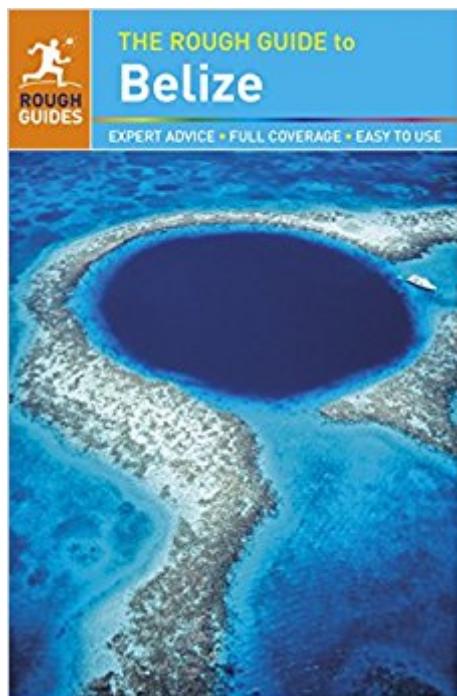


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# The Rough Guide To Belize (Rough Guides)



## Synopsis

The Rough Guide to Belize is the ultimate travel guide to this unique country, with clear maps and detailed coverage of all the best attractions, from the sun-washed cayes to soaring Mayan pyramids. Discover Belize's highlights with stunning photography and in-depth information on everything from the country's magnificent Barrier Reef, the longest in the Western Hemisphere, to its mist-shrouded jungles. Find detailed practical advice on what to see and do in Belize, relying on up-to-date descriptions of the best resorts, hotels, spas, restaurants and activities for all budgets. Explore every corner of Belize with clear, user-friendly maps. Make the Most of Your Time on Earth with The Rough Guide to Belize. About Rough Guides: For thirty years, adventurous travelers have turned to Rough Guides for up-to-date and intuitive information from expert authors. With opinionated and lively writing, honest reviews, and a strong cultural background, Rough Guides travel books bring more than two hundred destinations to life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Reliable, readable Rough Guides \* Conde Nast Traveller \*

WHERE TO GO With its wealth of national parks and reserves, numerous small hotels and reliable public transport, Belize is an ideal place to explore independently; even on a short visit you'll be able to take in both the little-visited Caribbean islands and the heartland of the ancient Maya. Almost every visitor will have to spend at least some time in Belize City, even if only passing through, as it's the hub of the country's transport system. First-time visitors may be

shocked initially by the decaying buildings and the pollution of the river, but it is possible to spend several pleasant hours in this former outpost of the British Empire. In contrast, Belize's capital, Belmopan, is primarily an administrative centre, with little to offer visitors. Midway between the two, the Belize Zoo is easily the best in Central America and well worth making the effort to visit, to see the native animals close up and learn about the zoo's efforts towards their conservation. Northern Belize is relatively flat and often swampy, with a large proportion of agricultural land, though still endowed, like everywhere in the country, with Maya ruins and nature reserves. Lamanai, near Orange Walk, is one of the most impressive Maya sites in the country, while the lagoons at Sarteneja (Shipstern Nature Reserve) on the northeast coast, and inland at Crooked Tree provide superb protected habitats for the country's abundant wildlife, particularly birds. In the northwest, adjacent to the Guatemalan border, is the vast Rio Bravo Conservation Area, where hunting has been banned for over a decade, allowing the possibility of close encounters with the wildlife. The mainland coast is almost entirely low-lying and swampy &#x96; wonderful for wildlife, but for swimming and underwater activities you'll need to visit the cayes. The largest, Ambergris Caye, draws over half of all tourists to Belize, with the tiny resort town of San Pedro their main destination; Caye Caulker, to the south, is the most popular island for independent travellers. Many of the other cayes are now becoming easier to reach, and organized day-trips are available for divers and snorkellers to the wonderful atolls of the Turneffe Islands and Lighthouse Reef. Further south, off the coast of Honduras, the English-speaking, coral-fringed Bay Islands are a potential side-trip from Belize, offering a taste of Latin America in the Caribbean and some of the best-value diving in the world. In the west of the country, San Ignacio and its environs offer everything the ecotourist could want: Maya ruins and rainforest, rivers and caves, and excellent accommodation in every price range. Caracol, the largest Maya site in Belize, is now a routine day-trip from here, while the magnificent ruins of Xunantunich lie en route to the Guatemalan border. Cross the border and a few hours later you can be in Tikal, one of the greatest of all Maya sites. Dangriga, the main town of the south-central region, serves as a jumping-off point for visitors to the central cayes and atolls (little developed at present but more accessible every year) and for trips to the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, home to the jaguar reserve. Further south, on the coast, the quiet GarÃ-funa village of Hopkins sees more visitors with every year that passes, while the delightful, relaxed, fishing village of Placencia, at the tip of a long, curving peninsula, has some of the country's best beaches. Most visitors to Punta Gorda, the main town of Toledo District, are on their way to or from Puerto Barrios in Guatemala by boat. Venture inland, however, and you'll come across the villages of the Mopan and KekchÃ- Maya, set in some of the most

stunning countryside in Belize and surrounded by the country's only true rainforest. Here are yet more caves, rivers and Maya ruins, including Lubaantun, source of the enigmatic Crystal Skull.

**WHEN TO GO** Belize lies in a subtropical latitude, so the weather is always warm by European standards, and often hot and humid. The immediate climate is largely determined by altitude: evenings in the forests of the Mountain Pine Ridge are generally pleasantly cool, while the lowland jungle is always steamy and humid. On the cayes, the sun's heat is tempered by near constant ocean breezes. Although Belize has its dry and rainy seasons, you'll find that the sun shines most of the year, while rain can fall in any month. The dry season runs roughly from January to May, and the last couple of months before the rains come can be stiflingly hot. During the rainy season (officially May to November); mornings are generally clear and afternoons often drenched by downpours; this is when humidity is at its highest. During the heaviest of the rains rural roads can be flooded and journeys delayed, particularly in the south. There's often a break from the rains in August (called the mauger season in Belize), and even before then the rain is rarely persistent enough to ruin a holiday. The worst of the rains fall in September and October, which is also the height of the hurricane season, when wind speeds can exceed 120kph, though most severe storms follow a track to the north of Belize. If you're out on the cayes you'll need to leave, but rest assured that Belize has an efficient warning system and a network of shelters. The rain can continue into December, a time when cold fronts are sometimes pushed down from the north (lowering temperatures to 10°C for a couple of days); when you'll be grateful you brought a sweater or jacket. With all this in mind, the best time of year to visit Belize is from late December to March, when the vegetation is still lush and the skies are clear. This is the main tourist season and therefore the priciest time to visit. Plenty of people visit during the summer months, too, a period that's appropriately promoted by the tourism industry as the "green season". --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I bought this and Moon. If you are the kind of person that wants to adventure in the interior get this book. If you want to spend your time on the Cayes, get Moon. If you want to mix it up, get both. Really just get both. Your trip will cost enough as it is. This thing definitely pointed me to better times, and at one point saved my bacon. It's worth it for the small price you pay, especially when you can't count on Internet access in Belize.

Before a recent trip to Belize, I bought the Rough Guide and the Moon Guide, figuring whatever one book missed, the other would cover. We ended up taking the Rough Guide with us on our trip and

the Moon Guide stayed home. The Rough Guide isn't as current as the Moon Guide, but it's current enough. More importantly, the Rough Guide included more useful information, wasn't as editorialized and was better indexed. If you're going to buy one book and you're new to Belize, then buy this one. We visited a lot of hidden gems we would have otherwise missed thanks to what was in this book.

I was already familiar with this tiny, wonderful country, but this book provides an amazing amount of information I didn't know. As I'm considering retiring there, I'm studying it like a textbook! I bought the Kindle version and especially love the maps and the way you can move from section to section using the interactive table of contents.

After looking at several other books we chose this one for our 14 day trip in January of 2001. It was an excellent resource for important info and interesting tid-bits. It is a little old now and some information is out dated at this point. It could really use an update. My husband and I would volunteer to go again!! We had a great time and highly recommend Belize for the less mainstream traveler. Go now though, it is definitely changing! Don't miss Hol Chan marine reserve snorkeling and Placencia village. Also, we loved Crooked Tree and Tikal. Have a great time and take this book with you!!!

We had Lonely Planet "Central America" and Fodor's "Guatemala and Belize", but it was Rough Guide we kept coming back to. In our trip to Guatemala and Belize we spent 4 days in Belize, but only out on the Cayes. Most of the time was spent on Caye Caulker (a very laid back and relaxing escape) staying at Mara's Place which was listed in the guide without much fanfare, but hit the spot. If you need low budget (~25US per room - no tax!) stay with Mara. She is right near the swimming spit and has lovely cabins (no A/C, but ceiling fans) that are simple, but clean. You'll always notice Mara driving around town in her sporty ATV. For the size of the Caye the restaurants are plentiful with most listed in the guide. The one shortcoming was scuba info. Belize barrier reefs are known for their great scuba and snorkeling and the island has plenty of shops - but only 1 is listed. They will refer you elsewhere if they can't accommodate you, but I am surprised that Rough Guide didn't dedicate more space to this popular sport. I assume the writer either a) didn't spend much time on the Cayes or b) didn't care much for water sports. Might have been both, but this is a huge oversight given that the Cayes are one of the most popular destinations in Belize. Despite this shortcoming - you won't be disappointed.

Hooray! Belize now has its own Rough Guide. In the past, Belize has been combined with Guatemala in one edition. The new Belize edition, by Peter Eltringham (who co-authored the old Guatemala-Belize guide and has a hand in several other of Rough Guides to Mexico and Central America) is a tour de force of relentless research, timely info and sharp writing. I want to try to explain why this is such a good guide. But first, let's get something out of the way -- the name. Many North American reader still think the Rough Guides, published in London, are for budget travelers. In fact, as I understand it, the name Rough is an Anglicism meant to suggest that it is an approximation, an expected plan, as in a "rough plan." The Rough Guides, of which there are now more than a hundred, are definitely not just for travelers who are "roughing it." In fact, they cover all levels of travel, from budget to upmarket. A name change awhile back didn't stick, and the guides now go by the name by which they're known to experience travelers the world over, Rough Guides. Anyway, back to the new guide to Belize. Peter Eltringham first came to Belize with the Royal Air Force. He's been just about everywhere in Belize and knows it inside out. Turn to any section, and his recommendations on hotels, restaurants and what to do are almost always spot on. Although he's generous -- occasionally to a fault -- with hotels he likes, Peter can be blunt: He's willing to call a hotel overpriced when it is or to point out the illegal cutting of mangroves by resort developers. This guide is especially good on lesser-known destinations such as the southern cayes or Corozal District. There's also a helpful section on Tikal and one on the Honduras Bay Islands, though this latter section was written before Hurricane Mitch and is therefore nearly useless. A section called Contexts offers insightful information on Belize history, music, literature and other subjects. In short, this is a must-carry for anyone traveling in Belize.

Great guidebook for my semi-backpacking trip in Belize and Tikal area. Information in the book is up to date and the lodging recommendations were useful. Maps were pretty good too. I didn't have to get maps of the towns and Mayan sites I visited because the book had maps within.

From what I have seen, this is one of the best of the Belize guides. Current information that can be used by a wide range of travelers to Belize. Great introduction to a small but wildly diverse country. Lots of practical details in a well-written and well-organized book.

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