

HOLY CROSS HIGH SCHOOL GOES TO BELIZE

8 days

Itinerary downloaded on: September 30, 2022

Day 1: *Arrive in Belize City*

Meet and greet upon arrival in Belize City, an interesting mix of British colonial architecture and small-town ambience. Belmopan may be the de facto capital but Belize City is the cultural and commercial centre.

Overnight in Belize City.

Meal Plan: Dinner, if required

Day 2: *Lamanai & New River Safari*

Guided tour of Lamanai & New River Safari.

Today we explore one of the many temples or palaces of Lamanai. Travelling via the Northern Highway, we pass through rural villages and lowlands to Tower Hill, where we board a riverboat and head up the New River. While traversing the many little creeks and lagoons, it is easy to encounter birdlife including hawks, kites and falcons. Dainty Jacanas lightly walk on the lily pads while the elusive crocodiles bask in the morning sunlight. The river is lined with hardwood trees with lots of orchids and bromeliads. At the entrance to the New River Lagoon, the ruins of Lamanai (Mayan for submerged crocodile) rise into view.

Once at the site we tour the small museum, which features many ancient relics found at Lamanai. This ancient archaeological site reveals a civilization that is known to have occupied Belize as far back as 1500 BC. Among the most spectacular of these archeological wonders is the ruins of one of the Maya's largest ceremonial centers and home to several large temples located on the banks of the New River Lagoon. The Lamanai Archeological Reserve also contains a museum, the remnants of two 16th century Spanish churches and a colonial sugar mill from 1860.

Overnight in Belize City.

Meal Plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 3: *Belize Zoo & Xunantunich*

Guided tour of the Belize Zoo & Xunantunich Maya site.

Early this morning we visit the world famous Belize Zoo. A highlight of any visit to this little country, the zoo allows us not only to see some of the rare creatures of Central America but the zoo is actively involved in conserving habitat for these species and part of our entrance fees go towards ensuring that the wild relatives of these now caged animals can live free.

Later we visit Xunantunich, a Classic-period ceremonial centre. Its name means "stone maiden." Perhaps the best part of a visit to Xunantunich is the spectacular view of the surrounding forest from the top of El Castillo, the largest structure in the complex and the second tallest human-made building in Belize at 40 m/132 ft. The frieze on the side of El Castillo is a recreation in stucco. Not much is known about the history of Xunantunich except that it was abandoned after being hit by a massive earthquake around AD 900. As with most Mayan buildings, the architecture here is layered, with new buildings erected on top of old ones. Continue to San Ignacio.

Overnight in San Ignacio.

Canada/USA
1-800-665-3998

United Kingdom
0114-247-3400

Meal Plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 4: Caracol & Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve

Guided day tour Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve and a visit to Caracol, the largest site in Belize and once the most densely populated site in Mesoamerica. This is the largest site in Belize and once home to over 150,000 Mayans.

Bring along your walking shoes, your swimwear and an adventurous mind for a full day of activity. This reserve is teeming with hills and valleys, rivers and waterfalls and swimming holes and caves all surrounded by the majestic beauty of the tropical pine forest. Our three main stops are the Rio Frio Cave, the Rio On Rapids and Pools, and road conditions permitting, you'll get a chance to see the 1000ft. Hidden Valley Waterfalls. Binoculars are recommended as there is much exotic flora and fauna, endemic only to this extremely rugged, but beautiful part of the country. Stop in at one of the lodges in the area for a local lunch and refreshments.

Overnight in San Ignacio.

Meal Plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 5: San Ignacio - Cave Tubing

Day tour of cave tubing & zip-lining

A transfer from San Ignacio Hotel via the Western Highway brings you to the Caves Branch Outpost and its winding path through the Maya Mountains and numerous ancient caves once inhabited by the Maya. On arrival at Caves Branch Outpost, be prepared for a 45-minute jungle trail hike. Your guide will point out various plants, roots, and herbs once used by the ancient Maya. The entrance tunnel that heads into the underground cave system is the start of an "eye opening" adventure. Your guide hands out flashlights, and you are ready to float in inflated inner tubes assisted by gentle currents taking you through the cave system. Intricate crystalline formations line the caves and stalagmites and stalactites add to the serene opulence of nature. Come dressed in bathing suits, T-shirts, shorts, tennis shoes or water shoes. Our day also includes some exciting zip-lining!

Level of difficulty: Moderate - Participants should be in average physical condition with no physical limitations to participate.

Overnight in San Ignacio.

Meal Plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 6: San Ignacio - Cay Caulker

Transfer to Belize City to connect with our 45 min water taxi to Cay Caulker. Afternoon at leisure.

Overnight on Cay Caulker.

Meal Plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 7: Cay Caulker: Hol Chan Marine Reserve & Shark Ray Alley Snorkeling

On early British maps the island's name is spelled "Cay Corker." Known historically for its plentiful supply of exposed fresh water at La Aguada, one theory holds that this island was a favourite stop for sailors to replenish and cork water bottles. The Spanish name of the island is Cayo Hicaco, which means "the island of the cocoplum." "Caye Caulker" could be an anglicized pronunciation of Cayo Hicaco. Another theory is that boats were caulked in the protected bay, La Ensenada, on the western side of the island leading to the "Caulker" name.

Despite the growth of tourism, Cay Caulker remains a small village with a distinct cultural flavour not necessarily found in large-scale tourist development. Almost all the businesses are locally owned, vehicles larger than golf carts almost never roam the streets, and lodging is small scale compared to many other tourist destinations, including neighbouring Ambergris Cay.

Today we have a boat excursion for snorkeling in the Hol Chan Marine Reserve. Balance of the day to enjoy the beach and / or independent exploration.

Overnight on Cay Caulker

Meal Plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Day 8: Cay Caulker - Belize City - Depart

Return to Belize City in time to connect with homeward flights.

Breakfast BON VOYAGE!

Meal Plan: Breakfast