



Xunantunich Ruins

# BELIZE WINTER GETAWAY

February 23, 2021 – 12 Days

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. Belize belongs to the British Commonwealth with Queen Elizabeth II as its monarch and head of state. This tour has lots of fascinating history including the archeological site of Xunantunich. 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.

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 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.

Activity Level: 2



**TOUR**  
**25**

26 Meals Included:

9 breakfasts, 8 lunches, 9 dinners

Fares per person:

\$6995 double/twin, \$8350 single

Please add 0.2% GST.

**This tour is limited to 25 people**

Early booking recommended!

**Early Bookers:**

\$250 discount on first 8 seats; \$125 on next 4

**Experience Points:**

Earn 124 points from this tour

Redeem 124 points if you book by November 23



## ITINERARY

### Day 1: Tuesday, February 23

We fly from Kamloops, Kelowna and Victoria to Toronto and stay overnight at Sheraton Gateway Hotel, conveniently located in Terminal 3.

**Accommodation:** Sheraton Gateway

### Day 2: Wednesday, February 24

Our flight continues to Belize City, arriving about 2 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 Sea and offers two enticing pools in a courtyard full of tropical plants.

**Meals included:** Dinner

**Accommodation:** Radisson Fort George Hotel

### Day 3: Thursday, February 25

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. The highlights include Baron Bliss Lighthouse, Memorial Park, former Belize City Prison, the 1812 St. John's Cathedral, the waterfront promenade, and National Handicraft Centre. At the Mayan ceremonial centre of **Altun Ha**, we visit the Temple of the Masonry Altars which yielded the famous jade head buried with a ruler around 600 A.D. Stroll through the ruin's two main plazas and 13 structures.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Radisson Fort George Hotel

### Day 4: Friday, February 26

We leave Belize City, headed for **San Ignacio**, about a two-hour drive west. On the way, we stop at the **Baboon Sanctuary** which protects some 2,000 monkeys on privately owned land. Called "baboon" in the local Creole dialect, the black

howler monkey thrives throughout the sanctuary, as do nearly 200 bird species, including colourful parrots, hummingbirds, limpkins, manakins, and even toucans. We stay four nights at the San Ignacio Resort, an intimate hotel of only 26 rooms with a 10-minute walk to the bustling public market. It is nestled on a tropical hillside overlooking the Macal River.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** San Ignacio Resort

### Day 5: Saturday, February 27

At the **Belize Butterfly Farm**, watch flocks of colourful butterflies flutter and feed in a beautifully land-scaped, tropical environment and learn about the amazing lifecycle. Next, 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 are continuing and a burial chamber was discovered in 2016. .

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** San Ignacio Resort

### Day 6: Sunday, February 28

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. Next, we go to the **Ajaw Chocolate Cooperative**. The scent of chocolate fills the air while you learn about the chocolate-making process, then roast and grind cacao beans to create your own

chocolate drinks and candies. This workshop emphasizes traditional chocolate-making using minimal ingredients – pure cacao, honey, sugar, spices, but no milk to preserve the chocolate's true flavour. After lunch, we enjoy the Garifuna Experience which includes a short show of their **cultural dance and music**.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** San Ignacio Resort

### **Day 7: Monday, March 1**

This is a day at leisure to do as you wish. You may want to browse through the local market nearby.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** San Ignacio Resort

### **Day 8: Tuesday, March 2**

Leaving San Ignacio, we stop at a school where any donations of school supplies are gratefully received, and the children do a short “thank you” performance. Afterwards, we drive to Belize City airport and take a short flight 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 Sunbreeze Hotel. It is located oceanfront right in the town and has a pool, gardens and restaurant.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Sunbreeze Hotel

### **Day 9: Wednesday, March 3**

We take a snorkelling excursion to **Hol Chan Marine Reserve** off the south end of Ambergris Caye. It was established in 1987 and protects 18 km<sup>2</sup> of coral reefs, seagrass beds, and mangrove forests. Over 160 species of fish have been

recorded in the reserve, along with 40 types of coral, 5 species of sponge, 2 sea grasses, 3 species of sea turtle, and marine mammals such as dolphins and West Indian manatees. Spotted eagle rays and southern stingrays are common at the bottom of the channel. Lobsters, moray eels and sea anemones live among the rocky outcrops, and some of the many corals include brain coral, elkhorn coral, and finger coral. The mangrove forests act as nurseries for many fish species, and the seagrass beds have parrotfish, hogfish, and occasional turtles.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Sunbreeze Hotel

### **Day 10: Thursday, March 4**

This is a free day in San Pedro.

**Option:** An excursion is offered to fly over 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 coral channels in 1971. Cost of this option is \$340 per person.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Sunbreeze Hotel

### **Day 11: Friday, March 5**

We fly back to Belize City and board our late afternoon flight to Calgary, arriving about 10 pm. We stay overnight at the Marriott Hotel in the airport.

**Meals included:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Marriott Hotel YYC

### **Day 12: Saturday, March 6**

Flights are arranged to home cities.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Flight from Kelowna, Kamloops or Victoria to Belize City with stopover in Toronto
- Current air taxes, fees and fuel surcharges
- Airline luggage fee for one suitcase
- Transfer from Belize Airport to hotel
- 11 nights accommodation and hotel taxes
- Coach transportation in Belize for 9 days
- Expert local guides and naturalists
- Locally-guided tour of Belize City
- Belize Museum and House of Culture
- Baboon Sanctuary
- Butterfly Farm tour
- Xunantunich archeological site
- Hand-cranked ferry crossing of Mopan River
- Green Iguana Conservation Project
- Ajaw Chocolate Cooperative
- Garifuna cultural dance and music show
- San Ignacio School visit
- Flight Belize City to/from Ambergris Caye
- Flight from Belize City to Kelowna, Kamloops or Victoria with stopover in Calgary
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
- Gratuities to local guides, drivers & naturalists
- Luggage handling at hotels
- **26 meals:** 9 breakfasts, 8 lunches, 9 dinners

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## 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 WestJet via Toronto to Belize City and return via Calgary. There are overnight stays in Toronto and Calgary since the Belize flight does not connect in one day.

**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** are not available on this tour.

**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 Level 2:** This tour has lots of walking due to the historic nature of some cities, archeological sites, and other attractions, and when you are 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 or at check-in if this could be a concern. The coach cannot carry a scooter. 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 frequent assistance. Please consider these mobility issues prior to booking this tour.

**TOUR 25** **Tour 25:** This is a Tour 25 departure, meaning the tour is limited to 25 participants, offering a more intimate travel experience.



## TOUR POLICIES

**Payments:** A deposit of \$600 per person is requested at the time of booking and balance is due November 23, 2020. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

**Discounts:** Early bookers receive \$250 discount on first 8 seats and \$125 on next 4 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after November 23.

**Cancellation Policy:** Up to October 23, 2020, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From October 24 to November 23, the cancellation charge is \$300 per person. From November 24 to December 23, the cancellation charge is 50% of the tour fare. From December 24, 2020 to January 22, 2021, the cancellation charge is 80% of the tour fare. After January 22, there is no refund.

**Fare Changes:** Changes to currency exchange rates or 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 for medical and cancellation claims, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

**Photo Credits:** Beach (AdobeStock), Xunantunich (AdobeStock).

**Experience Points:** This tour earns 124 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 November 23.

**Consumer Protection BC Licences:** Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842

### KAMLOOPS

(Head Office)

250 Lansdowne St.  
Kamloops, BC V2C 1X7  
**250-374-0831**

#### Office Hours:

8:30am to 4:30pm  
Mon, Tues, Thurs, & Fri  
Wed 9:00am to 4:30pm  
Closed holidays &  
weekends

### KELOWNA

2575 Richter St.  
Kelowna, BC V1Y 2R1  
**250-762-3435**

#### Office Hours:

9:00 am to 4:00 pm  
Closed holidays &  
weekends

### VERNON

3206 35th St.  
Vernon, BC V1T 6B7  
**250-545-9197**

#### Office Hours:

9:00 am to 4:00 pm  
Closed holidays &  
weekends

### PENTICTON

100-159 Wade Ave East  
Penticton, BC V2A 8B6  
**250-493-1255**

#### Office Hours:

9:00 am to 4:00 pm  
Closed holidays &  
weekends

### VICTORIA

102-736 Broughton St.  
Victoria, BC V8W 1E1  
**250-590-7889**

#### Office Hours:

8:30 am to 4:00 pm  
Closed holidays &  
weekends

**WE PLAN. YOU PACK. NO WORRIES!**

[www.wellsgraytours.com](http://www.wellsgraytours.com)

**1-800-667-9552**