

BELIZE WINTER GETAWAY

February 6, 2018 - 12 Days



a world to experience



Fares Per Person:

\$5095 double/twin

\$5895 single



tour²⁵
a more intimate travel experience

- > This tour is exempt from GST.
- > **Early Bookers:** \$200 discount on first 8 seats; \$100 on next 4
- > **Experience Points:** Earn 95 points from this tour.
Redeem **95 points** if you book by **October 3**.

Includes

- Coach transportation to/from Seattle Airport
- Flight from Seattle to Belize City
- Current air taxes, fees and fuel surcharges
- Transfer from Belize Airport to hotel
- 11 nights accommodation and hotel taxes
- Coach transportation in Belize
- Expert local guides and naturalists
- Locally-guided tour of Belize City
- Belize Museum and House of Culture
- Cultural dance and music show
- Xunantunich archeological site
- Hand-cranked ferry crossing of Mopan River
- Green Iguana Conservation Project
- Caracol Mayan Temple Site
- San Antonio Village Women's Co-op Center
- Exhibition of Ancient Mayan cooking methods and pottery making
- Mayan dance performance
- Charter boat to/from Ambergris Caye
- Boat excursion to Great Blue Hole
- Transfer from hotel to airport
- Flight from Belize City to Seattle
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
- Gratuities to local guides, drivers and naturalists
- Luggage handling at hotels
- **29 meals:** 11 breakfasts, 9 lunches, 9 dinners

Kamloops > 250-374-0831
Kelowna > 250-762-3435
www.wellsgraytours.com

Penticton > 250-493-1255
Vernon > 250-545-9197
Toll Free > **800-667-9552**



BELIZE — A WINTER PARADISE

Belize, formerly British Honduras, is a small country on the Caribbean coast of Central America, bordered by Mexico and Guatemala. Its mainland is only 290 km long and 110 km wide. Belize's abundance of terrestrial and marine species and its diversity of ecosystems gives it a key place in the globally significant Mesoamerican Biological Corridor. Belize has a diverse society, composed of many cultures and languages that reflect its rich history. English is the official language of Belize, with Belizean Kriol being the unofficial language. Over half the population is multilingual, with Spanish being the second most common spoken language. Belize belongs to the British Commonwealth with Queen Elizabeth II as its monarch and head of state.

There is lots of fascinating history on this tour. Several archeological sites are visited including Xunantunich and Caracol. The Mayan civilization spread across what is now Belize around 1500 BC and flourished there until about 900 AD. The British settled in the 17th century and Belize became an independent nation in 1981. The economy today depends primarily on petroleum exports and agriculture, with tourism becoming increasingly important.

Belize contains lowland plains beside the Caribbean, the Maya Mountains which rise to 1100 metres, the world's second longest barrier reef, and about 450 cayes (islands) offshore. Belize has an incredible variety of wildlife because of its unique geographical position and a range of climates and habitats. It is home to about 5,000 species of plants and hundreds of animal species, and a special reserve protects jaguars. There are seven World Heritage Sites, including the Barrier Reef and the Mayan Temples.

Come and admire the natural, historic and cultural wonders of Belize on this unique journey, and escape from the Canadian winter for 10 days.

Itinerary

Tuesday, February 6:

Meals: L

We travel via the Coquihalla Highway, cross the border and follow I-5 south to **Seattle**. We stay overnight at the Quality Inn in Renton near the Seattle airport.

Wednesday, February 7:

Meals: B,D

We fly to Houston, then continue to Belize City, arriving about 4 pm (2 hours ahead of Pacific Standard Time). **Welcome to Belize!** Our driver and bilingual guide meet us, and we check in at the Radisson Fort George Hotel for a two-night stay. The hotel has a beautiful setting beside the Caribbean and offers two enticing pools in a courtyard full of tropical plants.

Thursday, February 8:

Meals: B,L,D

We go to Belize Museum and House of Culture. Discover Belize through exhibits that include jade artifacts from local Mayan temples, Belizean stamps and coins, and history of early mahogany trade including tools and equipment used. Then our local guide takes us on a tour around **Belize City**, pointing out the impressive colonial architecture. Next is the Bliss and Garifuna Experience which includes a short show of their cultural dance and music. Dinner is at Birds Isle Restaurant.

Friday, February 9:

Meals: B,L,D

We leave Belize City, headed for **San Ignacio**, about a two-hour drive west. We stay four nights at the San Ignacio Resort, an intimate hotel of only 24 rooms with a 10-minute walk to the bustling public market.

Saturday, February 10:

Meals: B,L,D

This morning, we explore incredible **Xunantunich** (Maiden of the Rock). We ride across the crystalline waters of the Mopan River on a hand-cranked ferry to reach this stunning archeological site. It consists of six plazas surrounded by 26 temples. El Castillo rises 40 metres above the main plaza floor and features intricate, handcrafted friezes and stelae. Xunantunich may have been settled by Mayans as early as 1000 BC and was abandoned by 750 AD. Hidden by the jungle, it was rediscovered by a British explorer in the 1890s. Excavations continue to the present, and a burial chamber was discovered in 2016. This afternoon, we visit the **Green Iguana Conservation Project** spearheaded by our hotel which has been at the forefront of conservation for the threatened Green Iguana. An interpretive and educational exhibit has been designed to create a closer look at this amazing reptile, and to learn how vital they are to the ecological balance of the river habitat.

Sunday, February 11:*Meals: B,L,D*

A full-day tour takes us to **Caracol** (translated as Snail), located deep in the Chiquibel forest reserve near the border of Guatemala. The Caracol area was occupied as early as 1200 BC and lasted no later than 950 AD. Caracol boasts 53 carved stone monuments, more than 250 burial sites, and the tallest man-made structure in Belize - the 43-metre tall temple of **Canaa**. The site is noted for its immense agricultural field system and city planning. Caracol was discovered in 1937 by a native logger looking for mahogany trees. Explorations since then have uncovered a city of 200 square kilometres that may have supported a population of 100,000 people.

Monday, February 12:*Meals: B,L,D*

We visit the **San Antonio Village Women's Co-op Centre**. These women are reviving the lost art of making ceramics in the style of the ancient Maya, using the same techniques of their ancestors but also adding their own unique styles. Included is an exhibition of ancient Maya cooking methods and pottery making. You can watch or participate. This is followed by a short performance of Mayan dance featuring drumming and costumes.

Tuesday, February 13:*Meals: B,L,D*

In your advance information, we will suggest a list of useful items for school children. Leaving San Ignacio, we stop at a school where your donations are gratefully received and the children do a short "thank you" performance. Afterwards, we drive into Belize City and board a charter boat to

Ambergris Caye. In Belize, islands are called Cayes (pronounced "keys"). The most famous of these is Ambergris Caye and its small, vibrant town of San Pedro — an island situated 57 km from the mainland. The Caye is 40 km long and 1½ km wide and is known for its white sand beaches. We stay three nights at Grand Colony Island Villas. It is located right next to the beach and has three swimming pools and restaurant.

Wednesday, February 14:*Meals: B,L,D*

We take a boat excursion to the **Great Blue Hole**, a giant submarine sinkhole off the coast of Ambergris Caye in Lighthouse Reef. The hole is circular in shape, over 300 metres across and 108 metres deep. The site gained fame when Jacques Cousteau maneuvered his ship, Calypso, through the narrow corral channels in 1971.

Thursday, February 15:*Meals: B,L,D*

This is a day at leisure to enjoy the resort, the wonderful beaches, and the town of San Pedro.

Friday, February 16:*Meals: B*

We take the boat back to Belize City and board our midday flight to Houston, continuing to Seattle. We stay overnight at the Quality Inn near the airport.

Saturday, February 17:*Meals: B*

There are shopping stops at Bellis Fair Mall in Bellingham and the Duty-Free Store, then we cross the border and travel home via the Coquihalla.

Tour Notes:

Currency & Expenses: The currency in Belize is the Belize dollar which is officially tied to the US dollar at a rate of 1 US\$ = 2 BZD. However US dollars are widely accepted and you probably don't need to buy or bring any BZD. Gratuities have been included for all group meals and for local guides, naturalists and drivers. As this tour has been planned and priced eight months before departure, it is possible that exchange fluctuations could affect the fare, in which case you will be notified of the increase or decrease. All meals are included in Belize.

Flight: Current flight schedule is with United Airlines from Seattle to Belize City and return. There is a plane change in Houston each way. Flying time is about 7½ hours each way. There is currently no fee for checked luggage since the flights are international.

Time Zone: Belize is two hours ahead of British Columbia in winter.

Documentation: A passport is required, valid six months after return date. A visa is not required.

Triples: Triples are not available on this tour due to the different nature of hotel rooms.

Health Clinic: Visit a travel health clinic two months before departure to discuss possible inoculations for this tour. Bring this itinerary. There are currently no required inoculations, but you may want to discuss Hepatitis A/B and tetanus.



Activity and Mobility: This tour has lots of walking due to the historic nature of some cities and attractions, and looking for birds and animals. It may be necessary to climb stairs, walk on uneven surfaces, and walk at least a kilometre, plus stand for an extended time on walking tours. Climbing a Mayan pyramid is optional. There can be long walks in airports and you should request a cart or wheelchair in advance if this could be a concern. If you think you may have difficulty participating in Activity Level 2, Wells Gray Tours recommends that you bring a companion to assist you. The tour director, local guides and drivers have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. Please consider these mobility issues prior to booking this tour.

Important Tour Information: This brochure will be available at final payment and contains lots of planning and packing tips for your holiday.

Tour Policies

Payments: A deposit of \$600 per person is requested at the time of booking and balance is due October 3, 2017.

Discounts: Early bookers receive \$200 discount on first 8 seats and \$100 on next 4 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after October 3.

Cancellation Policy: Up to September 1, 2017, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From September 2 to October 3, the cancellation charge is \$300 per person. From October 4 to December 1, the cancellation charge is 50% of the tour fare. From December 2 to January 3, 2018, the cancellation charge is 80% of the tour fare. After January 3, there is no refund.

Fare Changes: Changes to currency exchange rates and taxes, and surcharges from airlines and other tour suppliers can occur at any time and are beyond the control of Wells Gray Tours, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up until the time of departure.

Travel Insurance: A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons (Brian Gratwicke). Photo of Keel-Billed Toucan, Belize National Bird.

Tour 25: This is a Tour 25 departure, meaning capacity of tour is limited to 25 participants for a more intimate travel experience.

E-points: This tour earns 95 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points or e-points. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until October 3.

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