

PARADISE ISLANDS

A lodge to lodge Sea Kayak & Snorkel Adventure on the Southern Barrier Reef

Trip Details

5 days / 6 nights

Price

\$1589 USD Contact us
 for current Cdn prices

Nov/ Dec 2009

Nov 22, 24, 29

Dec 6, 13, 20, 22, 27, 29

Departures 2010

Jan 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

Feb 7, 14, 21, 28

Mar 7, 14, 16, 21, 28, 30

Apr 4, 11, 18, 25

May 2, 9

Activities

Sea Kayaking
 (paddling & sailing),
 Snorkeling, Fishing,
 Photography,
 Natural History
 Interpretation.

Accommodations

1 night forest cabana,
 5 nights island lodges



The Setting...

The Barrier Reef, which runs the full length of the Belizean coastline, is considered one of the richest marine ecosystems on earth. The 185 mile (300 km) long reef runs from 10 to 25 miles offshore, is the longest continuous reef in the Caribbean, and the second longest in the world. Along the Barrier Reef are over 225 cays, ranging from small, sand-fringed islands perched along the reef's edge, to larger islands of partially submerged man-groves.

Historically, ships avoided this area of the Caribbean because of inaccurate charts and the difficulty of navigating the shallow reef-strewn waters. Teeming with brilliantly coloured fish, sea grass beds and patch reefs, the reef systems have not seen nearly the level of human impact as witnessed in Mexico to the north and Honduras to the south. We travel in the less developed southern regions of Belize's Barrier Reef, which remains a near-pristine marine ecosystem and is unparalleled in the Caribbean. It is in this region that we find the best sea kayaking and snorkelling. Our base of operation, in the southern coastal community of Dangriga, is the ideal launching point for us to explore this spectacular region.



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A Note About the Ecology...

Flora...

The ecology of the Belizean coast is a complex combination of coral reefs, sand flats with extensive turtle grass and mangrove ranges. The Barrier Reef shelters the Belizean coastline from the rougher open waters of the Caribbean sea. It acts as a huge break-water, holding in the sand, resulting in the beautiful islands forested with coconut palms, sea grape and coco plum, and in the remarkable protected reef structures. The 'breakwater' action also enables the diverse ecosystems of the mangrove and turtle grass to flourish. These tangled partially submerged "forests" provide essential feeding and nursing habitat for hundreds of species of fish, shell-fish, reptiles, marine mammals, and birds.

Fauna...

We have plenty of time to snorkel, fish and enjoy the scenery and marine life of the Caribbean. We explore many different regions of the reef including the inner and outer walls, patch and fringing reefs, mangrove ranges and protected lagoons. Our traveling routes often cross those of the fishermen who make their living from the sea and with this inter-action we gain good company and an insight into a way of life that is very different from our own.

Recommended Tour-books:

Eltringham, Peter. 2004
Belize: The Rough
Guide. London. Penguin
Publishers.

Perottet, Tony. 2004
Belize: Insight Guide
Singapore. Houghton
Mifflin Publishers.

-Great photographs and
written by a Belizean!

Recommended Reading:

Rabinowitz, Alan. 2000
Jaguar, One Man's
Struggle to Establish the
First Jaguar Sanctuary
New York. Island Press.

Typical Daily Itinerary:

Day 0: Arrive at the Belize International Airport where you are met by an Island Expeditions representative and transferred to the Tropical Education Centre, adjacent to the Belize Zoo. We are staying in Forest Cabanas situated in the midst of idyllic tropical pine forest with a network of interpretative trails and wildlife viewing platforms at our doorstep. There is also a great interpretive centre, which details the diverse ecology of Belize, and is an ideal starting point for the adventure ahead. After checking into our accommodations we enjoy a welcome to Belize dinner with our fellow travelers and our Belizean guide team.

This day is your day to arrive before the trip starts, meet your fellow travelers and acclimatize to your new tropical environment.

Transfers from the airport and lodging are included.

Accommodations: (Lodge)

Meals: Dinner is included on this night



Day 1: Waking up to the sounds of the tropics is a pure delight with the chatter of parrots and parakeets flying overhead, the fresh morning air scented with tropical blossoms and the expectation of an exciting adventure-filled day ahead. After breakfast we travel the Hummingbird Route through the Maya Mountains to meet up with our motor charter waiting to take us to our first island on the southern Barrier Reef. We'll introduce you to safety in a tropical marine environment and then begin with teaching the fundamentals of sea kayaking, including safety, group and self rescues and touring techniques. Enjoy a swim, explore the island shoreline and then after a tasty Belizean lunch we begin our journey paddling over top submerged coral reefs, turtle grass beds and through narrow mangrove channels to reach our first nights accommodations. We'll land our

kayaks right in front of our lodge settle into our accommodations and then enjoy drinks and dinner.

Accommodations: (Lodge)

Meals: B,L,D

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Day 2: Situated right on the barrier reef in the heart of the *Southwater Caye Marine Reserve* we are ideally positioned to explore the surrounding reefs and cayes. Start with a steaming mug of coffee and fresh tropical fruits then enjoy an early morning swim or paddle before breakfast. Our focus for the morning will include snorkelling at (our first snorkelling session begins with a thorough instruction and demonstration and beginner through to advanced skills are taught) at the Tobacco Caye cut and the outer reef walls. In the afternoon we'll paddle to nearby cayes to explore the sheltered lagoons and mangrove channels returning in the evening to Tobacco Caye.

Accommodations: (Island Lodge) **Meals:** B,L,D

Day 3: Looking south with our gaze following the line of breaking waves along the barrier reef crest we can see the next island we'll be travelling to today— Southwater Caye. After packing our kayaks with our personal gear bag, wishing fond farewells to our hosts we'll start our day on the water with an introduction to kayak sailing. From here we'll paddle and sail our kayaks along one of the most beautiful sections of the entire reef system. The waters are shallow and clear, and we'll see a tremendous variety of marine life including southern stingrays, eagle rays, grouper, nurse sharks and more. As we make our way to Southwater Caye with its coconut palms swaying in the wind, this is a day you'll wish could go on forever. We'll land our kayaks on the beach check into our accommodations, enjoy an ice cold drink and explore the island before dinner, then maybe try a little bone fishing action on a fly rod, or even a nighttime snorkel session on Southwater cut.

Accommodations: (Island Lodge) **Meals:** B,L,D

Day 4: We have plenty of time to kayak snorkel, fish and enjoy the scenery and marine life of Belize. We explore different regions of the reef including the inner and outer walls, patch and fringing reefs, mangrove ranges and protected lagoons. For divers we can arrange dives as requested and for those who'd like to try out diving for a first time, we can arrange discover Scuba courses with prior notice. As we explore by kayak, our routes often cross those of the fishermen who make their living from the sea and with this inter-action we gain good company and an insight into a way of life that is very different from our own.

Accommodations: (Island Lodge) **Meals:** B,L,D

Day 5: Our last day on the cays we'll have the choice to paddle to Twin Cays, the future site of the new Marine Reserve Interpretive Center and explore the diversity of the islands or you can choose to stay and enjoy the island setting and snorkelling. This evening we celebrate our final night together with a seafood feast and island festivities.

Accommodations: (Island Lodge) **Meals:** B,L,D

Day 6: After an early breakfast our water taxi carries us back to the mainland and the town of Dangriga where the trip finishes. Any extra luggage that you have stored at our operations base, will be made available to you to repack and taxis can be arranged to your connecting flight to the Belize International Airport, or local bus stations to continue exploring Belize.

Meals: B



What's Included...

Comprehensive Pre-Trip Information Package

All meals, accommodations, and transfers described in the tour

Unlimited use of our Equipment, including activities and instruction

Use of waterproof dry bags

Accommodation on the day before the trip ('Day 0') and the final night

Professional Guiding Services (both North American Leaders and Belizean Guides)

Marine Park Fees, Government Taxes

What's Not Included...

Transfer back to Belize City

Gratuities

International Flights

Airport Departure Tax

Alcoholic Beverages

Extra costs due to late Arrivals, lost baggage and circumstances beyond our control

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Accommodation...

On 'Day 0 we will be spending the night at the Tropical Education Centre in our Forest Cabanas. Our cabanas are situated in a serene tropical pine forest setting. Bathrooms, and showers are situated in a separate building in the Forest Cabana complex. The Education Centre harbours Belize's largest collection of tropical animal specimens, a fantastic interpretative centre, and has a great network of trails and wildlife viewing platforms, perfect for exploring the pine savannah setting.

While out on the cayes we kayak between islands along the southern barrier reef and stay in small Belizean owned lodges. Facilities include running water and fully serviced bathrooms where we stay. We stay a total of 5 nights along the eastern edge of the barrier reef. On the final morning after breakfast we take a water taxi back to the mainland in time to make your flight connections home or connect with the next stage of your trip.

NOTE: You will be carrying your personal equipment and clothing in waterproof bags which go into the hatches of each kayak. Island Expeditions will supply each person with a number of 20 litre waterproof bags for this purpose.

Thinking about seeing other parts of Belize with IEC?

The Paradise Islands combines well with an adventure traveling inland. The two day Maya World Extension gives you a wonderful opportunity to extend your vacation. Visit the most interesting ancient Mayan cities of Belize such as Lamanai and Altun Ha. Also included is a interpretive boat tour of the wetlands of the Crooked Tree Bird Sanctuary.

Getting back to Belize City ...

Our North American office can help you make arrangements for your return to Belize City the day after the trip ends, unless you have made other arrangements with us. We can book a domestic flight from Dangriga to Belize City or directly to the Int'l Airport. The flight cost (25 minutes) is approximately \$65.00 USD per person or you can travel overland by bus (3-4 hours) for around \$10.00 USD.

Thinking About Traveling Independently, Before or After Your Trip?

With over 20 years of exploration in Belize, our very knowledgeable and experienced office staff can offer you a wealth of travel information to help you plan the best vacation possible! However, we do recommend that you read up on the country and find what interests you. Once you find an area of interest, give our office a phone call.



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Website: www.islandexpeditions.com
School Trips: www.educationaltrips.org

Hey Teachers & Parents! Did you know Island Expeditions Co. has been operating custom educational trips for high schools and colleges for close to two decades! For more information, please visit:
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