

Belize

HISTORY

An adventurer's paradise, Belize is an English-speaking country on the Caribbean coast of Central America, bordered on the north by Mexico, and the west and south by Guatemala.

Once part of the Mayan, Spanish, and British Empires, Belize gained its independence in 1981. The country is bordered to the south and west by Guatemala, to the north by Mexico, and to the east by the Caribbean Sea. The island actually sits under sea level, and most of the country is covered with mangrove plants. With 8,867 square miles and approximately 300,000 citizens, Belize's population density is the lowest in the Central American region.

With the longest Barrier Reef in the Western Hemisphere and three coral atolls, visitors can enjoy a wide array of water activities. The Belize Barrier Reef parallels the mainland for 185 miles, areas of which have been declared World Heritage Sites. The Belize ecosystem is home to more than 400 species of fish, 540 species of exquisite birds, a broad range of mammals and reptiles, and some 70 different types of coral. 40% of the country has been protected as national parks and reserves, including the world's only Jaguar Preserve. Tropical forests rich with wildlife allow for a wide variety of inland activities. The area known today as Belize is believed to have been the heart of the Maya civilization from about 250 to 900AD. Belize possesses the greatest concentration of Mayan sites in the entire region.

Traveling throughout this enchanting country, visitors will become aware that with all of the scenic beauty, the amazing wildlife and the incredible land and sea adventure opportunities, the most valuable of all the national treasures is the Belizean people. There is an enormous variety of cultures and traditions, and visitors can experience this unique mix that is truly Belizean. Developed originally in the 17th century, today Belize represents the heart of Creole culture. Here a *mélange* of cultures mix in the city. Mestizo, Creole, and Garifuan, blend Latin, Lebanese, Hindu, Chinese, and Far East Indian.

FAST FACTS

Belize

CAPITAL

Belmopan, a small city just less than 2.5 sq. miles in total, is the capital of Belize.

LOCATION

Belize is an independent state within the Commonwealth of Nations, Central America, on the Caribbean Sea. It is surrounded by Mexico in the north, Guatemala on the south and west and by the Caribbean on the east.

SIZE

Belize extends 8,867 square miles.

POPULATION

The total population is 266,440.

LANGUAGE

English is the official language of the country.

CURRENCY

The official currency of Belize is the Belizean dollar. One United States dollar is equivalent to two Belize dollars.

TIME ZONE

Belize is on Central Standard Time. The ship may not always follow local time. Please adhere to the ship's time while in port

TOURIST INFORMATION

The Belize Tourism Board is located in the Central Bank Building on Gabourel Lane and the Fort Street Tourism Village.

DOCKING/TENDERING

Belize is a tender port.

SHORE EXCURSIONS

Please check your tour ticket for the correct meeting time and location for your tour. Your cruise line representative team will direct you.

TRANSPORTATION

Taxis are available at the Fort Street Tourism Village. Drivers speak English. The taxis are not metered, so be sure to set price before embarking.

HOW TO GET TO TOWN

The Tourism Village is located in downtown Belize City.

SHOPPING

You can find souvenirs, arts & crafts, jewelry, and clothing all at the Fort Street Tourism Village.

BANK HOURS

Banks are open for business transactions from 8:00 am to 1:30 pm from Monday through Thursday. On Friday banks close at 4:30 pm. Some banks are opened on Saturday morning.

POST OFFICE HOURS

Post Office is open Monday to Friday 8:00 am to noon then 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

PHONE LOCATIONS

Phones are located in the Fort Street Tourism Village close to the entrance/exit.

EMERGENCY

In case of an emergency dial 911 for the police or 90 for the fire station and/or ambulance.