



## TRIP ESSENTIALS

Belize's small size, accessibility, ease of travel within the country and seamless communication with locals (the official language is English) make it a perfect getaway for U.S. travelers who want to explore a diverse Caribbean destination. Belize is also deeply committed to eco-tourism, creating unspoiled terrain for visitors to explore—from the barrier reef to the extensive network of caves to the lush rainforest. And the rich culture that has characterized Belize since the days of the Maya adds to its distinctive allure.

### Language + Population

The population of Belize is approximately 311,000 people, with English as the official language and widely spoken. Belizeans also speak English-based Creole (Kriol), as well as Spanish, Maya, Garifuna and Mandarin.

### Geography

Belize is approximately 185 miles long and 75 miles wide, or about the size of Massachusetts. The country is bordered by the Caribbean Sea to the east, Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula to the north and Guatemala to the west and south. Much of its land is preserved in national parks, nature reserves, rainforests and Maya historical sites.

### Climate

Offering a subtropical climate with brisk prevailing Caribbean trade winds and an average temperature of 80°F, Belize has two seasons: the dry season from December to May, and the green (or rainy) season from June to November.

### Time Zone

Belize is on GMT-6, or U.S. Central Standard Time. Daylight saving time is not practiced.

### Currency

The local currency is the Belize dollar (BZ). The U.S. \$1 equivalent is BZ \$2 and does not fluctuate. U.S. currency is readily accepted throughout the country. ATMs are located countrywide in the main cities and towns and most allow cash withdrawals via credit card.

### Electric

The electrical system in Belize is the same as in the U.S.: 110 volts AC power is provided throughout the country. In most parts of the country, the power supply is fairly stable and reliable. Hotels delivering luxury class service install backup generators. Continuity of electricity is between 90% and 95%.

### Water

Quality Belize tap water is treated in cities and towns. Tap water and ice in beverages are very safe to consume. Bottled water is also available throughout the country.

## Government

Independent from Britain since 1981, Belize (formerly British Honduras) has a democratically elected parliamentary government and is a member of the British Commonwealth.

## Entry Requirements

- Visitors to Belize must possess a passport valid for at least three months after the date of arrival and a return ticket with sufficient funds to cover their stay.
- Visitors are given a one-month stay, after which an extension can be applied for with the Immigration Department.
- Visas are not required for citizens of the United States and its territories, Canada, United Kingdom and its territories, European Union, Caribbean and Central American countries.
- For visitors driving/boating into Belize from Guatemala or Mexico, a temporary importation permit must be secured at the point of entry. Vehicle/vessel permits are valid for 30 days.

For more information on visas and passports, visit <http://www.mfa.gov.bz/index.php/what-we-do/consular-matters/>

## Traveling with Children

Belize is family friendly and welcomes children of all ages. Children under 18 years of age must have proper documentation, including a valid passport and letter of parental consent. Children traveling with one parent require a notarized letter of authority from the other parent indicating travel consent.

## Traveling with Pets

Pets must be accompanied by a veterinary certificate issued by a registered veterinarian from country of origin and an import permit from the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) at +011-501-223-1653.

## Ports of Entry

By Air: Commercial airlines all land at the Philip Goldson International Airport (PGIA) in Ladyville, just minutes from Belize City. Private airplanes need to be cleared through the Belize Airport Authority and Civil Aviation Department at the PGIA.

Direct flights from major U.S. gateways make travel to Belize seamless. Travel time is about 5 hours from New York City, 3 hours from Dallas and 2 hours from Miami. Traveling within Belize is also convenient via Maya Island Air or Tropic Air.

By Land: Belize has two main border points: Santa Elena at the northern border with Mexico and Benque Viejo del Carmen on the western border with Guatemala.

By Sea: Seaports where vessels may clear Customs and Immigration are located in Belize City and San Pedro Town in the Belize District; Big Creek and Dangriga Town in the Stann Creek District and Punta Gorda Town in the Toledo District.

Cruise ships stop in Belize City for a one-day call and offer day trips to experience a taste of Belize. Even during a short stopover, cruise passengers have a wealth of options, whether they prefer a snorkel trip among sting rays and sea turtles in Shark Ray Alley, a visit to the Maya site of Altun Ha or an excursion to the Belize Zoo.

## Emergency Information

Belize has both public and private hospitals. Hospitals are located in urban centers; clinics and nurse practitioners can be found in rural areas.