



XUNANTUNICH

BELIZE

Best of Belize: Caves, Corals, and Mayan Wonders

8 DAYS | Choose your dates | Best season to travel: OCT - JUN

Discover the natural and archaeological highlights of Belize, from lush rainforests and coral reefs teeming with life, to ancient ruins and ceremonial structures. Visit mountains, reserves, caves, and Maya sites on the mainland; then, spend several nights on Ambergris Caye to immerse yourself in the underwater world of the Belize Barrier Reef, the second largest reef system in the world. During your journey, you'll have the opportunity to meet with local residents, including conservationists and artisans, and enjoy some leisure time to explore on your own.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Observe tapirs, jaguars, and Harpy Eagles at the world-renowned Belize Zoo.
- Delve into the Maya underworld at Actun Tunichil Muknal cave, a Maya ceremonial burial ground and site of the "Crystal Maiden" skeletal remains.
- Visit the Community Baboon Sanctuary (CBS), a small grassroots project committed to saving the habitat of the black howler monkey.
- Climb to the top of El Castillo pyramid, the second tallest man-made structure in Belize, at Xunantunich, Belize's most accessible Maya site of significance.
- Look for colorful fish, sea sponges, stingrays and other marine life during snorkeling excursions at Mexico Rocks and Hol Chan Marine Reserve.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

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



CHRISTMAS TREE WORM BY J CRAIGHILL PHOTOGRAPHY



ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

DAY 1 - BELIZE CITY

Upon arrival at the Belize City airport, transfer to the Radisson Ft. George Hotel, situated in front of the Ft. George Marina. Gather this evening to have dinner, meet your guide, and receive an orientation to the program. *Overnight at Radisson Ft. George Hotel. (D)*

DAY 2 - SIBUN RIVER

This morning after breakfast, visit the Belize Zoo. Situated upon 29 acres of tropical savanna, the zoo exhibits over 150 animals representing more than 45 species, all native to Belize. The zoo is home to orphaned, rescued, and rehabilitated animals as well as those born at the zoo or sent as donations from other zoological institutions. Upon arrival, receive an introduction to the animals of Belize and visit the exhibits. Highlights include the jaguar rehabilitation program, the Harpy Eagle exhibit, and the Baird's tapir enclosure. Have lunch at Cheers restaurant, and then continue to Sleeping Giant Rainforest Lodge, located along the Sibun River with views of the mountains and rainforest. This evening after dinner, take a walk around the lodge to look for nocturnal wildlife. *Overnight at Sleeping Giant Rainforest Lodge. (BLD)*

DAY 3 - SIBUN RIVER

After breakfast, explore the Maya underworld during a visit to Actun Tunichil Muknal cave.

This excursion combines land and river hiking and caving, beginning with a 45-minute hike up the Roaring River Valley and through the rainforest of the Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve to the entrance of the cave. Explore this geologically fascinating cave and also the main attraction, the "Cathedral" chamber, a Maya ceremonial site and burial ground. Later this afternoon, return to the lodge. *Overnight at Sleeping Giant Rainforest Lodge. (BLD)*

DAY 4 - SIBUN RIVER

This morning is at leisure to enjoy the amenities of the lodge, which include a swimming pool, hot tub, spa services (at extra cost), and complimentary kayak rental. This afternoon, cross the Mopan River via a hand-winched ferry at the Maya village of San



Jose Succotz for a visit to Xunantunich, Belize's most accessible Maya site of significance. The site's dominant structure, El Castillo, rises 130 feet above the jungle floor, offering superb views of western Belize with forest stretching out all around and the rest of the ancient city mapped out beneath you. If the visit is on a Saturday, it will be market day in San Ignacio and there will be time to explore the market. Return to the lodge for dinner. *Overnight at Sleeping Giant Rainforest Lodge. (BLD)*

DAY 5 - AMBERGRIS CAYE

After breakfast, transfer to the airport in Belize City. En route, visit the Community Baboon Sanctuary (CBS), a small, grassroots project committed to saving the habitat of the black howler monkey. More than 200 private landowners in seven villages stretching over 20 square miles have voluntarily pledged to conserve their land for the protection of black howler monkey habitat. Many of these landowners benefit directly from the sanctuary thanks to ecotourism, and many others benefit indirectly through educational programs. Moreover, the population of the black howler monkey in the sanctuary has risen to more than 2,000 monkeys. With four main goals—conservation, education, research, and tourism—the sanctuary has helped ensure the protection of not just black howler monkeys but many species of flora and fauna in the area. Continue to Belize Municipal Airport for the 20-minute flight to Ambergris Caye. Upon arrival in San Pedro, walk across the small dirt street and check in at the Sunbreeze Hotel, facing the Caribbean Sea. The afternoon is at leisure to explore the island. This evening dinner is on own. *Overnight at Sunbreeze Hotel. (B)*

DAY 6 - AMBERGRIS CAYE

Enjoy breakfast, then board the boat for a 20-minute ride from San Pedro up the coast of north Ambergris Caye to Mexico Rocks, an opulent collection of star, elk horn, and stag horn coral. Colonized by lobsters, eels, and colorful juvenile fish, this site is shallow and protected by the

barrier reef from ocean swells, making it an ideal location for novice snorkelers. At this site you will see boulder coral 10 to 12 feet tall, nearly reaching the surface and providing refuge to a variety of marine life including flame scallops, anemones, tube worm shrimp, and eels sheltered in the coral's nooks and crannies. Sea fans, azure vase sponges, and butterfly fish add life and color, and giant brain coral formations create miniature undersea habitats and islands for spiny lobster, yellowtails, and stingrays. A treacherous-looking cave is also found here, with hundreds of baby snappers looking out of its mouth. Underwater visibility at Mexico Rocks is perfect, with views of both dramatic canyon walls and caves through the coral formations. After snorkeling, the afternoon is at leisure to explore the island. Lunch and dinner on own. This evening, enjoy a night snorkel at Hol Chan Marine Reserve. Much of the reef marine life is nocturnal, and at the glow of the dive light, garden eels will peek out among stingrays flapping their wings to cover themselves on the

sandy bottom. Surrounded by tiny bioluminescent blinks, it's possible to observe jacks, snappers, and groupers whooshing around for their evening snacks. *Overnight at Sunbreeze Hotel. (B)*

Overnight at Sunbreeze Hotel. (B)

DAY 7 - BELIZE CITY

This morning there will be time to relax and enjoy the beach. This afternoon, return to the airport for the flight to the Belize Municipal Airport. Upon arrival, you will be met and transferred to the Radisson Ft. George Hotel. This evening, celebrate your new experiences with a farewell dinner at the hotel. *Overnight at Radisson Ft. George Hotel. (BD)*

DAY 8 - DEPARTURE

Transfers to the airport provided by the hotel. *(B)*



XUNANTUNICH BY DENIS BARTHEL



LAND PRICING

\$2,825 (15 participants + 1 leader)

\$3,125 (10 participants + 1 leader)

Price includes accommodations, meals, entrance fees, and activities as indicated in the itinerary, private transportation unless otherwise noted in itinerary, non-alcoholic beverages with meals, local guides in each region for duration of program, and carbon offset.

International airfare, gratuities, or items of a personal nature are not included.

Valid for travel in 2021.

TRAVEL PROTECTION

Holbrook Travel purchases Travel Protection on behalf of all participants. 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. Refer to the Plan Document for more details.

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

A \$200 per person deposit and enrollment form is due to secure your reservation. This deposit is refundable until 95 days prior to departure excluding a \$100 cancellation fee. Non-refundable final payments are due no later than 95 days prior to departure.



This program includes optional carbon offsetting with ClimateSafe. Learn more at holbrooktravel.com/climatesafe



ACTUN TUNICHIL MUKNAL BY BERNARD DUPONT



ACTIVITY LEVEL **2** EASY-MODERATE

WHAT TO EXPECT

This light adventure celebrates Belize's rainforest, Barrier Reef, and pre-Columbian ruins. It includes three nights at Sibun River and two at Ambergris Caye, bookended by overnight stays in Belize City. The most vigorous activity is a land and river hike for caving at a Mayan burial site. On Ambergris Caye, a 20-minute boat ride takes you to Mexico Rocks for a morning of swimming and snorkeling. Night snorkeling is also offered at Hol Chan Marine Reserve. An afternoon at the Mayan ruins of Xunantunich affords you the opportunity to climb the 130-foot pyramid known as "El Castillo." Other activities include a market visit and wildlife viewing. Daily activities last 2–6 hours, balanced by leisure time at your resorts. Belize is typically hot and humid; the cooler "dry" season (November–early May) has average daily highs in the mid-80s and less rain. There is one roundtrip internal flight; a ferry crossing; and several overland transfers lasting 1–2 hours in private, air-conditioned motorcoaches.



BLACK HOWLER MONKEY BY SAM HOWZIT