

PARADISE ISLANDS

A lodge to lodge Sea Kayak and Snorkel Adventure on the Southern Barrier Reef

Trip Details

5 days / 6 nights

Price

\$1689

Trip Begins - Belize City

Trip Ends - Dangriga

2011/2012 Departures

Nov 13, 20, 22, 27

Dec 4, 6, 11, 18, 20, 25, 27

Jan 1, 3, 8, 15, 22, 29

Feb 5, 12, 14, 19, 21, 26

Mar 4, 11, 13, 18, 20, 25, 27

Apr 1, 3, 8, 15, 22, 29

May 6, 13, 20

Activities

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

Accommodations

1 night Forest Cabana
5 nights Island Lodges



The Setting...

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. Along the Barrier Reef are over 225 cayes, ranging from small sand fringed islands perched along the reef's edge to larger islands of partially submerged mangroves.

Historically, ships avoided this area of the Caribbean Sea because of inaccurate charts and the difficulty of navigating the shallow reef-strewn waters. Teeming with brilliantly coloured fish, sea grass beds, and patch reefs, the reef systems have not seen nearly the level of human impact as witnessed in Mexico to the north and Honduras to the south. We travel in the less developed southern regions of Belize's Barrier Reef, which remains a near pristine marine ecosystem and is unparalleled in the Caribbean. It is in this region that we find the best sea kayaking and snorkeling. Our base of operations in the southern coastal community of Dangriga is the ideal launching point for us to explore this spectacular region.



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A Note About the Ecology...

Flora...

The ecology of the Belizean coast is a complex combination of coral reefs, sand flats with extensive turtle grass, and mangrove ranges. The Barrier Reef shelters the Belizean coastline from the rougher open waters of the Caribbean sea. It acts as a huge breakwater and holds in the sand, resulting in beautiful islands forested with coconut palms, sea grape, and coco plum, as well as remarkable protected reef structures. The 'breakwater' action also enables the diverse ecosystems of the mangrove and turtle grass to flourish. These tangled partially submerged 'forests' provide essential feeding and nursing habitat for hundreds of species of fish, shell-fish, reptiles, marine mammals, and birds.

Fauna...

We have plenty of time to snorkel, fish, and enjoy the scenery and marine life of the Caribbean Sea. We explore many different regions of the reef, including the inner and outer walls, patch and fringing reefs, mangrove ranges, and protected lagoons. Our traveling routes often cross those of the fishermen who make their living from the sea and with this interaction we gain good company and an insight into a way of life that is very different from our own.

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

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 Centre, adjacent to the Belize Zoo. We are staying in Forest Cabanas situated in the midst of idyllic tropical pine forest with a network of interpretative trails and wildlife viewing platforms at our doorstep. There is also a great Interpretive Centre, which details the diverse ecology of Belize and is an ideal starting point for the adventure ahead. After checking into our accommodations we enjoy a 'Welcome to Belize Dinner' with our fellow travellers and our Belizean guide team. *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.

Accommodation: Forest Cabana **Meals:** Dinner is included on this night

Day 1: Waking up to the sounds of the tropics is a pure delight with the chatter of parrots and parakeets flying overhead, the fresh morning air scented with tropical blossoms, and the expectation of an exciting adventure filled day ahead. After breakfast we travel the Hummingbird Route through the Maya Mountains to meet up with our motor charter waiting to take us to our first island on the Southern Barrier Reef. We'll introduce you to safety in a tropical marine environment and then begin with teaching the fundamentals of sea kayaking, including safety, group and self rescues, and touring techniques. Enjoy a swim, explore the island shoreline, and then after a tasty Belizean lunch, we begin our journey paddling over top submerged coral reefs, turtle grass beds, and through narrow mangrove channels to reach our first night's accommodations. We'll land our kayaks right in front of our lodge, settle into our accommodations, and then enjoy drinks and dinner.

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

Day 2: Situated right on the Barrier Reef in the heart of the *Southwater Caye Marine Reserve* we are ideally positioned to explore the surrounding reefs and cayes. Starting with a steaming mug of coffee and fresh tropical fruits we enjoy an early morning swim or paddle before breakfast. Our focus for the morning will be snorkeling and kayaking. Con't...



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Day 2...cont: Our first day's snorkeling session begins with a thorough instruction and demonstration (beginner through to advanced skills are taught) at the Tobacco Caye cut and the outer reef walls. In the afternoon we'll paddle to nearby cayes to explore the sheltered lagoons and mangrove channels - returning in the evening to Tobacco Caye.

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

Day 3: Looking south, with our gaze following the line of breaking waves along the Barrier Reef crest, we can see the next island we'll be travelling to today – Southwater Caye. After packing our kayaks with our personal gear bag and wishing fond farewells to our hosts we'll start our day on the water with an introduction to kayak sailing. From here we'll paddle and sail our kayaks along one of the most beautiful sections of the entire reef system. The waters are shallow and clear and we'll see a tremendous variety of marine life, including southern stingrays, eagle rays, grouper, nurse sharks, and more. As we make our way to Southwater Caye, with its coconut palms swaying in the wind, this is a day you'll wish could go on forever. We'll land our kayaks on the beach, check into our accommodations, enjoy an ice cold drink, and explore the island before dinner. Then we can maybe try a little bone fishing action on a fly rod or even a night time snorkel session on Southwater cut.

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

Day 4: We have plenty of time to kayak, snorkel, fish, and enjoy the scenery and marine life of Belize. We explore different regions of the reef including the inner and outer walls, patch and fringing reefs, mangrove ranges, and protected lagoons. For divers we can arrange dives as requested and for those who'd like to try out diving for a first time, we can arrange Discover Scuba courses with prior notice. As we explore by kayak, our routes often cross those of the fishermen who make their living from the sea and with this interaction we gain good company and an insight into a way of life that is very different from our own.

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

Day 5: Our last day on the cayes we will paddle to Billy Hawk Caye (in the Blue Ground Range), a Garifuna fishing camp, for lunch and an afternoon of snorkeling. This evening we celebrate our final night together with a seafood feast and island festivities.

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

Day 6: After an early breakfast our water taxi carries us back to the mainland and the town of Dangriga where the trip finishes. Any extra luggage that you have stored at our Operations Base will be made available to you to repack and taxis can be arranged to your connecting flight to the Belize International Airport or local bus stations to continue exploring Belize on your own.

Accommodation: N/A **Meals:** Breakfast only

Travel note: For those making connections home on this day, international connections departing Belize should be booked for **after** 12pm. In order to connect with the Friday afternoon departures from Belize you will require a short domestic flight from Dangriga to the International Airport at a cost of \$75US per person.

Please visit www.paradiseislands.travel for further trip details and images.



What's Included...

- Comprehensive Pre-Trip Information Package
- All meals, transfers, and accommodations as described in the Itinerary
- Unlimited use of our equipment, including activities and instruction
- Waterproof dry bags
- Accommodation the day before the trip (Day 0)
- Professional guiding services
- Marine Park Fees
- 9% Belize Hotel Tax
- 12.5% Belize Sales Tax

What's Not Included...

- Transfer back to Belize City
- Gratuities
- International Flights
- Airport Departure Tax
- Extra costs due to late arrivals, lost baggage, and circumstances beyond our control.

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Accommodation...

On 'Day 0' we will be spending the night at the Tropical Education Centre in our Forest Cabanas. Our cabanas are situated in a serene tropical pine forest setting. Bathrooms and showers are situated in a separate building in the Forest Cabana complex. The Education Centre harbours Belize's largest collection of tropical animal specimens, a fantastic Interpretative Centre, and has a great network of trails and wildlife viewing platforms perfect for exploring the pine savannah setting.

While out on the cayes we kayak between islands along the Southern Barrier Reef and stay in small Belizean owned lodges. Facilities include running water and fully serviced bathrooms where we stay. We stay a total of 5 nights along the eastern edge of the Barrier Reef. On the final morning after breakfast we take a water taxi back to the mainland in time to make your flight connections home or connect with the next stage of your trip.

NOTE: You will be carrying your personal equipment and clothing in waterproof bags which go into the hatches of each kayak. Island Expeditions will supply each person with several 20 litre waterproof bags for this purpose.

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

The Paradise Islands combines well with an adventure traveling inland. The two day Maya World Extension gives you a wonderful opportunity to extend your vacation. Visit the most interesting ancient Mayan cities of Belize such as Lamanai and Altun Ha. Also included is a interpretive boat tour of the wetlands of the Crooked Tree Bird Sanctuary.

Getting back to Belize City ...

Our North American office can help you make arrangements for your return to Belize City the day after the trip ends unless you have made other arrangements with us. We can book a domestic flight from Dangriga to Belize City or directly to the Int'l Airport. The flight (25 minutes) cost is approximately \$75.00 USD per person or you can travel overland by bus (3-4 hours) for around \$10.00 USD.

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.



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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 over a decade! For more information, please visit: www.educationaltrips.org



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