



SNORKELING IN BELIZE BARRIER REEF

BELIZE

Study Abroad: Marine Science

7 DAYS | Choose your dates

About this trip

South Water Caye Marine Reserve is the largest marine reserve in Belize and is an outstanding example of a barrier reef ecosystem. Considered to have one of the highest levels of marine biodiversity in the Western Hemisphere, the reserve has been designated a region of high ecological importance and is part of Belize's UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its vibrant corals, extensive spur-and-groove reef formations, mangrove ecosystems, and clear waters are home to an amazing array of endemic, colorful, and rare marine species, providing an exceptional underwater classroom for a marine science course.

Your students will...

- Study coral reefs, mangrove ecosystems, and other marine life on the island of Tobacco Caye.
- Experience the marine world after dark while snorkeling in a lagoon to observe the phosphorescent dinoflagellates.
- Take snorkeling excursions over several days to build on new knowledge and explore different concepts.
- Visit the Smithsonian Institute Research Station on Carrie Bow Caye to learn more about the laboratory facilities and research being conducted there.
- Explore South Water Caye fore reef, Man O' War Caye Bird Sanctuary, and Glover's Reef Atoll.

Educational Connections



Earth Science



Environmental
Studies



Citizen
Science



Marine
Science

What's included?

- Bilingual local guide
- Driver
- Accommodations
- Activities
- Private transportation
- Meals
- Beverages with meals
- Carbon offsetting

Itinerary

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

DAY 1 - TOBACCO CAYE

Upon arrival at the international airport in Belize City, transfer to Belize Municipal Airport for a short flight to Dangriga. A representative will be waiting to escort your group to the Riverside Cafe in Dangriga. Take advantage of this opportunity to purchase supplies in the shops and produce market. The stay on Tobacco Caye includes meals, but you can purchase snacks here to bring with you. (There is also a small snack shop on Tobacco Caye.) Next, board the boats and begin the journey out of the mouth of the Stann Creek River and across 12 miles of turquoise lagoon. In approximately 35 minutes, arrive at your base for marine exploration, situated in the middle of some of the world's richest biodiversity. The Belize Barrier Reef wraps around Tobacco Caye, providing safe and convenient access from shore. After lunch receive an orientation to the marine station, a snorkel gear fitting, and a briefing on how to effectively use equipment and interact with the coral reef. Begin the first snorkeling experience on the reef. Later enjoy some beach volleyball and then dinner. Tonight the first classroom session is an introduction to natural resource management in Belize and the South Water Caye Marine Reserve marine protected area, as well as an introduction to the waterproof fish ID cards that can be used during snorkeling if there is interest. Please note the sites and order of visits are weather dependent and will vary according to conditions during your stay. Accommodations at Tobacco Caye are rustic, basic dorm facilities with shared bathrooms and cold-water showers. *Overnight at Tobacco Caye Lodge dorms. (D)*

DAY 2 - TOBACCO CAYE

Spend a full day exploring various sites. Start with a visit to Man O' War Caye, one of 11 nesting sites in the Caribbean for the Magnificent Frigatebird. Also snorkel amid the mangroves in Tobacco Range Atoll, where you may be able to see manatees, and on Carrie Bow Patch Reef, a shallow patch where all the diversity of the Belizean waters is on bountiful display. Have lunch on South Water Caye, where seahorses are often found swimming near the docks, and enjoy some free time in the crystal-clear water. Visit the Smithsonian Institute Research Station on Carrie Bow Caye; if there are researchers, chat with them about their work. Continue snorkeling nearby sites based on energy level and preference, and then return to the island. After dinner, the second classroom session will focus on marine ecology and how mangroves, seagrass beds, and coral reefs interact with the terrestrial environment and each other to create the marine world. *Overnight at Tobacco Caye Lodge dorms. (BLD)*

DAY 3 - TOBACCO CAYE

This morning set out for a half day of snorkeling. If weather allows, explore the fore reef outside Tobacco Caye, the patch reef at Núñez Patch, and the Tobacco Caye Channel (south of the cut). The fore reef is an example of spur-and-groove formations. It's a bit deeper than the rest, but the bottom is visible at all times and it's an excellent chance to see the "real" barrier reef. South of the cut is a channel environment, going from mid-deep to shallow. This is a very diverse site and an opportunity to see bigger marine life cruising in the channel if it's present, including tarpons, turtles, and possible even manatees or dolphins. Núñez Patch is a very shallow patch, and students will be focused on finding smaller sea life like lobsters, anemones, shrimp, and a variety of small fish. Return to the island for lunch. The afternoon is free for coursework and to snorkel from the shore. Evening marine lecture based on group interest. *Overnight at Tobacco Caye Lodge dorms. (BLD)*

DAY 4 - TOBACCO CAYE

Continue coursework with a full day excursion for snorkeling in South Water Caye Marine Reserve. *Overnight at Tobacco Caye Lodge dorms. (BLD)*

DAY 5 - TOBACCO CAYE

Today take a field trip to Glover's Reef Atoll. Situated 15 miles east of the Belize Barrier Reef, it is one of only four atolls in the Atlantic Ocean. Once through the fringing coral reef, you'll find yourself surrounded by an incredible turquoise lagoon, filled with lush patch reefs. Explore the fore reefs that drop from the atoll into the abyssal trench. This trip is dependent on calm weather. *Overnight at Tobacco Caye Lodge dorms. (BLD)*

DAY 6 - TOBACCO CAYE

Finalize coursework during your last full day of snorkeling. This evening take a final night snorkel. Step off the dock into a nocturnal world of cephalopods, moray eels, arthropods, and echinoderms. Underwater lights are provided but must be turned off temporarily to observe the phosphorescent dinoflagellates. *Overnight at Tobacco Caye Lodge dorms. (BLD)*

DAY 7 - DEPARTURE

After breakfast journey by boat to Dangriga. Head to the airport in Dangriga for the flight home via Belize International Airport. *(B)*

Ecological Alliances

Tobacco Caye and the South Water Caye Marine Reserve support conservation-based programs including:

- **Monkey Bay Wildlife Sanctuary**
An environmental education center that offers experiential learning programs and training opportunities while serving as a model of conservation land stewardship.
- **The Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT)**
An environmental trust fund serving an enabling and empowering role in the conservation, preservation, enhancement, and management of Belize's natural resources and protected areas
- **The Mesoamerican Reef Fund (MAR Fund)**
A non-profit corporation created by four environmental funds from Mexico, Belize, Guatemala and Honduras, as a financial mechanism for conservation and adequate resource use in the Mesoamerican Reef Eco-region. It is the first environmental fund in the Western Hemisphere to transcend the national boundaries of four countries to encompass an entire eco-region.
- **REEF (Rogers' Environmental and Educational Foundation)**
A family foundation dedicated to preservation of the oceans with an emphasis on youth involvement.

Program pricing

\$1,875 (7 participants + 1 leader)

\$1,975 (14 participants + 2 leaders)

\$1,895 (18 participants + 2 leaders)

International airfare, gratuities, and items of a personal nature are not included. Valid for travel in 2020.

Travel protection

Holbrook Travel purchases Travel Protection on behalf of all participants traveling in 2018 or beyond. These plans help provide coverage once the trip has departed and offer benefits for Baggage/Personal Effects, Accident & Sickness Medical Expenses, Emergency Evacuation and more.

Optional additional coverage is available in the form of the Group Deluxe Plan, which offers benefits for Trip Cancellation/Interruption, in addition to many other insurance benefits and non-insurance assistance services. If interested in this optional plan, we can provide you with rates and plan details.

The fine print

Rates are based on triple and quadruple occupancy for participants; complimentary leader accommodations may be single or double occupancy based on availability. A \$200 per person deposit and enrollment form are required to reserve your space on the trip. This deposit is refundable until 95 days prior to departure excluding a \$100 cancellation fee. Final payments are due no later than 95 days prior to departure. Cancellations received less than 95 days prior to departure are non-refundable.