

"Jungle, Reefs and Lost Cities"

New AFS Belize & Guatemala

May 17-24, 2025

REGISTER NOW



If you're a nature lover craving adventure, this thrilling vacation is Un-Belizeable! Join us for 8 magical days exploring ancient caves, temples, jungles, and the bluest ocean reefs. Our past AFS groups loved this tropical adventure, and this year, you'll love how we've enhanced it. Our new dual-destination getaway blends the best of both worlds. So close, yet so exotic, with endless superlatives. The marine reserves, national parks, and wildlife sanctuaries we visit are extraordinary.

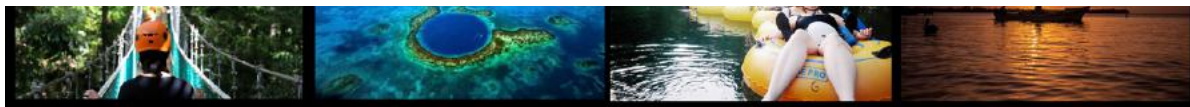
Belize-It or Not, tiny, sultry Belize is the "jewel of Central America" and big on rewards with its blend of cultures, exotic flavors, beautiful beaches, and stunning natural wonders. 40% of the country is protected areas. So diverse, it's the land of monkeys, jaguars, and toucans. The protected reefs are packed with fish, rays, turtles, dolphins, and amazing marine life, making it a snorkeling or diving paradise. You may opt to visit the famous Blue Hole, part of the second-largest Great Barrier Reef in the world, at the end of your trip.

Imagine the fun – cave tubing, jungle walks, plunging waterfalls, ancient temples, snorkeling in a marine reserve, and the amazing Shark Alley. Enjoy a private catamaran to Coral Gardens, Secret Beach, and so much more.

Then it's jungle fever as we cross into mysterious Guatemala, called the "soul of the Earth". Ramble through the dramatic ruins of ancient Mayan wonders. Explore UNESCO World Heritage sites like the hidden ruins of Yaxha and the legendary temples of Tikal, where ghostly Mayan temples poke through the cloud forest.

Some people prefer places closer to home. Come discover Mother Nature's best-kept secret. Each day is an Instagramable moment, and it's value-priced for a two-country, one remarkable trip. Reward yourself with an escape to stir your soul. The people are so friendly here, a warm welcome awaits. You better Belize-it!





REGISTER NOW

Our Glorious AFS Itinerary

Tap for a printable PDF Itinerary



May 17- Welcome to Belize D

Fly USA to Belize city. Best flights are via Miami. Details to come and trip tips. It's your first day in the beautiful country of Belize! You'll be welcomed by one of our guides at the **International Airport of Belize City (BZE)** and get your first taste of the natural beauty here when you arrive at your jungle lodge in the **Cayo district**. This area is known for its lush flora, so don't be

surprised to find yourself surrounded by greenery and flowers.

Take some time to settle in and enjoy the warmth of the country before you get started on your adventure. Enjoy a Welcome Dinner of Belizean cuisines to get to know your fellow travelers.



Overnight: [San Ignacio Resort Hotel](#). **San Ignacio, Belize.** (2 nights)



San Ignacio Hotel in Belize offers a serene escape amidst the lush jungle landscape, providing guests with a perfect blend of comfort and adventure. With its elegant accommodations and stunning views of the Macal River Valley, the hotel creates a tranquil oasis for travelers. The hotel also features an on-site restaurant that serves delicious local cuisine, ensuring a

memorable stay in this beautiful destination.



May 18 - Barton Creek Cave Tubing & Falls **B L**

Wake up to birdsong and palm fronds before having a delicious breakfast with plenty of fresh fruit. It's the perfect start to a busy day of adventure.

We'll head to **Barton Creek Cave**, which Maya people used as a ceremonial site and burial grounds. While the area has been thoroughly looted, there are still pottery shards throughout the cave. Set the tubing begin! The fun starts on our jungle walk through dry caves as we learn about indigenous trees in medicinal plants. Do your headlamps to enter the cool, gentle current of this

sacred place. This is one cave system that cannot be explored on foot, as it's filled with water. Relax in your innertube or canoe while your guide points out interesting sights as you float along, including an impressive cathedral ceiling, rock formations, and bits of Mayan history scattered along the ledges throughout. All our past groups loved this.

Fresh off your adventure through the cave system, you'll travel 30 minutes to **Big Rock Falls**. You'll need to do a little hiking to get to the actual falls and set back into the forest, but this only makes the view that much sweeter when you arrive. Stairs lead down to the natural pools at the bottom of the 150-foot falls. Take your time for photos and a swim before heading back to your hotel. Group lunch included.

Overnight: San Ignacio Resort Hotel.



May 19 - Mayan City of Tikal, Guatemala **B L**



You can't visit Central America without seeing some of the ancient wonders built by the Maya people, thousands of years ago. We'll cross the border into Guatemala and travel to Peten, where **Tikal** is located and spend the day exploring the incredible temples and history here. There are five temples still standing, as well as three



acropolis where nobles once lived. This city was one of the largest Maya cities during its peak. It's now a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**,

preserved for its incredible history. It's truly awe-inspiring to stand in the shadow of nearly intact temples with their intricate stone designs and carvings. The city center covers roughly a square mile of territory and is surrounded by thick jungle. Many visitors enjoy spotting the monkeys and other wildlife that live in the verdant growth as well as spectacular bird life. It's around 2.5 hour drive time to Flores Island Guatemala located on beautiful Lake Peten. Check in hotel and enjoy a group lunch before we set off on tour.

About Tikal - the national park is the largest excavated site among all ruined Mayan cities and Guatemala's most prized cultural gem, both magical and spiritual. The entire mystical complex stirs the imagination with wonder. The temples are among the tallest examples reaching a lofty 230 feet. Some of the earliest Mayan ruins date back as far as the 4th century BC. Abandoned by the Mayans in the 10th century and overgrown with the rainforest, it wasn't until the 17th century that its existence began to draw global attention. American explorer John Lloyd Stephens came across this during his travels. Remote as it is, it wasn't until 1848 that the first expedition would arrive. Major archaeological excavations have uncovered 10 mi.² of ruins and still continue today.



Hotel: [Camino Real Tikal](#) Guatemala. 1 Night



Camino Real Tikal Hotel in Guatemala offers a unique blend of luxury and nature, situated near the breathtaking Tikal National Park. Guests can enjoy comfortable accommodations along with amenities such as a swimming pool, restaurant, and guided tours to explore the ancient Mayan ruins and lush surrounding rainforest. The hotel exists in the midst of the magic of the jungle and the Mayan world, an environment created to remind you that the most important thing is to connect with yourself.

Immersed in the Petenera Jungle, Hotel Camino Real offers rooms surrounded by nature, facing one of the most beautiful lakes in the world. From here you can start any adventure, disconnect from everyday life and live unparalleled experiences.



May 20 - Hidden Ruins of Yaxha B L



After breakfast, we head to the unique and lesser-known Maya ruins of Yaxha, which are not far from Tikal. High on a hill overlooking the beautiful twin Lakes, this classic Mayan site is the third largest in Guatemala. Yaxha translates as "green water". During its heyday in the 8th century, it was home to a population of 20,000.

Its 400+ structures include 5 acropolises, 2 astronomical observatories and 3 ancient ball courts. These days excavations are ongoing.



The crowds are less here since most people just visit Tikal, but the views are stunning and the city itself is well worth a visit. Built alongside a lake, Yaxha wasn't populated until a few hundred years after Tikal. Today, the lake is divided into two, Lago Yaxha and Lago Sacnab. Watch carefully in the trees for parrots and toucans, and you may even see some of the crocodiles that the lakes are famous for.

Once you've thoroughly explored the site and our lunch, it's time to head back around 2 hours to Belize, where you'll settle in for a night of relaxation in Cayo district.

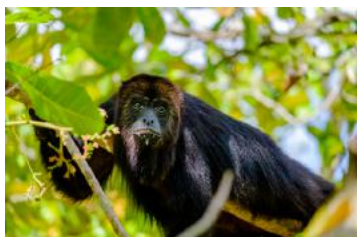
Overnight: San Ignacio Resort Hotel.



May 21 - Altun-Ha & Baboon Sanctuary B. L

Today we delve further into the history of Belize by visiting the ancient city of **Altun-Ha**. This site was a rich, important Mayan trading town that peaked in the classic period of 300 to 1000 AD. The entire site covers 1500 acres. Visitors come to see the central ceremonial precinct of two plaza is surrounded by temples, excavated in the 1960s and now looking squeaky clean with their conservation program.

Next up is the **Baboon Sanctuary** where you can see the fauna of the country up close and personal. While it's named for the baboons, the sanctuary is best known for black howler monkeys.



You may spot crocodiles and other types of wildlife as you hike through the lush forest. (No real baboons inhabit Belize, but locals use that name for black howler monkeys who live in this region. The endangered black howler exist only in Belize, Guatemala and southern Mexico.) The sanctuary is spread over several long establish créole villages in the Belize River Valley. It has increased the primate's population and is an interesting place to visit as it's a

complete community-run conservation operation.

After lunch and the Baboon Sanctuary, you'll return to Belize City where a small plane or water taxi will take you out to San Pedro Island, Ambergris Caye, located in the southern tip of the **Yucatán Peninsula**.

The Cayes - tropical islands cooled by ocean breezes; the Cayes are the favorite destination for visitors here. Around 25 miles long, Ambergris Caye is the largest and most developed of all the 200 islands or Cayes, pronounced: "keys." Here is a divers, snorkelers, birders and fisherman's paradise. The amazing coral reef system, the second largest in the world, lies a half-mile length of the island. This has made San Pedro Town the Caribbean's water sports capital. The Great Blue Hole, Turneffe Islands, Shark Ray Alley, Hole Chan Marine Reserves, Mexico Rocks Lighthouse Reef and many other awesome areas are a short boat ride away. (The Blue Hole in Belize is a breathtaking natural wonder that captivates the imagination with its stunning deep blue waters and striking circular shape. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is renowned for its vibrant marine life, making it ideal to explore its rich underwater ecosystems. The geological history of the Blue Hole, formed during the last Ice Age, adds an intriguing layer of fascination for geologists and nature enthusiasts alike. Its unique biodiversity, including colorful coral reefs and diverse fish species, showcases the incredible beauty of marine ecosystems. The Blue Hole's remote location offers a sense of adventure and tranquility, attracting travelers seeking an unforgettable experience in nature's splendor. Optional Extension to view the Great Blue Hole - this 400 foot in the reef can only be truly appreciated from the air, where you can see the shift of crystal clear sea to the rich marine hues that earned it's name. Fly in a small aircraft over the brightly colored towns and enjoy photographic views of the cayes that Koster along the coast.



Hotel: [SunBreeze Hotel](#) San Pedro, Ambergris Caye



The Sun Breeze Hotel on San Pedro Island, Ambergris Caye, is a tropical paradise that seamlessly blends comfort and natural beauty, making it an ideal destination for travelers seeking both relaxation and adventure. This charming beachfront hotel features spacious, elegantly designed rooms that offer stunning views of the turquoise Caribbean Sea, allowing guests to savor the gentle ocean breeze from their private balconies. With its inviting swimming pool and lush gardens, the hotel creates a serene oasis where visitors can unwind and soak up the sun. Just a short

stroll from the vibrant town of San Pedro, guests have easy access to a variety of local shops, restaurants, and exciting water activities, ensuring a memorable stay in this enchanting island setting. They get five stars on TripAdvisor.



May 22 -Private AFS Catamaran to Hol Chan, Shark Alley, Caye Caulker

B

L

Today, we board our private catamaran to **Hol Chan Reserve**. It means "little channel" and is a natural break in the barrier just 3 to 30 feet deep. It features over 160 different species of fish, a variety of corals, and turtles. It is the Mayan language for "little channel" and is a natural crack in the coral reef, which has consistently been a very fertile fishing area with ample aquatic life. It is

open to the sea ahead of the reef, so it allows aquatic creatures to go from the outside of the coral reef to the inside and vice versa.

It developed into the first marine reservoir in the entire country of Belize, and it has led to the species regenerating and the corals expanding intact. This snorkeling space has the highest variety of aquatic life and coral reefs. You will have the opportunity to see all sorts of corals, fishes, dolphins, ocean turtles and even the elusive manatees that swim the waters of Belize! More than 160 species of fish and 40 types of coral reefs have been documented in this marvelous space.

In **Shark Ray Alley**, we'll pause to watch gentle nurse sharks and stingrays swimming. If you're brave, you can take a dip with them! It is a natural habit for aquatic life such as nurse sharks and stingrays that correlate the sound of an engine to food. The water is shallow and translucent and you will see the nurse sharks and stingrays on the exterior, meaning that even if you do not go into the water you can appreciate it from the boat as well!



Our next stop, Coral Gardens, gives you the unique opportunity to see a wide variety of corals in a small area. You'll snorkel over the reef, which features dozens of colorful coral species, ranging from elegant fan corals to branching fire coral. You'll also spot plenty of tropical fish darting through the water.

Later, boost your energy with a delicious Belizean buffet for lunch, served aboard the catamaran. There will be a nice variety of foods to taste and you can get a better feel for the culinary culture of this area. After lunch, rest a bit and enjoy the view before hopping back in the water to scope out the **Northern Channel**. It's a good spot to see brightly colored fish and maybe even see sea turtles.



Caye Caulker is the next stop on our itinerary, where you can have a drink or a snack at one of the shops or cafes along the sandy main street. Make sure you take advantage of the many photo opportunities here . . . it's a lovely town to walk through. This is just how you picture a legitimate Caribbean island to be and a good contrast to the more developed Ambergris Caye.

Tourism has gradually grown on the island, but it has still kept its truly laid-back atmosphere, with the adage 'go slow'.

The streets all over Caye Caulker are entirely made of sand and are lined with swaying palm trees and souvenir shops. A focal point to visit is the well-known 'Split' and the pub Lazy Lizard, the most famous place for both residents and travelers to hang out for a drink and a swim.

You'll finish up this incredible day with a Sunset Cruise. It's a breathtaking sight to watch the sun dip below the horizon across the glittering ocean. Enjoy our Open Bar and fresh Ceviche to make it an even more memorable experience. [Click here for more information about this tour.](#)

Hotel: [SunBreeze Hotel](#) San Pedro, Ambergris Caye



May 23 - San Pedro Island **B**

Today, you'll have time to check out the picturesque town of **San Pedro** on **Ambergris Caye**, one of the largest Belizean islands. At 25 miles long, it's easiest to explore San Pedro Island in a golf cart. You'll find that the town is full of welcoming people, both local and foreign, as well as small shops and restaurants. However, the real fun lies outside San Pedro.

Exploring on foot or by golf carts, take some time to relax on the pristine white sands of **Secret Beach**. The water here is clear and shallow, making it ideal for swimming and lounging in the sun. You may even catch a glimpse of some of the brightly colored fish that Belize is so well known for. The island boasts a rich cultural heritage, influenced by its Garifuna and Mestizo communities, which can be experienced through local cuisine, music, and festivals. Visitors to San Pedro can enjoy a variety of water activities, such as snorkeling, diving, and fishing, with the nearby Belize Barrier Reef providing a breathtaking backdrop. The island's lively town features colorful buildings, charming shops, and friendly locals, making it a perfect spot for relaxation and exploration. With its combination of natural beauty, cultural richness, and adventurous spirit, San Pedro Island is a must-visit destination for anyone traveling to Belize.

Hotel: [SunBreeze Hotel](#) San Pedro, Ambergris Caye

May 24 - Return home

Sadly, your journey has come to an end and this is the day you return home unless you choose to extend your trip. You'll be taken to the **International Airport in Belize City** to fly home.

Get ready to spend 8 magical days in the jungles, caves, and reefs of Belize with our expert tour guides. Belize is a jewel of a country, where nature is preserved and celebrated, making it the perfect destination for nature lovers. From plunging waterfalls and pristine ocean reefs to Maya ruins and ancient caves, there's something for everyone in Belize. If it's the adventure you're craving, traveling through Belize's natural wonders will satisfy you in every way.

Jungles, Caves and Reefs in Belize

Expenses included:

- All private transportation.
- Seven nights of hotel accommodations.
- Professional certified guides.
- Domestic flights.
- All park entrance fees.
- Tours and excursions as listed.
- Daily breakfast.

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LAND PRICE: \$2875 per person, twins share. Gratuities for licensed guides, drivers, and porters of \$85 will be added to the invoice for your convenience.

Single rooms limited additional \$995

Have you read the Trip Tips yet? Scroll to the top of the page and click the link.

Itineraries are prepared up to a year ahead and things can change. Modifications may be made.

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