

~ Natural Belize ~

The Heart of the Jaguar Habitat

Belize is a British Commonwealth nation nestled on the southern end of the Yucatan Peninsula. This small Central American country (about the size of Massachusetts), once the heart of the Mayan Civilization, is endowed with remarkable natural and cultural assets. Belize harbors tropical rainforest, over 200 islands, coral reefs, Mayan ruins, and friendly English-speaking people who are glad to share their culture. Belize has become an internationally recognized leader in preservation and conservation. Over a quarter of the country is set aside in national parks, reserves and other protected areas. You can walk the paths of Mayans, whose civilization dates back to 1500 B.C., and ponder the mysteries of their demise. Paddle a canoe into a Mayan ceremonial cave and see artifacts of their civilization. Walk with us in the Cockscomb Jaguar Preserve, where you can see a stunning array of tropical plants and animals— perhaps the tracks of a jaguar. You can kayak down a river lined with huge ficus and other trees, home to green iguanas and myriad birds and other wildlife. Top your Belize experience off with a trip to the largest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere. There you can sea kayak, snorkel, and scuba dive on the coral reef. Belize beckons those who seek life-enriching experiences. Join us and enjoy the beauty, diversity and adventure in this alluring land at a leisurely pace



Highlights:

- Visit one of the most beautiful coastal landscapes in the Yucatan.
- Work with the park's wildlife & ecology researchers as they conduct their field studies.
- Days will be spent hiking, kayaking & canoeing, studying tracks and signs of the island wildlife and learning the unique ecology of the area.
- Meet with world renown jaguar researchers from the Wildlife Conservation Society to visit and learn about the planet's only jaguar preserve.

Dates: December 05 - 14, 2008



Environmental Adventure Company

www.eactours.com

1-888-422-5660

Daily Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Belize City and transfer independently to the Radisson Fort George. The hotel is conveniently located near the National Handicraft Center, the marina and many great restaurants. Overnight: Radisson Fort George

<http://www.radisson.com/belizecitybz>

Days 2 & 3: You will meet your fellow adventure travelers at a leisurely welcome breakfast and orientation in the Radisson restaurant at 8:00 AM. Then we'll travel by water taxi to Caye Caulker where we'll spend two days enjoying the beach and coral reef. Caye Caulker offers us sandy, palm-lined beaches and opportunities to snorkel among nurse sharks, rays, snappers, and other coral reef denizens. Other options include exploring the reef in sea kayaks, diving (including night dives), wind-surfing, sailing, birding and nature walks. Overnight: Seaside Cabanas

<http://www.seasidecabanas.com/>

Day 4: An early morning bird-sighting walk is optional. After breakfast we'll travel to the Cayo District, stopping along the way to visit the famous and unusual Belize Zoo, where many of Belize's native fauna can be seen in natural habitat. Carefully hand-painted signs describe the animals in first "person." The white-lipped peccary sign exclaims: "We are the waries, and we like the way we smell." After the zoo we'll drive down the beautiful Hummingbird Highway, stopping at St Herman's Blue Hole National Park on our way to Caves Branch. At this rain forest resort we'll encounter the lush plant and animal life of the Belize jungle; the mysticism of lost Maya ruins; the rugged beauty of subterranean caves and caverns; and the majesty of the Caves Branch River. Overnight: Caves Branch Cabanas

<http://www.cavesbranch.com/lodging/index.html>

Days 5: An early morning bird walk is optional. After breakfast several options are available, including caving tours, river and cave tubing, nature walks, mountain biking, gliding through the canopy on a zip line, or relaxing in a hammock. During the evening, night walks through the rain forest are available. Overnight: Caves Branch Cabanas

<http://www.cavesbranch.com/lodging/index.html>

Day 6: Our excursion will be to the Cockscomb Basin Jaguar Sanctuary, where a variety of trails will introduce us to the rich bird life and tropical rain forest. This famous jaguar preserve is the largest in Central America. Joined by a jaguar researcher, you'll learn about the work being done to protect this magnificent species. We may even find tracks along the stream banks as we explore this fascinating area. After dark we'll take a night walk and perhaps see kinkajous, foxes, tamanduas, paraques, etc. Overnight: Cockscomb.

Day 7: Today we'll travel to the charming village of Placencia, where you can snorkel, beach comb, scuba dive, sea kayak, fish, or just relax among coconut palms. Later, we will take a leisurely boat ride up the Monkey River and also visit Paynes Creek National Park. Commonly seen are manatees, a variety of birds, crocodiles, howler monkeys, and an array of tropical rainforest vegetation. We will spend most of the day viewing wildlife, their signs and the incredible population of birds. Overnight: Inn at Robert's Grove

<http://www.robertsgrove.com/html/accommodations.html>

Day 8: We leave for Chaa Creek, a private 365-acre nature reserve set along the banks of the Macal River in the foothills of the Maya Mountains. Options include: exploring, kayaking in river, birding, horseback riding, relaxing. We can visit the Natural History Centre, Butterfly Farm, and Rainforest Medicine Trail. Later, we will travel to Caracol in Mountain Pine Ridge. Birding along way is can be exceptional. Forest surrounding Caracol is fascinating. Caracol, the most extensive Maya site known in Belize, covers 30-square miles of thick, high-canopy jungle, and includes five plazas, an astronomic observatory and over 35,000 buildings

which have been identified. The loftiest among them is a massive pyramid (Caana) that is capped by three temples and rises over 140 feet above the jungle floor. On return trip to Chaa Creek, stop at Rio On pools, where you can cool off by swimming in the cool pools or by sitting in your own natural Jacuzzi. You can also slide down a natural water slide or get a hydro-massage under a waterfall. Overnight: Chaa Creek Lodge. <http://www.chaacreek.com/>

Day 9: This day provides an opportunity to relax, explore the natural surroundings of the rainforest that surrounds Chaa Creek, or participate in one of the following activities:

> Explore Actun Tunich Muknal "Cave of the Stone Sepulcher", a sacred place to the prehistoric Maya of Belize. The cave system consists of a series of chambers, ending in a 300 by 50 meter Cathedral where sacrificial ceremonies once took place. Here you will be exposed to the actual remains of individuals sacrificed to the gods of the underworld.

> Canoe from Chaa Creek to San Ignacio on the Macal River. You'll float down the Macal through rainforest, farmlands, and into San Ignacio. You may spot a green iguana before it leaps off an overhanging limb to escape into the river. You may see wood rails, toucans, kingfishers, and other Belizean birds.

> Take a two- to three-hour horseback ride along the forest trails.

> Hike to Vaca Falls and enjoy cascading waterfalls, deep pools, and huge granite rocks that are perfect for sunbathing. When you're ready to return to the lodge, hop on your big ski tube and float down the Macal River to the river camp. Then take a 15-minute walk back to the lodge. <http://www.chaacreek.com/>

Day 10: Travel to the Phillip Goldman Airport near Belize City for departure home or to your next destination.