



## MAYA WORLD

The Maya civilization, which reached the height of dominance in Central America from 250 to 900 AD, is universally regarded as one of the most fascinating and advanced ancient cultures, and Belize was at the epicenter of its development. Remnants of the civilization are found in important archaeological sites throughout the country that include ceremonial temples, magnificent structures and exquisite artifacts made of jade, stone and clay. An interesting stop is the Museum of Belize in Belize City, which houses the Jade Head, the largest carved jade Maya object ever discovered. Local guides offer unique insights into top archaeological sites, including:

### **Cerros: Maya Hill**

Used for Caribbean trade, this is the only Maya site along the coastline.

- » LOCATION: On a small peninsula in Corozal Bay in the Corozal District

### **Altun Ha: Water of the Rock**

This major ceremonial site was also a strategic trading center where many valuables were excavated, including the famous Jade Head.

- » LOCATION: 31 miles from Belize City in the Belize District

### **Lamanai: Submerged Crocodile**

Known for having the longest continuous habitation in the Maya region, this site features a decorative monument of a ruler in crocodile headdress.

- » LOCATION: Along the banks of the New River Lagoon in the Orange Walk District

### **Cahal Pech: Place of Ticks**

The remains of a royal palace make exploring this site that was first settled around 1200 to 1000 BC very popular.

- » LOCATION: Just 10 minutes by foot from San Ignacio Town in the Cayo District

### **Caracol: The Snail**

During its heyday, this Maya center was larger in population than Belize City today and features the amazing Caana or Sky Place, a colossal 140-foot-tall pyramid that's the tallest manmade structure in Belize.

- » LOCATION: In Chiquibul National Park in the Cayo District, about 46 miles into the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve



**Xunantunich: Maiden of the Rock**

Another impressive temple reaching 130 feet offers fabulous views of San Ignacio, Benque Viejo del Carmen and the Guatemalan countryside. To reach it, visitors travel across the Mopan River via hand-cranked ferry.

» LOCATION: On the Guatemalan border in the Cayo District

**Lubaantun: Place of Fallen Stones**

A major religious, ceremonial, political and commercial center, this site is made of cut stones fitted without mortar and is where the famous crystal skull was found.

» LOCATION: One mile from San Pedro Columbia Village in the Toledo District

**Nim Li Punit: Big Hat**

This site was named for its important carved stela depicting a figure in a large headdress, one of the tallest in the Maya world.

» LOCATION: Near the village of Indian Creek in the Toledo District