

**WILD SOUTH**



An Extraordinary River Journey through Belize's most Spectacular Rainforest

**Trip Details**

4 days / 5 nights

**Price**

\$1129

**Trip Begins** - Dangriga

**Trip Ends** - Belize City

**2011/2012 Departures**

Nov 30

Dec 7, 14, 21, 28

Jan 4, 11, 18, 25

Feb 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

Mar 7, 14, 21, 28

Apr 4, 18, 25

**Activities**

Whitewater Paddling on a Rainforest River, Wildlife,

Hiking, Birding,

Photography,

Natural History

Interpretation

**Accommodations**

1 night Jungle Lodge

3 nights River Camping

1 night Hotel



**4 DAYS / 5 NIGHTS**

**No previous paddling experience needed to join the fun**

**The Setting...**

For the adventurer, the Wild South of Belize offers an opportunity to explore one of the last remaining untouched regions of the country. Here the rainforest covers the land and the ancient traditions of the Maya are still strong. We travel through an area of small Mayan villages where traditional Milpa agriculture is the way of life and the modern world is only just beginning to make inroads. The geology is of predominantly limestone karst formations of limestone, with jungle clad hills that rise abruptly from the coastal plain as we enter the southern Maya mountains and the upper Moho River valley. The upper Moho is a unique travertine river created by calcium carbonate minerals depositing out of the river and forming ledges and pools. Not only does this create a stunningly beautiful river setting, the higher alkalinity of the water creates a unique environment where many insects cannot reproduce which creates a very pleasant relatively bug free rainforest environment that is very comfortable to travel.

Where the roads end we continue with inflatable river kayaks to gain access to the most spectacular regions of the country as we travel by river through a region seldom seen by travelers. On the river we are using two person inflatable kayaks which offer superior stability, ease of handling, and are a great way to explore this pristine rainforest. Our adventure combines an exciting river journey with a rich cultural experience. We travel into the heartland of the Maya people with Ketchi and Mopan Mayan Guides where we have a rare opportunity to experience their contemporary village life.



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## A Note about the Ecology...

### Flora...

We begin our trip into the inland of Southern Belize by immersing ourselves in the magical world of the tropical rainforest. Broadleaf rainforest covers approximately 60% of Belize's wooded area. The year-round growing season, plentiful precipitation during the rainy season (May- November), and millennia of evolution has yielded this area with a complex and tremendous diversity of plant life. Each plant fulfills its own ecological niche as the continuous recycling of the decayed plant matter fuels new growth. With this rich nutrient cycle a diverse range of plant life, from the huge buttressed Ceiba trees to the smallest of fungi thrives. High above the forest floor is the enchanting world of the broad-leaved canopy. The canopy may tower 100 ft or more, with massive hardwoods like Santa Maria, Mahogany and Sapodilla trees forming a broad canopy, and in turn supporting many species of Epiphytes (air plants). This habitat provides for a unique community of wildlife and many species will spend most of their life inhabiting the roof of the rainforest.

### Fauna...

In the rainforests of Belize we have great opportunities to view wildlife. Hiking or paddling we see iguanas resting in the branches of fig trees or we may hear the grunts and snuffling as a herd of peccary (wild pigs) passes close by. Large tropical birds are frequently sighted. We see toucans with their oversized bills flying ungainly from one fruiting tree to the next. High overhead loud squawking alerts us to the presence of scarlet macaw. Once in view, the size of the bird and the splendor of their red and blue plumage is unmistakable. There is also a multitude of falcons, hawks, and vultures scavenging and hunting from the sun bright upper canopy down to the mottled light of the forest floor. Also found in the southern Belizean rainforest are a number of often bizarre mammals. The largest of these being Belize's national animal, the Baird's tapir - locally known as the mountain cow. It has a large hippopotamus like body and a long snout, much like the fabled aardvark. The tapir, along with the white-lipped and collared peccary and the jaguar, are some of the larger mammals that inhabit the river valleys and forests where we travel.



### 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

### Thinking About Traveling Independently, Before or After Your Trip?

With 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.

## Typical Daily Itinerary:

**Day 0:** This is our arrival day where you will meet your group. Our meeting point is 3 pm in Dangriga (we can help coordinate transportation to Dangriga for you from any point in Belize). After meeting the group we travel to our Jungle Lodge in the far south of Belize. The Lodge at Big Falls is situated on the banks of the Rio Grande river in Belize's southern Toledo District, a region of isolated villages lying amongst an unspoiled tropical wilderness. Our location is superb. The lodge property is located on a meander of the river with almost a mile of river frontage. There are views towards the Maya Mountains to the north west while the south eastern bank faces the small village of Big Falls.

**Accommodation:** Lodge at Big Falls ([www.thelodgeatbigfalls.com](http://www.thelodgeatbigfalls.com)) **Meals:** Dinner

**Day 1:** Rise early in the morning to enjoy the beauty of the setting and enjoy a delicious breakfast. In the afternoon we drive further south from Big Falls to our put-in point on the Moho river, stopping for lunch at the traditional Maya village of Santa Theresa. Once on the river, our guides provide a brief boat and river orientation and we take as much time as we need to learn and practice our new boat-handling skills, enabling us to safely navigate the rapids and pour-overs. We then begin our journey along one of Belize's most beautiful rivers through some pristine rainforest to our first river camp.

**Accommodation:** Jungle River Camping, **Meals:** B, L, D

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**Day 2,3:** For these next days we break contact completely with the outside world and become a part of the mist-shrouded rainforest as we follow the Moho River through canyons and lush rainforest. Each bend reveals the dynamic nature of the river - from calm meandering water that reflects the intense green of the jungle to stretches of rapids, pour-overs, and spectacular waterfalls as the river descends from the Maya Mountains to the sea. Depending on water levels, some days we may reach our bush-camp by mid-afternoon and switch to land based activities. Hiking through the forest, birding, plant and animal identification, and photography are some of the many activities we engage in. During the trip with our Mayan guides and North American leaders, we emphasize understanding the ecology of the rainforest, learning about the habits of the wildlife, and gaining an appreciation for the rich Mayan folklore which adds so much to our experience in the jungle.

**Accommodation:** Jungle River Camping,                   **Meals:** B, L, D



**Day 4:** As we continue our journey this day the nature of the river changes. We leave the Maya mountains and enter the coastal plains of Belize as the river begins to meander, with quiet pools interspersed by gentle current. Here it is not uncommon to see a Mayan family along the river banks or paddling dugout canoes in the large river pools. Paddling downstream we arrive to our river pull out in the afternoon where we are met by IEC staff. We have a final lunch in the Mayan village of Jordan, followed by a transfer back to Dangriga. Here we board a domestic flight to the Belize Municipal Airport, then proceed on to our accommodations to enjoy a well deserved hot shower.

**Accommodation:** Biltmore Plaza Hotel                   **Meals:** B, L

**Note:** No river experience is required to participate on this trip. Your guides will provide thorough instruction on river travel and boat handling skills at the beginning of the trip. The Wild South takes place in a remote rainforest river valley in southern Belize and involves navigating rapids and pour-overs as we descend the Moho River. Weather conditions can greatly affect water levels and may increase the level of difficulty.



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## Accommodation...

On 'Day 0': we will be staying at The Lodge at Big Falls in the southern Toledo district. Our accommodation beside the banks of the Rio Grande river are spacious cottage-style cabanas within a rich tropical setting. The cabana roofs are traditionally thatched with bay-leaf palm. The floors are beautifully tiled and each fully-screened room has a ceiling fan and full en-suite bathroom providing hot and cold water. The carefully landscaped surroundings have been designed to attract birds and butterflies close to the cottages where guests can comfortably enjoy the view from their own private verandah.

On Days 1,2,3: we are camping along the riverbanks of the Moho River in Southern Belize. We practice minimum impact camping to ensure that the pristine state of the wilderness remains for future visitors. We will be keeping our weight and volume to a minimum, carrying our gear in the kayaks from camp to camp. We stay in comfortable and roomy MSR Tents, which provide ample room for two people and gear. All camping gear is provided including tents and sleeping pads (participants need to bring their own light sleeping bag or cotton sheet and fleece blanket). As we travel down the river we use organized camping areas to minimize our impact on the forest floor but give ourselves the flexibility to adjust our schedule for different conditions.

On Day 4: we fly on a chartered flight to Belize City and spend the last night at the Biltmore Hotel. This is a clean and comfortable hotel with a lovely inner courtyard and swimming pool outside the city center and within 20 minutes of the International Airport.

## What's Included...

- Comprehensive Pre-Trip Information Package
- All meals, accommodations, transfers described in the tour
- Unlimited use of our equipment
- Use of waterproof dry bags and thermarests during river trip
- Accommodation on the day before the trip ('Day 0') and the final night
- Professional Guiding Services
- Domestic flight DGA to TZA
- 12.5% Belize Sales Tax
- 9% Hotel Tax

## What's Not Included...

- Gratuities
- International Flights
- Extra costs due to late arrivals, lost baggage, and circumstances beyond our control

## Getting back to Belize City ...

On the Wild South, IEC provides transportation back to Belize City at the end of the tour. Accommodation is at the Belize Biltmore Hotel. Transportation to the airport the next day is by Taxi and is not included.



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