

MAYA REEF EXPLORER

The renowned coral reefs of Glover's Atoll then a journey back through time to the world of the ancient Maya

Trip Details

5 days / 5 nights

Price

\$1199 USD Contact us for current Cdn prices

2009/10 Departures

This trip runs weekly on Saturdays from November through May.

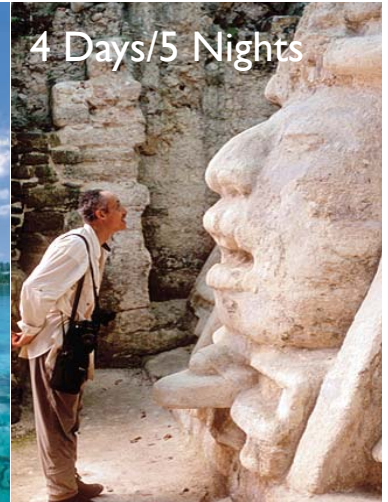
Call 1-800-667-1630 for details.

Activities

- Sea Kayaking
- Snorkeling
- Scuba Diving (optional)
- Mayan Ruins
- Rainforest
- Birding,
- Photography
- Natural History
- Interpretation

Accommodation

- 1 night research facility
- 2 nights Atoll Basecamp
- 2 nights Lodge



4 Days/5 Nights

**The Setting...
 Glovers Atoll**

One of three coral atolls offshore of Belize, Glover's Reef was named after the English pirate John Glover who used this remote offshore ring of islands and coral reefs as a base from which to raid Spanish merchant ships during the 17th century. 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 and to further efforts to protect this extraordinary environment, the atoll was designated as a World Heritage Site, in 1996. We travel and explore this extraordinary area from our fully-equipped basecamp by sea-kayak, 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 and most developed in the Caribbean, and Glover's is the best in Belize!

Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary – Located northwest of Belize City the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary consists of a large network of inland lagoons, wetlands, and waterways. The sanctuary provides both the abundant food sources and the safe resting areas necessary to support a large and diverse population of birds. dry-season. Those visiting in the later months of the dry season (Feb – May) are treated to a concentration of wildlife, which congregate in the park's shrinking lagoons, as freshwater resources across the country dry-up.



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The Mayan Sites...

Lamanai – The ruins of Lamanai lie scattered along the banks of the New River covering an area of 950 acres of tropical rainforest in central Belize. The Mayan name Lamanai, translates into “submerged crocodile”. Due in part to its location straddling a major trade route, Lamanai was one of the longest continuously occupied Mayan cities in Central America—from about 500 BC to 1675 AD.

The first major excavation was undertaken by the Royal Ontario Museum. During a series of field seasons beginning in 1974, they mapped 718 structures stretching out along the shore of the lagoon. Lamanai's importance is reflected in the large, imposing Late Pre-Classic temple-pyramids built over top of earlier temples. On site researchers found buried deep inside a 600 AD temple a well preserved Pre-Classic temple dating back 700 years prior to 100 BC

Altun Ha – Translates into “stone water”, which comes from the ancient Mayan reservoir, or aguada, that Belizeans call “rock stone pond”. Altun Ha was an important Classic Period site situated to take advantage of the trading that occurred between the waters of the Caribbean and the deep interior of the Mayan Civilization. The entire city covered three square miles (5 km²) and the population is estimated to have been 8,000 to 10,000 people at its peak. Within the central portion of the site there are more than 275 structures. Though Altun Ha has become famous for a large jade head, representing the sun god Kinich Ahau, that was discovered in the main temple. This head is the largest Mayan jade artefact ever discovered weighing 10 lbs. It is now the national symbol of Belize and seen on the corner of every Belizean banknote.

Recommended Tour-books:

. 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.



Notes on Ecology...

Inland

We begin our trip, immersed in the rich savannah, grassy lowlands, lagoons and broadleaf rainforests of Central Belize. Within the savannah and lowland habitats of Belize, the dominant plant species is the Caribbean pine, but there also exists an abundance of other species such as grasses, palms, palmettos to cecropias and miconias. Although, this ecosystem is not as diverse vegetation as the broadleaf tropical rainforest, it does possess a unique system that relies on specific ecological influents. Fire is the major ecological influent, which contributes to the continuous dominance of this system. This can be seen through-out the lowland savannah zones as charred stumps and burned bark on many of the trees, which seems like a destructive force to the untrained eye, however, this is an important factor in the regions on-going renewal. The cycle of burns renews growth in the region, and certain species cannot release their seed without fire! The lagoons and riverine environments of the lowlands also harbor an tremendous diversity of plant-life, which ranges from small thin-boled trees, to large kapoks along the floodplain.

While traveling in the Crooked Tree Sanctuary of northern Belize, we have great opportunities to view a diverse array of wildlife. Travelers flock to the region to see the diverse bird life found throughout the savannah and marshlands; over 250 different species have been spotted in this region (approximately 2/3 of Belize's total). During the dry-season, when the birds tend to congregate in shrunken pools and riverbeds, it is not uncommon to see one hundred species or more in a day. Some of the birds seen are: the jabiru stork, the belted kingfisher, the tri-colored heron, boat-billed heron, the snail kite, tiger heron, the osprey, and the black-collared hawk. While traveling along the river or lagoons we are also likely to spot some of Belize's interesting land creatures, such as the Morelet's crocodile, turtles, and iguanas.

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Sea

Belize's Barrier Reef is the largest reef in the northern hemisphere, second largest in the world, extending 185 miles (300 km) along the coastline. Nineteen miles seaward from the eastern border of the Barrier Reef, lies one of Belize's most spectacular atoll – Glover's Reef. These circular shaped reef systems climb from the ocean 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 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.

Typical Daily Itinerary:

Day 0: Arrive at the Belize International Airport where you are 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 forest cabanas we have dinner. *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 and lodging are included.

Accommodations: (Lodge) **Meals:** Dinner is included on this night

Day 1: We depart early in the morning driving along the Hummingbird Route through the Maya Mountains to the Caribbean coast. We then travel by charter boat out past the main Barrier Reef to our private base-camp on Southwest Caye, at Glover's Reef Marine Reserve. We are introduced to our new environment and get settled into our accommodation. Once settled, the guides provide instruction, teaching the fundamentals of sea kayaking, snorkeling and safety 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.

Accommodation: (Basecamp)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 2: Full day of activities, snorkeling, sea kayaking, kayak sailing, fishing, or optional scuba diving (\$50 per dive). After our days activities enjoy the rare beauty and peacefulness of a remote coral reef island under the stars and learn about the cultures of Belize.

Accommodation: (Basecamp)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3: For our last day at Glover's, the choice is yours. We may choose to don mask, snorkel and fins for a last visit to your favorite coral reef, or work the flats with your most productive bonefish fly, before our motor charter comes to pick us up. Once in Dangriga we board our charter flight to connect us with the next leg of the journey. Once airborne we have the Manatee Lagoons over our left shoulder and the Belize Barrier Reef over our right, giving us an impressive view of Belize's coastal topography from the Caribbean sea to the Maya Mountains. We are then picked up and brought to the

What's Included...

All meals (fully catered) at our Southwest Caye base-camp
Unlimited use of our Equipment and facilities
Professional guide and sports instruction services with Full guide services, All accommodations including lodge on 'Day 0'
Glover's Reef Marine Park fees of \$10US per person
Belize 19% hotel and sales tax
Comprehensive pre-trip information package
Financial Support for Conservation and Education programs in Belize
Charter flight from Dangriga to Belize City

What's Not Included...

Alcoholic Beverages
Gratuities
Airport Departure Tax
Extra costs due to late arrivals and other circumstances beyond our control



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lodge where we are staying right within the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary.

Accommodation: (Lodge)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4: A full day of exploration as we travel overland and by river to the Mayan ruins of Lamanai. With the very best Lamanai guides we explore the many temples, plazas, palaces, and museums within the park boundaries. In the afternoon we depart Lamanai by river boat where we have tremendous birding and wildlife opportunities: Iguana, parrots, toucan, aracari and Morelet's crocodile are usually seen as we travel along the New River returning to our lodge along the banks of the Crooked Tree Lagoon.

Accommodation: (Lodge)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5: An early morning coffee and binoculars in hand, we enjoy the waking wilderness and many hundreds of birds feeding along the shores of the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary Lagoons. The protected area was created in 1984 primarily to preserve resident and migratory birds, and consists of a network of inland lagoons, swamps and waterways that shelter one of the world's largest flying birds, the jabiru (jabiru mycteria.). After breakfast we enjoy a morning boat tour in the lagoons and then depart to the Mayan site of Altun Ha. Considered one of the major Mayan ceremonial centres of Belize, Altun Ha also functioned as an important trading centre between the interior and the Caribbean Sea during the classic period (250-900 AD). Within the site, there are more than 275 structures and there are up to 250 to 300 unexcavated mounds. Our trip finishes in the afternoon and we can drop you off directly at the Belize International Airport in time to connect with your flight home, or at the Belize Biltmore Plaza Hotel, on the outskirts of Belize City.

Accommodation: (none)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Important Note: For those who are connecting with their international flights on the last day of the trip it is important that your flight is scheduled to depart after 3pm. If you are planning on staying an extra night in Belize we can make reservations for you at the Biltmore Hotel or add on an extra night at our lodge in the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. Please make sure that you talk with our reservations staff (1 800 667 1630) to coordinate details for the last day of the trip before booking your international flights.

Accommodation...

On 'Day 0', we will be spending 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.

On Day 1 & 2 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 with all linen provided. On the island, we have a fully equipped kitchen, fresh-water collection system for drinking water, fresh-water showers and modern composting toilets. We also have a large dining area and resource library lounge.

On Day 3 & 4 we are staying at Birds Eye View Lodge, situated on the water's edge of the Crooked Tree Lagoons. This comfortable Belizean-style hotel offers private bath and lakeside views. Over top of the hotel there is a deck and bar, which is a perfect place to catch the evening breeze, watch the tropical birds over the wetlands and reminisce over your recent discoveries.

Transportation...

At the start of the trip we pick you up on arrival at the Belize International Airport on Day 0. On the last day of the trip we can drop you off directly at the Belize International Airport (flights departing later than 3pm) or the Biltmore Plaza Hotel. All transportation by land, air and water from Day 0 to Day 5 on the trip is included.



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Website: www.islandexpeditions.com
School Trips: www.educationaltrips.org

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