the reef portion of this trip are weather dependent and the following itinerary is a 'guide' and will remain flexible and open to changes at the trip leaders' discretion.**



Scuba Divers...

There are some great opportunities to dive at Lighthouse Reef. Optional diving is available for certified divers on certain days of the trip. Single tank dives are available from \$49 US. Please let us know in advance if you are considering diving during the trip as we often need to make special arrangements ahead of time. We can also arrange a variety of dive packages before or after your trip. For further information please contact our office directly.

3 Day Dive Package—\$319 USD

Includes: 8 dives (1 night dive & blue hole dive), snacks and drinks, use of dive light during night dives

Equipment...

While at our private Basecamp on Half-Moon Caye our guests have unrestricted use of the following equipment: Double Kayaks (outfitted with special sails), Single Kayaks, complete Research Library, a motor skiff for kayak support and fishing trips, and on the island we are in communication with the mainland via Satellite phone.

LIGHTHOUSE REEF ADVENTURE

Accommodation...

On Day 0, we stay at the Bird's Eye View Lodge in the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. This is a wonderful place to be introduced to the inland flora and fauna of Belize and a chance to explore one of Belize's oldest villages.

On Day 1 to 4 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 final night we will be arriving back to Belize city in the afternoon and transfer for the night at Belize Biltmore Hotel, located 3 1/2 miles north of Belize City. This is a modern and comfortable hotel, with a lovely central courtyard and swimming pool to relax and unwind.

What's Included...

- All meals (fully catered) while you are at our Half Moon Caye Basecamp
- Some complimentary beer, wine, or rum drinks.
- Unlimited use of our equipment and facilities
- Professional guide and sports instruction services with Belizean and North American guides
- Comfortable Basecamp accommodations
- Half-Moon Caye Marine Park fees
- Comprehensive pre-trip information document
- Financial support for Conservation and Education programs in Belize
- 9% Belize Hotel Tax
- 12.5% Belize Sales Tax

What's Not Included...

- Gratuities
- International Flights & Airport Departure Tax
- Snorkeling or Dive Gear & Scuba Diving fees
- Blue Hole Park Fee
- Extra costs due to late arrivals and other circumstances beyond our control

Thinking about seeing other parts of Belize with IEC?

Why not come a day or two early and explore more of Belize's interior, including a boat journey on the New River to the Mayan city of Lamanai. Also for those who are interested in visiting both of Belize's premiere atolls, take a look at our 3 day Glover's Reef Getaway or full week trip. Call our office for details.

Getting back to Belize City ...

Your transportation back to Belize City is included in the cost of the trip. This is a great point to make extra arrangements to travel further on in Belize, or to return to the International Airport which is just a short taxi cab away. We would be happy to answer any questions, or provide you with further directions after the trip.

Thinking About Traveling Independently, Before or After Your Trip?

With over 20 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.



Toll-free: 800.667.1630
Phone: 604.452.3212
Fax: 604.452.3433
Email: info@islandexpeditions.com
Website: www.islandexpeditions.com
School Trips: www.educationaltrips.org

Hey Teachers & Parents! Did you know Island Expeditions Co. has been operating custom educational trips for high schools and colleges for close to a decade! For more information, please visit: www.educationaltrips.org