

Hopewood Holistic Health's *Holistic Journeys*; Destination BELIZE



COMMON QUESTIONS

You Betta Belize It!



Belizean Identification. Previously called British Honduras, the country now known as Belize derives its name from one of two historical sources: Maya root words or the surname of the Scottish buccaneer Peter Wallace, who maintained a camp near present-day Belize City in the seventeenth century. Belizeans affectionately refer to their country as "the Jewel."

The formation of a consciousness of a national culture coincided with the growth of the nationalist movement in the 1950s toward independence. It was a phenomenon that occurred simultaneously among neighboring British West Indian colonies.



Ethnic and geographic identification coincides with the areas where ethnic groups settled. In the north and west there are the mestizos, people formed by the union of Spaniards and Maya. In the central part, there are the Creoles, formed by the intermarriage of the British and their African slaves. In the south, there are the Garifuna, also called Black Caribs, along the coast and the Maya farther inland.

The building of the capital city, Belmopan, in the late 1960s was a crowning achievement of the nationalist movement, radically transforming the settlement pattern. The immediate reason was to rebuild after the massive destruction of the old capital, Belize City, by a hurricane in 1961; another reason was to attract the population into the hinterland to engage in agriculture, which the government was promoting to replace timber, the hallmark of the colonial economy. The government was attempting to build a national culture emerging from colonialism with a new settlement pattern and a new economy.

Location and Geography Belize is at the southern end of the Yucatan peninsula, facing the Caribbean Sea. It covers 8,866 square miles (23,000 square kilometers) and has the second largest barrier reef in the world, which shelters scores of cays.



Demography Immigration has been a major demographic factor. The latest massive inflow came from Latinos in the neighboring countries fleeing the civil unrest of the 1980s. Together with the long-resident Spanish-speaking group, they have become the largest ethnic group, according to the census of 1991. This group numbered 81,275, or 44 percent, of the national population of 189,392. The other main groups are the Creoles, 55,386 (30 percent); Maya, 20,447 (11 percent); and Garifuna, 12,343 (7 percent). While immigration has built the population, emigration has introduced a transnational fluidity between Belize and the United States. Since the 1960s thousands have left to settle in American cities, although many of those people retain family ties in Belize.

Linguistic Affiliation The different groups speak their own languages, but the language spoken across ethnic lines is a form of pidgin English called Creole. There is much bilingualism and multilingualism. English is the official language and is taught in all primary schools; however, its use is limited to official discourse and it appears more often in the written form than in the spoken. As you walk about Belize, listen to the hummm of dialects in Spanish, Creole, Garifuna and Mayan spoken throughout the country.

Symbolism The proponents of the nationalist movement introduced symbols as essential parts of the national culture they were crafting in the 1960s and 1970s. Prominent among them were the national bird, the toucan; flower, black orchid; tree, mahogany; and animal, tapir. In official discourse there was increasing use of the term "fatherland" to galvanize public sentiment away from a distant colonial power to a new nation state rooted in the cultural history of the Maya, the aboriginal settlers of the sub-region.



Read more: <http://www.everyculture.com/A-Bo/Belize.html#ixzz4T0gDbVvo>

What language is spoken in Belize?

What are the business hours?

Banks:

Monday - Thursday 8 am - 1 pm

Friday - 8 am - 4:30 pm

**Note that hours vary by bank and destination.

Commerce & Industry:

Most business open Monday - Friday 8:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M - 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. Some businesses are open on Saturdays & Sundays.

What are the public and bank holidays?

New Years Day - January 1

Baron Bliss Day- March 9

Good Friday

Holy Saturday

Easter Monday

Labour Day-May 1

Commonwealth Day- May 24

St. George's Caye Day- September 10

Independence Day- September 21

Columbus Day- October 12

Garifuna Settlement Day- November 19

Christmas Day- December 25

Boxing Day- December 26

What currency is used in Belize and what is it worth? The Belize Dollar (BZ\$) has a fixed rate of exchange of BZ \$2 to US \$1. Most hotels, resorts, restaurants, and tour operators will accept U.S. currency, traveler's checks (not as popular as in the past, may have to go to a bank to get them cashed) or credit cards. Debit cards are in wide use, preferably Visa and Mastercard. When using your credit cards in Belize, most establishments will add a 5% service charge to your bill. Always make sure that you understand which dollar rate is being quoted. Is it Belize Dollars or U.S. Dollars?

Is electricity 110 or 220 volts? Although most of the electricity is provided by Diesel/Generator Sets, the power is stable at 110 Volts A.C., which is the same voltage as in the United States.

What types of health services are available? There is a well staffed hospital and several private doctors in Belize City. Also the district towns and larger villages have hospitals or clinics. **MAKE SURE YOU CHECK WITH YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY AND CONFIRM WHAT COVERAGE YOU HAVE OUT OF THE COUNTRY!** We recommend the following Travel and International Health coverage- <http://www.travelguard.com>

Can I drink the water? Potable water is available in most areas of Belize, but it is advisable to ask, and if in doubt, drink boiled or bottled water. Better yet, bring a water filter to filter tap water and eliminate the excessive and hazardous use of plastic!

Are there any diseases I should be concerned about? Pan Global pests and diseases are now a factor in any travel and at home. The following diseases are found in part of Belize, most of Central America and Mexico and in southern and eastern seaboard states in the US: The best protection is common sense, being proactive, being in good health and asking for help when an issue arises. Zika virus, Dengue, Chikungunya, Malaria, Traveler's Diarrhea.

There is no vaccine or medicine for Zika, Dengue or Chikungunya. You can protect yourself by preventing mosquito bites for all mosquito borne diseases by following suggestions:

- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use EPA-registered insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE, also called para-menthane-diol [PMD]), IR3535, or 2-undecanone (methyl nonyl ketone). Always use as directed.
- Pregnant and breastfeeding women can use all EPA-registered insect repellents, including DEET, according to the product label.
- Most repellents, including DEET, can be used on children older than 2 months. (OLE should not be used on children younger than 3 years.)
- Use permethrin-treated clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents). You can buy pre-treated clothing and gear or treat them yourself.
- Stay in places with air conditioning and window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net if air conditioned or screened rooms are not available or if sleeping outdoors.
- Mosquito netting can be used to cover babies younger than 2 months old in carriers, strollers, or cribs to protect them from mosquito bites. No inoculations are required for entry, but anti-malaria tablets are recommended by some for extended stays in the jungle. I recommend the use of Sweet Annie (*Aritimisa annua*) three tablets or caps daily for three weeks prior to the trip and throughout the experience. See Antibiotic Alternatives by Steven Bhurner ISBN or check out James Duke's Herbal Pharmacopia on the net. Great info! I would recommend an active tetanus. Do carry a complete first aid kit, with all prescriptions and a

copy of any prescriptions with you. I would include a Z pack of antibiotics for emergencies but can recommend many herbal alternatives to sleep aids, antiseptics, muscle relaxers and bug repellent.

What will it cost to send a letter home? (Estimates)

To the USA: Letters - 1st 10 grams US \$0.30 Postcards - US \$0.15
Each additional 10 grams is US \$0.25

To Europe: Letters - 1st 10 grams US \$0.40 Postcards - US\$0.20
Each additional 10 grams US \$0.30

Are there any taxes or services charges I should know about?

Hotel Room Tax 9% as of April 1, 2005
Service Charge Optional and varies by proper

Departure Fees International Passengers by Air

Philip Goldson International Airport

Passenger Service Fee \$15.00
Airport Development Fee \$15.00
Conservation Fee \$3.75
Security Fee \$1.25
Total Airport Departure Fees: US \$35.00

Payable ONLY in US currency.

- All fees apply to non-Belizean citizens and non-Belizean permanent residents
- These fees are sometimes included in the cost of your airfare. Confirm with your ticket agent.

International Passengers by Land

Santa Elena: Northern border with Mexico

Benque Viejo del Carmen: Western adjacency zone with Guatemala

Border Processing Fee \$15.00
Conservation Fee \$3.75
Total Border Departure Fees: US \$18.75 or BZ \$37.50

Payable in US or Belize currency.

All fees apply to non-Belizean citizens

- Exemptions: children under 12; permanent residents of Belize; visitors from border towns for first 24 hours.

International Passengers by Sea

Departure by boat from Punta Gorda, Dangriga or San Pedro

Conservation Fee \$3.75
Total Sea Departure Fees: US \$3.75 or BZ \$7.50

Payable in US or Belize currency.

Domestic Air Passengers

International Airport to Domestic Airport

Security Fee \$0.75

Total Fee for Domestic Air Passengers: US \$0.75 or BZ \$1.50

Are taxis available? Taxis are available in towns and resort areas, and they are easily recognized by their green license plates. Unless specific arrangements are made prior to your arrival at the Phillip Goldson International Airport (PGIA), taxis are available at the entrance to the main terminal. Although there are no meters on the taxis, the drivers do charge somewhat standard fares, but it is always important to understand what your fare will be, prior to hiring a taxi. (\$25.00 is the standard taxi fare from the airport to Belize City.

How is the telephone service in Belize? Belize Telecommunications Limited provides telecommunication between Belize and the United States and Canada. Service is also available for communication with other countries. The BTL main offices (www.btl.net) are located at the corner of Albert and Church Streets in Belize City at telephone number 227-7085 and the corner of Princess Margaret Drive and St. Thomas Street at telephone number 223-2868. Phone cards are available at numerous locations. BTL is also the contact for obtaining an Internet connection in Belize. Cell phones are standard in Belize. You can bring a cell phone and get it easily unlocked for use or rent one at a nominal fee near the airport.

What time zone is Belize in? Time observed year round is GMT-6, which is the same as United States Central Standard Time. Daylight Savings Time is not observed in Belize.

Are there any entry requirements to visit Belize? With the exception of cruise ship passengers, all visitors to Belize must present a valid passport before entering the country. Please note that driver's licenses and birth certificates are not approved travel documents and cannot be used to enter the country. Passports must be valid up until time of departure.

In cases where a visitor remains in the country for over 30 days, an extension of entry must be requested. Extensions are available for the cost of:

Up to 6 months for US \$25

After 6 months US \$50 per month.

How long can I stay? Visitors are permitted to stay in Belize for a period not to exceed thirty (30) days. The following category of persons may be granted by the Immigration Department extensions of up to three (3) months at a time. These three months would be after the thirty-day period given by the Immigration Officer at the port of entry.

1. Persons living in remote areas away from the Immigration Office
2. Potential Investors
3. Business persons

The above is on the strict understanding that the applicant presents himself /herself in person and satisfies the requirement that the necessary funds (US \$50.00 per person per day) are available for the duration of the period requested extension. Applicant must also have a ticket to his/her onward destination. Extensions are granted at a cost of US \$50.00 per month.

To obtain a visitor's extension, an application must be submitted to any of the district office or to the:

**Belize Immigration and Nationality Department
Belmopan, Cayo District
Belize, Central America
Telephone 011-501-822-2423
Fax: 011-501-822-2662**

Since visa requirements are subject to change, please contact the Belize Consuls and Embassies for up-to-date information. OR Contact:

**The Belize Embassy
2535 Massachusetts Avenue Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20008
USA
Telephone: (202) 332-9636
Fax: (202) 332-6741**

**Can I use my credit card to get cash advances? I would suggest a debit card.
BANKING SERVICES PROVIDED**

ALLIANCE BANK

The Alliance Bank has 4 locations countrywide with a total of 4 ATMs.

Opening Hours:

Belize City Monday - Friday: 8:00 am - 4:00 pm

Independence Tuesday - Friday: 8:00 am - 2:00 pm

Pomona Tuesday - Friday: 9:00 am - 2:00 pm

San Pedro Monday - Friday: 8:00 am - 3:00 pm

- ATM Information: Accepts only Alliance Bank cards.
- Other Information: The Alliance Bank provides BTM cards which function like debit cards. They can be purchased in any amount and then used at the ATM machines.

ATLANTIC BANK

The Atlantic Bank has 10 locations countrywide, with a total of 7 ATMs.

Opening Hours:

Belize City Monday, Tuesday & Thursday: 8:00 am - 3:00 pm

Tuesday - Friday: 8:00 am - 2:00 pm Tuesday - Friday:

9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Countrywide Branches Monday - Friday: 8:00 am – 2:00 pm

- ATM Information: No international credit cards accepted.
- Traveler's Checks: No service charge for cashing traveler's check.
- Other Information: Cash advance services are provided during working hours. There is also a service charge on cash advances. For checks over \$250.00 the customer needs a proof of purchase and an ID.

BELIZE BANK

Belize Bank has 12 locations countrywide with a total of 15 ATMs.

Opening Hours: Monday - Thursday: 8:00 am - 3:00 pm

Friday: 8:00 am - 4:30 pm

Corozal Free Zone, San Ignacio & the International Airport

Saturday: 9:00 am - 12 noon

Big Creek opens only on Friday from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

- ATM Information: There are local and international. The following credit cards accepted: Visa, Master Cards, Cirrus, Plus and Visa Electron.
- Travelers Checks: Service charge of US\$1.00 is charge for US \$100.00 and less.

FIRST CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL BANK

The First Caribbean International Bank has 4 locations countrywide, with a total of 4 ATMs. Opening Hours: Monday - Thursday: 8:00 am - 2:30 pm

Friday: 8:00 am - 4:30 pm

- ATM Information: The only credit card accepted is VISA with logo PLUS.
- Travelers Checks: No services charge on cashing checks.

SCOTIA BANK

Scotia Bank has 9 locations countrywide with a total of 11 ATMs.

Opening Hours: Monday - Thursday: 8:30 am - 2:30 pm

Friday: 8:30 am - 4:00 pm

Saturday: 9:00 am - 12 noon

- ATM Information: The ATM's only accept local Scotia Bank cards. They are not international and they do not accept credit cards.
- Travelers Checks: Service charges for cashing checks are the following: \$1 + sales tax per checks under US/CDN \$100; \$2 + sales taxes per Sterling travelers checks.
- Cash Advances: Service provided during normal business hours

Will my cell phone work in Belize? In order to have mobile cellular service in Belize, an unlocked GSM (Global System Mobile Communication) 1900 MHz cellular phone is required. Phones may be activated at any BTL office or Digicell distributor in the country. Prepaid service works using phone cards that can be bought at various stores around the country. Cellular phones can also be rented for US \$5 a day from the Belize Telecommunications (BTL) office at the Phillip Goldson International Airport (PGIA). A deposit of US \$150 is required.

Contact Info for Belize:

For any emergencies involving U.S. citizens, please contact the American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit in the U.S. Embassy at ACSBelize@state.gov or by calling 501-822-4011.

For further information: See the State Department's travel website for the Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Belize Country Specific Information. Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.

Contact the **U.S. Embassy in Belize, located at 4 Flora Park Road, Belmopan at +501-822-4011, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. After-hours emergency number for U.S. citizens is +501-610-5030.**

Call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/belize> *The Healthy Travelers packing list on this page is particularly good.*

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/1955.htm>

https://belize.usembassy.gov/messages_for_citizens.html

<https://step.state.gov/step/>

<https://www.slickrock.com/belize.html>

<https://belizephotos.wordpress.com/category/culture/>

<http://internationalliving.com/Belize>

<http://www.adventure-life.com/belize/articles/history-and-culture-of-belize>

Other Travel Insurance Options to Research

Travelex

Phone: (800) 228-9792

www.travelex-insurance.com and

<http://www.travelguard.com>