



International Medical Relief

PROVIDING COMMUNITY HEALTH
TO POPULATIONS MOST IN NEED

BELIZE



PRE-FIELD BRIEFING PACKET

BELIZE

ABOUT THIS PACKET

This packet has been created to serve as a resource for the Belize Medical Team.

This packet is information about the country and can be read at your leisure or on the airplane. The final section of this booklet is specific to the areas we will be working near (however, not the actual clinic locations) and contains information you may want to know before the trip.

The contents herein are not for distributional purposes and are intended for the use of the team and their families. Sources of the information all come from public record and documentation. You may access any of the information and more updates directly from the World Wide Web and other public sources.



BACKGROUND

Belize, which was known as British Honduras until 1973, was the last British colony on the American mainland. Its prolonged path to independence was marked by a unique international campaign (even while it was still a British colony) against the irredentist claims of its neighbour Guatemala. Belize achieved independence on September 21, 1981, but it has retained its historical link with the United Kingdom through membership in the Commonwealth. Belize is often thought of as a Caribbean country in Central America because it has a history similar to that of English-speaking Caribbean nations. Indeed, Belize's institutions and official language reflect its history as a British colony. However, its culture is more typical of that of other Central American countries. Belize's small population is ethnically diverse and includes a large proportion of immigrants. Since the 1970s, migration has shifted Belize's ethnic composition from a predominantly Creole (mixed African and British descent) population to one in which mestizos (in Belize, people of mixed Mayan and Spanish ancestry) make up half of the total inhabitants. Belize has one of the most stable and democratic political systems in Central America. After its original capital, Belize City, was ravaged by a hurricane in 1961, a new capital, Belmopan, was built inland, about 50 miles (80 km) west of Belize City, which remains the country's commercial and cultural centre as well as its most populous city.

Situated south of the Yucatán Peninsula, Belize is a land of mountains, swamps, and tropical jungle. It is bounded by Mexico to the north, Guatemala to the west and south, and the Caribbean Sea to the east. The country has a 174-mile (280-km) coastline. The southern half of the country is dominated by the rugged Maya Mountains, a plateau of igneous rock cut by erosion into hills and valleys that stretch in a southwesterly to northeasterly direction. The Cockscomb Range, a spur of the Maya Mountains, runs toward the sea and rises to Doyle's Delight. The northern half of the country consists of limestone lowlands and swamps less than 200 feet (60 metres) above sea level.



EXTENDING YOUR STAY

WHAT TO SEE IN BELIZE

Belize is a tropical paradise. It has endless opportunities for swimming, snorkeling, scuba diving, tubing, and kayaking. Encountering its wildlife, whether at the zoo or a preserve, is thrilling. You can meet a howler monkey or swim with a manatee. You'll find fantastic food and delicious, locally distilled spirits. And the history of the area comes alive as you explore the Mayan ruins that dot the landscape. There are plenty of beautiful beaches for lazy days in the sun, but don't forget the sunblock.

#1: Visit a Sacred Cave

Actun Tunichil Muknal, known to locals as ATM, is a sacred cave and Mayan burial site. The tours are highly regulated, require permits and guides, and are limited to groups of eight at a time. At one point, you have to take off your shoes and walk around with just socks, to protect the delicate artifacts. You'll come across the sparkling remains of children sacrificed to the Rain God, including the famous Crystal Maiden whose bones shimmer as a result of calcite deposits.



#2: Xunantunich Mayan Ruins

Across the Mopan River from the village San Jose Succotz, the ancient Mayan city of Xunantunich lies tucked into the lush Belizian jungle. Cross the river in a hand-cranked ferry, then get lost in the network of expertly built temples, observatories, palaces, and plazas. The most prominent of them all is El Castillo. The impressive 130-foot tall structure features stone carvings and stucco friezes decorated with mythological figures and glyphs.

#3: Visit the Blue Hole

Blue Hole is arguably one of the world's most famous scuba diving locations. The problem is, you can't see the water from the water! So if it's panoramic vistas you're after, a much better option is to do a helicopter tour for a bird's eye view of this gorgeous location. Part of the Great Barrier Reef Reserve System, the Great Blue Hole is a United Nations World Heritage Site.



#4: Tube Touring Nohoch Che'en Reserve

An interesting and refreshing way to see the sites of Belize is to go tubing. While there are many options, one of the best is at the Nohoch Che'en Archeological Reserve, also known as the Jaguar Paw. Here you can view stalactites, stalagmites, and crystal columns. The Mayans called the caves their word for hell, Xibalba, and they were used as part of many different religious ceremonies.



#5: Tour Belize City

Taking a tour of Belize City will help you learn about the area's history and culture. It's worth it to check out because you'll get to visit places like the Old Belize City Prison, the historic Chateau Caribbean Hotel, Memorial Park, and Lindbergh Landing. You might even have a chance to visit a rum factory. And don't forget to get a selfie at the famous Belize sign. However, it's best to do this as part of a pre-arranged group tour, as parts of the city should be avoided by tourists, especially in the evening hours.

#7: Swim with the Manatees

At Swallow Caye Wildlife Sanctuary, you can actually swim with West Indian manatees in their natural habitat. You aren't allowed to touch or harass the gentle mammals because Belize is making a conscious effort to protect its natural resources, part of what makes visiting so special. During your visit, you may also come upon stingrays, hawksbill sea turtles, pelicans, herons, and roseate spoonbills.



PUBLIC HEALTH OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW

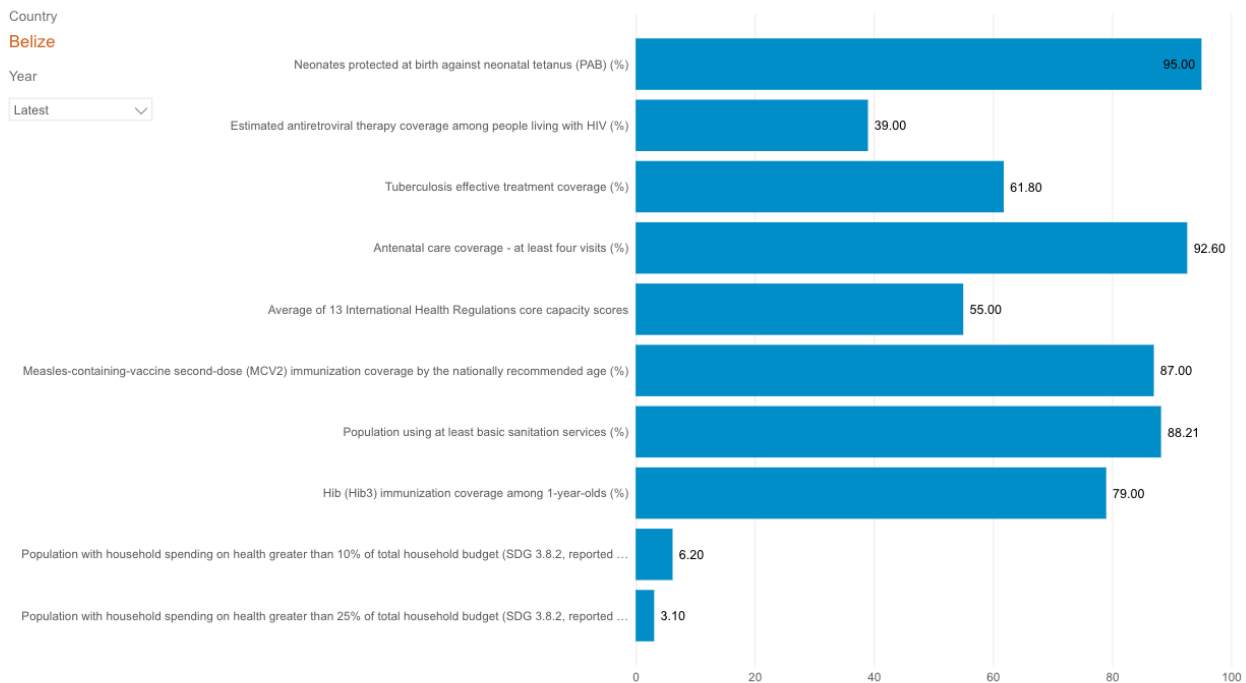
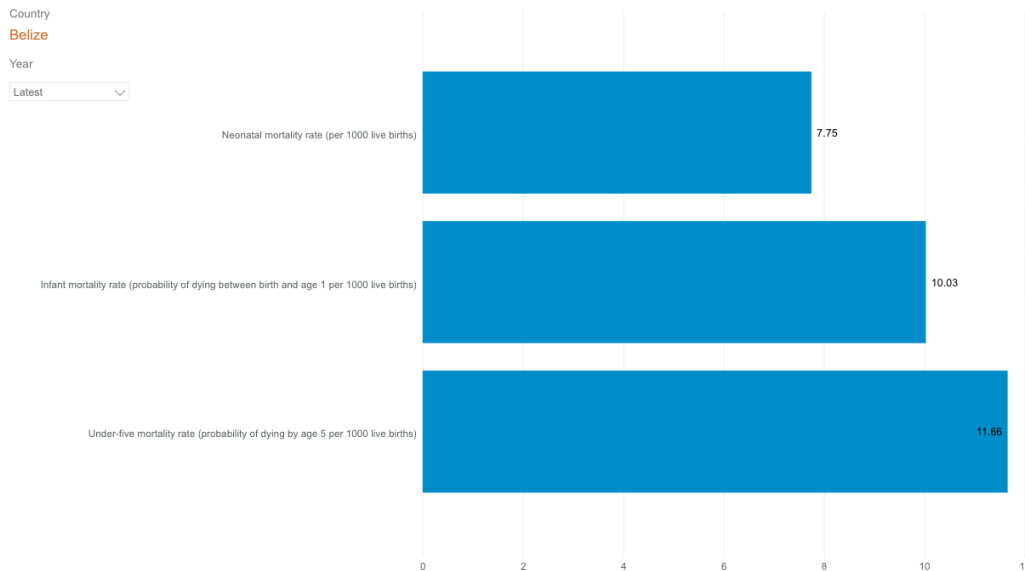
The Ministry of Health established the Information Management Unit in 2014 to ensure that information for health planning, organization, direction, control, and assessment is accurate, timely, and appropriate. Healthcare in Belize is provided through both public and private healthcare systems. The Ministry of Health (MoH) is the government agency responsible for overseeing the entire health sector and is also the largest provider of public health services in Belize. The MoH offers affordable care to a majority of Belizeans with a strong focus on providing quality healthcare through a range of public programs and institutions. In contrast to the public health sector, the private health sector provides care to a smaller portion of the population. However, similar to the public sector, private health services are offered at a relatively low cost with a shared emphasis on quality of care and quality improvement. The Human Rights Measurement Initiative finds that Belize is fulfilling 83.0% of what it should be fulfilling for the right to health based on its level of income. When looking at the right to health with respect to children, Belize achieves 99.1% of what is expected based on its current income. In regards to the right to health amongst the adult population, the country achieves only 86.6% of what is expected based on the nation's level of income. Belize falls into the "very bad" category when evaluating the right to reproductive health because the nation is fulfilling only 63.2% of what the nation is expected to achieve based on the resources (income) it has available.



While public healthcare in Belize is available to all of the population at no direct cost to the individual, a large portion of funding has been allocated to Belize City. Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (KMH), the national and regional referral hospital for Belize, is located in Belize City. Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital is considered to be the premier public healthcare provider in Belize. However, due to funding issues, the hospital has faced many challenges with equipment problems, medical supply shortages, and operation management problems. Outside of Belize City, there are seven additional hospitals (located within the capitals of each of the seven other districts) that provide public healthcare. Among the seven district

capital hospitals there are three regional hospitals: the Southern Regional Hospital in Dangriga, the Northern Regional Hospital in Orange Walk Town, and the Western Regional Hospital in the nation's capital of Belmopan. Together, these regional hospitals provide more services to the public than the capital hospitals of Corozal and Toledo district. Belize has a network of approximately 60 public health clinics, with a total of 700 public hospital beds, that provide primary medical and dental care to rural areas. Most of these health clinics suffer from inadequate staffing, lack of financial resources to handle the patient volume, and a lack of equipment and medicine. As a result, there is reduced access to (quality) care. An additional challenge surrounds the tendency for individuals residing in rural areas to utilize non-western medicine for their health needs rather than seeking publicly available health services. This creates problems in fully assessing the standard of healthcare in Belize and thus delays medical statistics requested by the United Nations and other interested parties.

The US Embassy advises tourists considering medical treatment in Belize to learn as much as they can about the institution and the medical staff. Before traveling, medical tourists should double-check that the facilities they're contemplating are accredited, buy medical evacuation insurance, and make sure that the cost and payment for their treatment are clear to all parties. In addition to other publicly available information, U.S. citizens can find a list of hospitals and air ambulance services on the U.S. Embassy's website.



HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

While public healthcare in Belize is available to all of the population at no direct cost to the individual, a large portion of funding has been allocated to Belize City. Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (KMH), the national and regional referral hospital for Belize, is located in Belize City. Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital is considered to be the premier public healthcare provider in Belize. However, due to funding issues, the hospital has faced many challenges with equipment problems, medical supply shortages, and operation management problems. The government of Belize, with assistance from the European Union and United Nations, has undertaken a major restructuring of the healthcare system. In 1990, the private sector became an increasingly important player in service delivery, providing services to approximately 15% of the population. Private healthcare for many people in Belize continues to play an increasingly important role. The country has three main private hospitals. La Loma Luz Hospital is a private institution run by the Seventh Day Adventist mission. Belize Medical Associates is a 25 bed private hospital that offers radiology and neurological services. Universal Health Services is also another private healthcare facility in Belize City. In total Belize has 100 private hospital beds. Belize's private healthcare sector is divided into nonprofit and for-profit facilities. Belize Medical Associates and Universal Health Services are both for-profit hospitals. La Loma Luz Hospital is a non-profit hospital. In addition, there are over 50 for-profit clinics and four nonprofit clinics spread throughout Belize. Half of these private clinics are located in Belize City. The overlap between private and public is common. Government institutions usually assist private facilities when they lack equipment for a fee. Roughly 14 percent of Belize's health care staff work in both sectors.

COMMUNICABLE AND NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES, HEALTH RISK FACTORS AND TRANSITION

There are a number of health conditions prevalent in Belize. The most common conditions include: malaria, dengue fever, gastroenteritis, cholera, and HIV/AIDS. Since Belize is a developing country, many of these conditions are related to issues surrounding, infrastructure, standard of sanitation, and are reflective of the general lack of education and awareness about how these conditions are acquired and transmitted. Historically, malaria has caused major problems in Belize. Although treatment for Malaria has improved dramatically over the years, there are still concerns about future outbreaks. Similar concerns surround dengue fever, cholera, and HIV/AIDS. Due to the relatively fragile infrastructure and low population, an outbreak of HIV/AIDS or any of the other medical conditions noted above may impact the population size as well as the human resources.



The last case of neonatal tetanus was reported from Stann Creek District in 1997 and the last case of non-neonatal tetanus was in a three-year-old from Orange Walk District in 1998. The last case of Congenital Rubella Syndrome was reported in 1997. The Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR) vaccine was introduced in 1996 and the pentavalent formulation (DPT/Hep/Hib) in 2002. In 2005, MMR coverage was 95%; BCG, DPT, OPV-3 and Hepatitis B coverage were 96%.

Ischemic heart disease was the leading cause of death in Belize in 2019, accounting for around 49.2 deaths per 100,000 people. Interpersonal violence and diabetes mellitus were the second and third most significant causes of death observed in the country that year, with an estimated mortality rate of 37.3 and 36 deaths per 100,000 population.

Main wild diseases in Belize are malaria, Chagas disease (also known as the kissing bug disease), dengue fever, and leishmaniasis. They are known as arthropod-borne diseases, which means they are diseases which can be transmitted to humans from insects. Dengue and malaria are carried by mosquitoes, Chagas' disease is transmitted by the assassin bug, and leishmaniasis by sand flies. Generally, common symptoms are flu-like, with aching joints, headaches, and high temperature. Belize is considered to be a low-risk country for malaria, though antimalarial medication is recommended for those more susceptible to contracting the disease, like women who are pregnant. Belize is currently in the pre-elimination phase in order to control malaria in the region, according to a report from the Health Sector Strategic Plan. Between 2007, where there were 845 cases of malaria, and 2012, with only 37 cases, cases of malaria decreased by 95 percent in Belize. Other regions in Latin America have experienced a reduction in the number of cases of malaria over similar time spans.

CDC International Influenza Program supports the process of the implementation of the International Health Regulations and the national laboratories surveillance networks for influenza. The Influenza Program is also enhancing the capabilities for diagnosis of influenza based on immunofluorescence in the National Reference Laboratory, and the implementation of PAHO's Operational Guidelines for National Intensified Surveillance of Severe Acute Respiratory Infection. The Crisis Leadership Workshop led to the formation of the Commission to support the Preparedness Response Capacity of the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Department of Epidemiology of the University of Miami.



The International Emerging Infections Program (IEIP) aims to prevent the spread of infectious diseases (IEIP). In 2007, the International Emerging Infections Program in Central America and Panama (IEIP-CAP) started working. The program's main goal is to ensure an immediate and efficient response to arising infectious disease threats inside the region by strengthening national governments', Ministries of Health's (MoH), and academic institutions' ability to detect emerging infections and prevent, control, and treat major infectious diseases. In 2010, IEIP-CAP collaborated on RECETA, a Central American community of epidemiologists and microbiologists aimed to improving the region's epidemiology laboratory capacity for foodborne infections. It has provided advanced training to local workers and funded national studies on themes ranging from increased Salmonella surveillance to the burden of disease.

Many natural disasters and civil unrest events have rocked Central America in recent decades. Because such disasters continue to occur, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) partnered with the Central America Ministers of Health Committee (COMISCA) to develop and implement an emergency preparedness and response assessment that comprised eight major functional areas. As part of a regional preparatory effort, the assessment was carried out in the Ministry of Health.

86%

Percentage of Road Crash Fatalities and Injuries in the economically productive age groups (15 - 64 years.)

4:1

Ratio of Male to Female Fatalities with the 15 - 49 year age group being most vulnerable to fatalities.

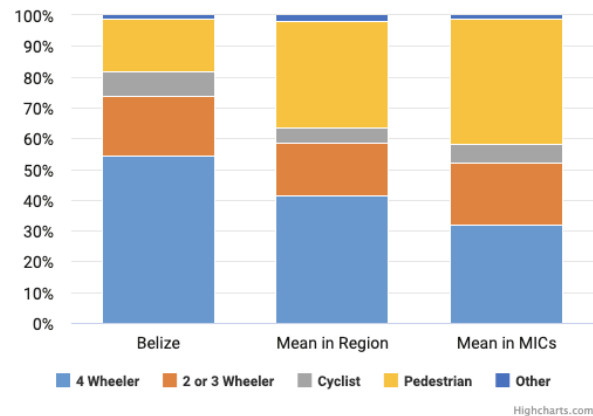
1,007 life yrs.

affected due to disability from road crash injuries per 100,000 people.

Road crash fatalities and injuries snapshot

Country Population, 2016:	366,954
Country Reported Fatalities, 2016:	101
WHO Estimated Fatalities, 2016:	104
GBD Estimated Fatalities, 2016:	71
WHO Est. Fatalities per 100,000 Pop., 2016:	28.3
Estimated Serious Injuries, 2016:	1,560
Cost of Fatalities and Serious Injuries, 2016:	\$167 million
Cost as % of country GDP, 2016:	9.4%

Fatalities by user comparison chart



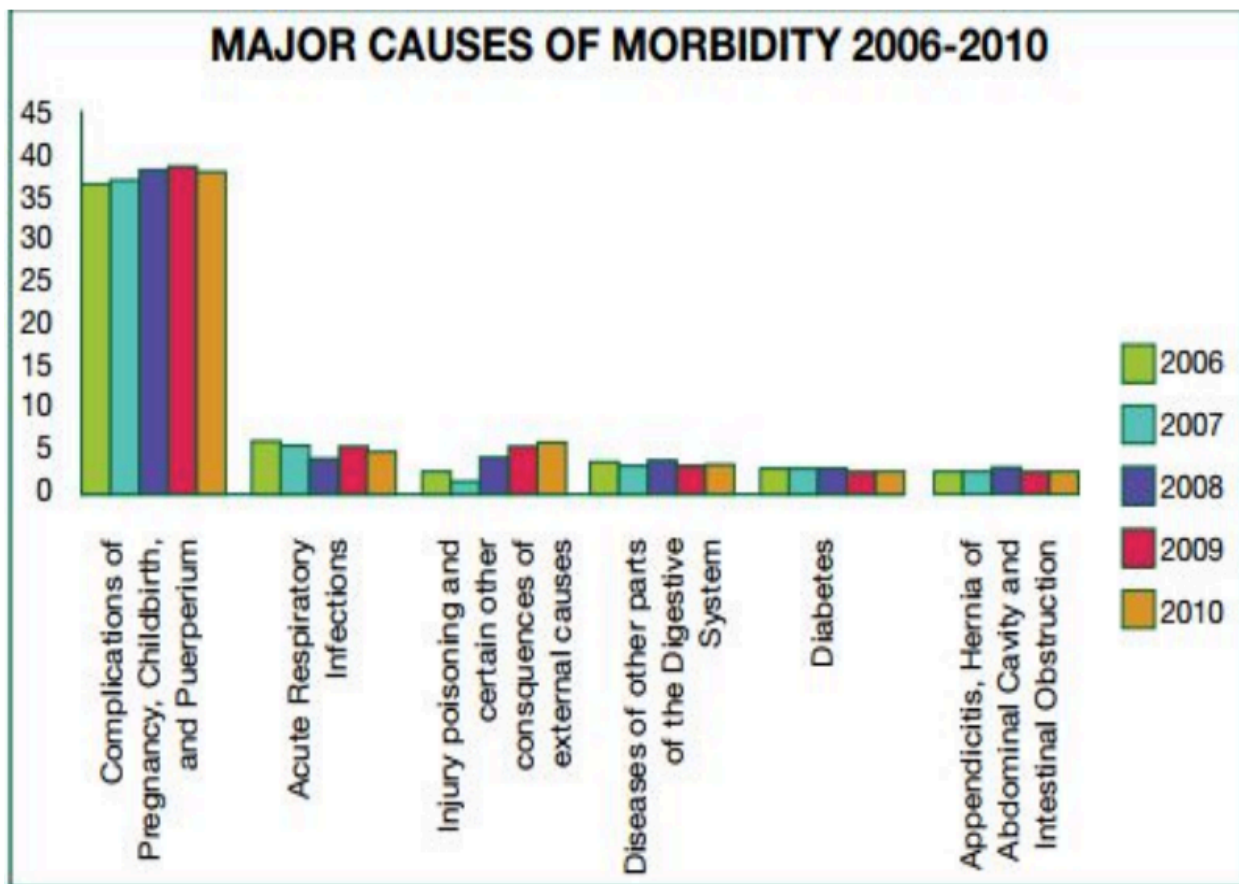
MATERNAL AND NEWBORN HEALTH

A maternal death is defined as a woman dying while pregnant or within 42 days of giving birth from any reason connected to the pregnancy or its care, but not from accidental or incidental causes. Belize has been working to improve the health of women and children and had already been providing mobile and community clinics that treat the leading causes of mortality in women even before the Belize Health Sector Strategic Plan was developed. These efforts were reflected in the data presented in the plan, which shows that between 2003 and 2012 the child mortality rate dropped from 21 deaths per 1,000 live births to 18.3 deaths per 1,000 live births. During this same time frame, the maternal mortality rate dropped from 82 deaths per 1,000 live births to 41.5 deaths per 1,000 live births. Though these are significant decreases in both child and maternal mortality rates, the Belize Health Sector Strategic Plan has a proposed target of 10 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

In Latin America, the most common leading cause of maternal death is Hemorrhage (uncontrolled), which was the leading cause of death in the Caribbean from 1997 to 2002. Thrombosis, hypertensive diseases (high blood pressure), and blocked arteries labor are all also a cause of difficult labor. The Belize government has taken many measures to help reach the UN Millennium Goals, two of which are goals to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates. In order to help with these goals, there has been changes made to the National



Health Insurance (NHI) of Belize to make healthcare more affordable and accessible. A major issue in Belize is the morbidity and mortality caused by pregnancy and childbirth complications. There is a high rate of death and injury due to many different factors. As seen in the figure, it's a landslide.



FLAG



The red and blue colors of the flag represent unity of the people. The 50 olive leaves that border around the perimeter of the Coat of arms symbolize the year of 1950 when Belize, then British Honduras, began its quest for Independence. The Mahogany Tree represents the country's economic foundation. The two men on either side of the tree represent the log wood workers. The fairer carries an axe which symbolizes the log wood cutters and the darker carries an oar to symbolize how the workers traveled by river to find and transport the log-wood. Under the Mahogany Tree is a shield separated into three - the left is an oar and squaring axe, the right is a saw and beating axe, and the base has a ship in full sail. Directly below the shield is the National Motto, "Sub Umbra Floreo", in Latin which translates to "Under the Shade I Flourish" referring to the shade of the Mahogany Tree.

Country Overview

General Overview

Belize was originally an area that was inhabited by the Maya (c. 300 BCE-900 CE); the ruins of their ceremonial centres, including Caracol and Xunantunich, can still be seen. The Spanish claimed sovereignty from the 16th century but never tried to settle Belize, though they regarded the British who did as interlopers. British loggers arrived in the mid-17th century; Spanish opposition was finally overcome in 1798. When settlers began to penetrate the interior, they met with Indian resistance. In 1871 British Honduras became a crown colony, but an unfulfilled provision of an 1859 British-Guatemalan treaty led Guatemala to claim the territory, a situation still unresolved. Belize became independent on Sept. 21, 1981. Although Guatemala officially recognized the territory's independence in 1991, a British force, stationed there to ensure the new country's security, was not withdrawn until 1994.

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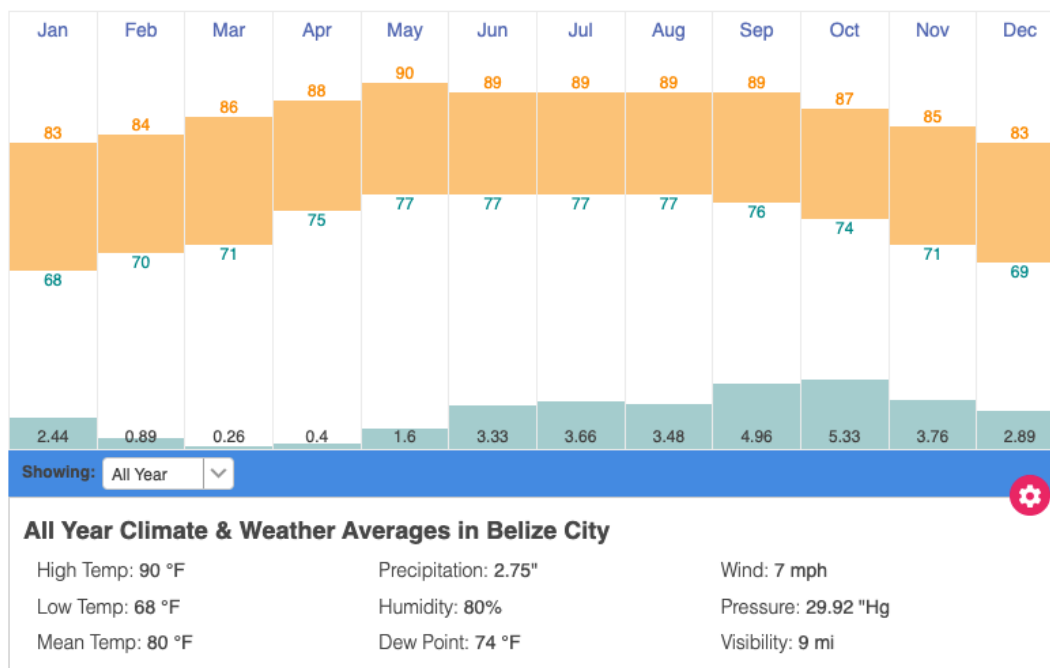
Belize is relatively prosperous and has a developing free-market economy with some government participation. It is a constitutional monarchy with two legislative houses; its head of state is the British monarch, represented by a governor-general, and the head of government is the prime minister. The Central Bank of Belize oversees the country's banks and issues the country's currency, the Belize dollar. Chief trading partners include the United States, the United Kingdom, China, Mexico, Curacao, Panama, and certain members of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (Caricom), which Belize joined in 1974. The country's main exports are seafood, sugar, citrus products, bananas, and clothing, and its chief imports include machinery and transport equipment, food, fuels and lubricants, and chemicals. Since the 1990s, Belize has had a substantial trade deficit in goods.

Belize's government is based on the British parliamentary system. The 1981 constitution provides for a bicameral National Assembly composed of an elected House of Representatives and an appointed Senate. Members of the House and the Senate both serve five-year terms. The governor-general, a Belizean national who represents the British crown, nominally appoints the prime minister (the leader of the majority party in the House) and the opposition leader (the leader of the principal minority party). The prime minister appoints the cabinet. Local government consists of the Belize City Council and town boards with authority over most municipal affairs. Most villages have councils, and some Mayan villages have an *alcalde* (a traditional community-elected leader) with limited powers. The Mennonite community administers its own form of local government.

CLIMATE AND WEATHER

Belize has a subtropical climate, with a well-marked dry season from late February to May and a wet season from June to November that is interrupted from August to September by another dry season. The mean temperature in Belize City is about 74 °F (23 °C) in December and 84 °F (29 °C) in July. The mean annual rainfall increases sharply from about 50 inches (1,270 mm) at Corozal on the northern frontier to 175 inches (4,445 mm) at Punta Gorda in the south, while at Belize City rainfall amounts to about 75 inches (1,900 mm). There are, however, considerable yearly variations throughout the country. Trade winds blow onshore most of the year, and from September to December northerly winds bring cooler, drier air. Hurricanes (tropical cyclones) are a threat from July through November. A hurricane in 2000 devastated the country’s infrastructure and displaced tens of thousands of Belizeans.

As with any country that borders the Caribbean, Belize has the potential to fall in the path of a hurricane. Generally speaking, hurricane season in the Atlantic runs from June until mid-November, with the potential for dangerous, destructive, and potentially life-threatening storms to arise during that time. In Belize, the highest probability for these storms comes between August and October, with the occasional outlier occurring from time to time.



GEOGRAPHY

Honduras' north coast is bordered by the Caribbean Sea, while the Pacific Ocean extends to the south via the Gulf of Fonseca. Honduras is primarily a mountainous country with limited coastal lowlands. In the northeast is La Mosquitia, a big undeveloped lowland rainforest, while in the northwest is the densely populated lowland Sula valley. The Ro Plátano Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO world heritage site in La Mosquitia, is bordered by the Coco River, which separates Honduras and Nicaragua.

The lowlands are drained by the navigable Belize River (on which stands Belize City), the New River, and the Hondo River (which forms the northern frontier with Mexico). Both the New and the Hondo rivers drain into Chetumal Bay to the north. South of Belize City the coastal plain is crossed by short river valleys. Along the coast is the Belize Barrier Reef, the second largest barrier reef in the world, which is fringed by dozens of small islands called cays. The reef reserve system was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1996. Belize's most fertile soils are the limestone soils found in the northern half of the country and in the coastal plain and river valleys in the south.



About three-fifths of Belize is forested. There are at least 50 different forest tree species, including mahogany, Santa Maria (*Calophyllum brasiliense*), cedar, and ironwood. In the north, limestone soils support deciduous forests, and sapodilla and mahogany predominate. In the south, the forest is taller and is evergreen. Santa Maria, rather than mahogany, flourishes on the plateau, and oak and pine grow on some of the plateau ridges. The rivers are largely bordered by swamp forests. On the southern coastal plain and inland from Belize City, open savanna (grassland) is marked by scattered oaks, pines, and palmetto palms. The coast is fringed with mangrove trees. The highlands are mostly forested and are largely uninhabited.

Situated south of the Yucatán Peninsula, Belize is a land of mountains, swamps, and tropical jungle. It is bounded by Mexico to the north, Guatemala to the west and south, and the Caribbean Sea to the east. The country has a 174-mile (280-km) coastline.



HISTORY

Between 1500 BC and 1200 BC, the Maya civilization moved into Belize and flourished until around 1000 AD. Cahal Pech, Caracol, Lamanai, Lubaantun, Altun Ha, and Xunantunich are among the Maya ruin sites that illustrate the complex civilization and much denser population of that time period. Spanish conquistadors and missionaries made the first recorded European inroads in the region in the 16th century. The availability of logwood was one of the area's draws, attracting British residents as well. Until 1862, Belize was referred to as the "Colony of British Honduras." In 1871, it was designated as a royal colony. Several constitutional amendments were passed as a result to expand representative government. In January 1964, Internal Self-Government was granted. In June 1973, the territory's official name was changed from British Honduras to Belize, and full independence was awarded on September 21, 1981.

The Maya civilisation arose at least three millennia ago in what is now southeastern Mexico, Guatemala, western Honduras, and Belize, in the lowlands of the Yucatán Peninsula and the highlands to the south. Despite over 500 years of European dominance, many features of this civilization still exist in the area. Some hunting and foraging bands settled in tiny farming towns around 2500 B.C., domesticating crops including corn, beans, squash, and chili peppers. Within the Maya core civilization, a plethora of languages and subcultures arose. The core institutions of Maya civilization arose between 2500 B.C. and 250 A.D. The classic period, which began approximately 250 A.D., was the pinnacle of this civilization.

When Europeans arrived in Belize in the 16th and 17th centuries, many Maya remained. Several tribes of Maya people resided in the area that is now Belize in the 16th century, according to archeological and ethnohistorical study. Because the political geography of the time did not correspond to modern-day borders, numerous Maya provinces stretched across the borders of modern-day Belize, Mexico, and Guatemala. The invasion of Yucatán began in 1527, when Spain dispatched expeditions to Guatemala and Honduras. Though the Maya put up a strong fight against Spanish "pacification," diseases spread by the Spaniards decimated the indigenous population and undermined their resistance to conquest. Spanish missionaries built churches in Maya villages in the 17th century.

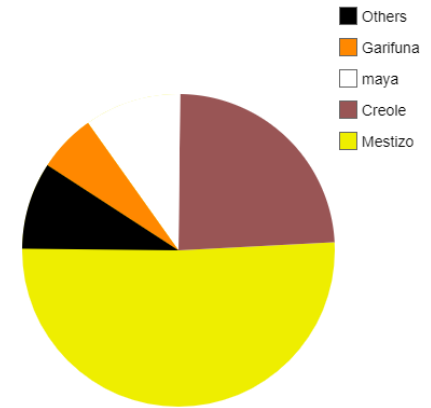
Spain attempted to preserve a monopoly on trade and colonization in its New World possessions in the 16th and 17th centuries, but northern European countries were increasingly drawn to the region by the prospects for trade and settlement. In order to contest and eventually overthrow Spain's monopoly, these powers used smuggling, piracy, and war. The Dutch, English, and French encroached on Spain's New World possessions in the 17th century. English buccaneers began cutting logwood (*Haematoxylum campechianum*), which was used in the creation of a textile dye, in southeastern Mexico and the Yucatán Peninsula in the early 17th century. Buccaneers from the United Kingdom began attacking Spanish ships from the coast. In the 1650s and 1660s, buccaneers ceased robbing Spanish logwood ships and began chopping their own wood. Buccaneers, on the other hand, did not establish permanent settlements. The change from buccaneering to logwood cutting was aided by a 1667 pact in which European nations committed to combating piracy.

The dispute between Britain and Spain over the British right to cut logwood and reside in the area raged on. Whenever the two powers were at odds in the 18th century, the Spanish assaulted British settlers. The Spanish, on the other hand, never established in the area, while the British always came back to increase their trade and settlement. The Treaty of Paris of 1763 granted Britain the right to cut logwood, but it also asserted Spanish authority over the area. The British settlement was abandoned when war broke out again in 1779, until the Treaty of Versailles in 1783 enabled the British to chop logwood in the area once more. However, the logwood trade had dwindled by that time, and Honduran Mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) had replaced it as the primary

British Honduras, which is what Belize was known as at one time, had two challenges on the road to independence: British reluctance to enable inhabitants to rule themselves until the early 1960s, and Guatemala's long-standing claim to the entire territory (Guatemala had repeatedly threatened to use force to take over British Honduras). By 1961, Britain had agreed to let the colony become self-governing. Negotiations between the United Kingdom and Guatemala resumed in 1961, but the elected representatives of British Honduras were excluded from the discussions. George Price turned down a proposal from Guatemala to create British Honduras a "associated state," maintaining his desire to lead the province to independence.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The majority of Belizeans are multiracial. Mestizos account for 52.9 percent, Creoles for 25.9%, Maya for 11.3 percent, Garifuna for 6.1 percent, East Indian for 3.9 percent, Mennonites for 3.6 percent, White for 1.2 percent, Asian for 1.2 percent, Other for 1.2 percent, and Unknown for 0.3 percent.



The majority of Europeans are descended from colonial settlers from Spain and the United Kingdom. The majority of Spaniards fled the country shortly after it was taken over by British colonists, who also left following independence. Beginning in 1958, German Mennonites of "Russian" Mennonite and Pennsylvania Dutch ancestry began settling in Belize, primarily in rural regions.

Because Belize's ancient Maya peoples were wiped out by disease and conflicts, or fled to Mexico and Guatemala, the majority of Belize's Maya today are descended from other ethnic groups. Three language groups make up the majority of the Maya population today. In the late 1840s, the Yucatec moved to Belize to avoid the Caste War in Yucatán, Mexico. Their descendants live in the bordering districts of Orange Walk and Corozal. A local Yucatec Maya population known as the Ichiache Maya had inhabited the territory before the great migration of Yucatec Maya from Mexico to Belize. The sugar cane sector employs the majority of Yucatec Maya nowadays. The sugar cane sector employs the majority of Yucatec Maya nowadays. Many Q'eqchi' fled Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, in the 1870s and 1880s, when their community land was seized for coffee plantations and they were forced to work. In the Toledo district, they established villages.

According to the 2010 census, Catholics make up 40.0 percent of Belize's population, down from 49.6% in 2000 and 57.7% in 1991; Protestants make up 31.7 percent of the population, with some groups seeing slight increases in percentage since 2000 (8.5 percent Pentecostal; 5.5 percent Adventist; 4.6 percent Anglican; 3.8 percent Mennonite; 3.6 percent Baptist; 2.9 percent Methodist; 2.8 percent Nazarene); Jehovah's Witnesses make up Other religions are practiced by 10.2 percent of Belizeans (an increase since 2000), including indigenous Maya, Garifuna, Obeah, and Myalism, as well as minorities of Mormons, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Bahás, Rastafarians, and others. Mennonites are largely found in the rural regions of Cayo and Orange Walk, and are of German heritage. In Belize, 15.6 percent of the population does not follow any religion, up from 9.4 percent in 2000.

Belize's current population is 408,487 people, according to the Belize Statistical Institute. Belize census data was produced in 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931, and 1946, in conjunction with a British Empire census. In 1960, 1970, 1980, 1991, 2000, and 2010, Belize conducted its own censuses. Since then, none have been held.

MARRIAGE

Despite the fact that many Belizean women are religious and that marriage is valued, Belizean women frequently have children at a young age and not necessarily within a marriage. Some people marry or stay in commonlaw relationships and have additional children. Others never marry, and as a result, extended relatives, siblings, and friends frequently pitch in to assist with the children's upbringing. Divorce laws are stringent, although single-parent families are fairly prevalent and socially acceptable. Women are often economically dependent on men, especially in poorer homes. Women frequently stay at home to care for and raise their children as well as maintain the household while their husbands work. While there is a chauvinistic culture, men participate in child rearing and show a sensitivity toward children that is uncommon in North America and Europe. Women don't appear to be oppressed on the surface. Male age at first marriage has changed significantly in recent years, however it has tended to decline from 1980 to 2016, ending at 22.5 years in 2016.

EDUCATION

The Education Act governs education in Belize (Chapter 36 of the Laws of Belize). According to the Human Rights Measurement Initiative (HRMI), Belize is only achieving 84.4 percent of what it should be for the right to education, depending on the country's financial level. HRMI examines the rights to elementary and secondary education in order to break down the right to education. When considering Belize's financial level, the country achieves 92.5 percent of what should be achievable for elementary education based on its resources (income), but only 76.4 percent for secondary education. Belize's educational system is made up of a variety of subsystems. The system is divided into three levels, each of which is based on British education: primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Belizean children begin their primary education with two years of "infant" classrooms, followed by six years of "standards." There are four "forms" of secondary education. Sixth form is a two-year post-secondary



program that was designed to prepare pupils for the Cambridge Advanced or "A-Level" exams. Since the early 1970s, associate of arts degrees approved by the United States Association of Junior Colleges have been awarded by sixth-form institutions.

Primary education in Belize is obligatory between the ages of six and fourteen years. In the year 2001, 93.2 percent of children aged 5 to 14 went to school. If their children of compulsory school age do not attend school on a regular basis, the Education Act punishes them with a fine of up to US\$100. Even Nevertheless, due to budgetary constraints, there are a huge number of school dropouts and children who do not receive any education. Although primary education is free in some

schools (primarily in the Orange Walk and Cayo districts), accompanying costs such as uniforms, books, and annual school fees put a pressure on poor families.

While the majority of Belize's tertiary and secondary schools have access to the Internet and computer labs, much of the country's elementary school system does not. Although several well-known high schools and primary schools in more metropolitan regions have computers and Internet connectivity, they have yet to integrate technology into their curricula.

RELIGION

In Belize, Christianity is the most widely practiced religion. The Roman Catholic Church is the single largest religion, with roughly 40.1 percent of the population (129,456 members), down from 49.6 percent in 2000, 57.7 percent in 1991, and 61.9 percent in 1980, however absolute numbers have climbed. Pentecostals account for 8.4% of the population, up from 7.4% in 2000 and 6.3 percent in 1991, while Seventh-day Adventists account for 5.4 percent of the population, up from 5.2 percent in 2000 and 4.1 percent in 1991. The Anglican Church's popularity has been progressively falling, with only 4.7 percent of the population believing in it in 2010, down from 6.95 percent in 1991. The rural districts of Cayo and Orange Walk are home to about 12,000 Mennonites (3.7 percent of the population). In 2010, those who indicated they had no religious affiliation made up 15.5 percent of the population (just under 50,000 people), more than double the numbers from the 2000 census. Other religions are represented by 11.2 percent of the population, including Maya, Afro-American religions (Garifuna, Obeah, and Myalism), Mormons, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Bahás, Rastafarians, and others.

In 2010, there were 1,333 Mormons, but the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints now claims 4,807 members (in 11 congregations). The Bahá Faith has 216 adherents according to the 2010 census (down slightly from the 2000 census, which counted 219). Buddhists (820, or 0.3 percent of the population), Hindus (about 650), and Muslims were also found in tiny numbers (about 620). According to the Association of Religion Data Archives, 2.5 percent of the population identifies as Bahá, 2.0 percent as Hindu, 1.1 percent as Jewish, 1.0 percent as spiritists, 0.6 percent as followers of indigenous faiths, 0.5 percent as Muslim, and 0.5 percent as Buddhist as of 2005. They believe that there were 7,776 Bahás in Belize in that year, making it the country with the greatest percentage of Bahás in the world (though not nearly the highest absolute number). Only 202 Bahás were counted in the 2010 Belize Population Census, out of a total population of 304,106, yielding a fraction of 0.066 percent, significantly less than 2.5 percent.

The Diocese of Belize City-Belmopan oversees Roman Catholic churches in Belize, while the Diocese of Belize oversees Anglican churches in the Church in the Province of the West Indies. Catholics travel to the country on a regular basis for special gospel revivals. Santa Elena is home to the Greek Orthodox Church. Since the 18th century, Muslims have lived in Belize. Many people converted to Islam during the 1960s civil rights movement. In Honduras, 47 percent of respondents say they are Roman Catholic, 36 percent say they are evangelical Protestant, and 17 percent say they are "other" or don't know. Since the 18th century, Muslims have lived in Belize. Many people converted to Islam during the 1960s civil rights movement. It's also popular among Middle Eastern immigrants, and some Kriols have taken to it. Mosques are still being constructed in large cities. Masjid Noor Mosque was established by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in Belize City at the start of 2020. It is still one of the fastest growing Islamic sects in Belize. The majority of Indian immigrants practice Hinduism.

The freedom of religion is guaranteed by Belize's constitution. Discrimination on the basis of religion is prohibited. A legislation against blasphemy isn't enforced. With the assent of the Governor-General, the Council of Churches, a body comprised of representatives from several Christian groups, appoints one senator to the Belizean Senate. The law also stipulates that religious views of inmates in imprisonment must be respected and accommodated. In order to function in the country, religious organizations must register with the government. Certain taxes are exempted for religious organizations. Religious workers must register with the government and obtain a religious worker's permission. private religious schools

Nondenominational "spirituality" programs that present world religions, as well as ethics and morality related with religion, are part of the public school curriculum for primary schools. The majority of public schools are run by Christian churches. A few schools are run by religious organizations that are not Christian.



CULTURE

Belize's culture is a mash-up of influences and people from Kriol, Maya, East Indian, Garinagu (also known as Garifuna), Mestizo (a blend of Spanish and Native Americans), Mennonites (Germans), and a variety of other cultures ranging from Chinese to Lebanese. It's a unique blend that has developed over the course of the country's lengthy and sometimes brutal history. The traditions of La Llorona, Cadejo, the Tata Duende, and X'tabai can all be found in Belizean folklore. In Belizean tradition, the concept of mystical healing and Obeah is significant, and there is still talk of wicked shaman techniques such as putting "Obeah" on particular dwellings. This is known to be accomplished by burying a bottle containing the 'evil' under a nearby tree.

Punta is the most prominent Garifuna music genre, and it has also become the most popular genre in Belize. It is distinctly Afro-Caribbean, and like similarly descended forms, it is sometimes regarded to be ripe for international popularization (reggae, calypso, merengue, etc.). Andy Palacio, Herman "Chico" Ramos, "Mohobub" Flores, Adrian "The Doc" Martinez, and Lindsford "Supa G" Martinez are all well-known actors. A slower, more melodic version known as Paranda has recently gained popularity because of the skills of Aurelio Martinez of Honduras and Paul Nabor of Punta Gorda; Nabor's hallmark track "Naguya Nei" is regarded the Garifuna nation's informal popular anthem.



Belizeans of all ethnic backgrounds consume a diverse range of meals. Breakfast typically consists of bread, flour tortillas, journey (johnny) cakes, or homemade fry jacks. It's served with a variety of cheeses (Dutch cheese, band back cheese, craft cheese, etc.) refried beans, various types of eggs, or sweetened condensed milk cereal (corn flakes, oatmeal). Milk, coffee, tea, Milo, Ovaltine, Cocoa, and orange juice are among the morning beverages (fresh or concentrated). Breakfast is referred to as "drinking tea." Lighter dishes include beans and rice with or without coconut milk, tamales, panades (fried maize (corn) shells with beans or fish), and meat pies, as well as escabeche (onion soup), chilmole (black soup made with black recardo), stew

chicken, and garnaches (fried tortillas with beans, cheese, and more).

Football and basketball are the most popular sports, with league teams dating back to the early 1990s receiving strong support. Volleyball, track and field, cricket, jai-alai, boxing, cycling, and softball are among the other sports popular in Belize, all of which have official associations. Triathlon, canoeing, chess, darts, billiards, martial arts, and even ice hockey have all gained popularity in recent years (in the Western Cayo District among the Mennonite population). Every Easter weekend, an international cross-country bicycle event is held. Belize boasts the world's second biggest barrier reef, as well as hundreds of small islands known as cayes, which are popular vacation spots for city dwellers, especially during school vacations and Easter.

POVERTY

Poverty in Belize is a result of the country's significant sensitivity to external shocks, such as natural disasters, climate change consequences, and trade terms. Due to high debt levels and little fiscal headroom, the government's ability to meet these challenges is constrained. Belize, as a lower middle-income country, saw a halt in growth and an increase in poverty as a result of the global economic crisis, which coincided with rises in food and fuel costs in 2008. According to the most current Country Poverty Assessment, the overall poverty rate climbed from 34 percent to 41 percent between 2002 and 2009, while extreme poverty increased from 11 percent to 16 percent. In 2010, the country began to expand again, with GDP increasing by 2.9 percent. Poverty in Belize is a result of the country's great vulnerability to natural disasters. Although agriculture has long been the backbone of Belize's economy, the services sector rose in significance during the 1990s. It is now the country's major contributor, accounting for 60% of GDP, according to the World Bank.

According to data, the country's overall economic development may not have translated into an equitable distribution of wealth and well-being. According to the Country Poverty Assessment, "inequality is thus the manifestation of the core structural problem, which Belize's development policy must address." Belize's administration continues to place a high priority on poverty alleviation in its policies. The State Department has announced intentions to spend \$500,000 through the US Mission in Belize to develop jobs for youngsters and eliminate poverty in Belize. "Marginalized adolescents are empowered when given a voice and chances," according to the grant announcement. Providing economic opportunities and/or business training to disenfranchised adolescents and their communities will help them attain their full potential as entrepreneurs while also improving citizen security." The funding proposal's goal is to "promote favorable cultural and social circumstances while confronting the fundamental causes of violence and crime in an innovative and effective manner." Up to ten grants, totaling \$500,000 USD, may be awarded by the US Embassy. NGOs, non-profit organizations, international government organizations (IGOs), educational institutions, and individuals are all eligible to apply.

The Toledo district has the highest poverty rate, with a large number of indigenous subsistence farming families, including mine. This indigenous group alone accounts for 40% of the destitute in the country (The Caribbean Development Bank Poverty Assessment Report, 2012). During the rainy season, these villages typically lack access to running water, relying mainly on clean rivers and big rains. Many communities also lack electricity, prompting individual households to invest in alternate energy sources such as solar panels. Poverty is reinforced in southern Belize by indigenous and socioeconomic disadvantages, poor infrastructure development, and a lack of youth leadership training. Addressing these concerns and strengthening underprivileged communities prompted me, a member of a small Maya village in southern Belize, to take action and establish the Program of Opportunities, Development, and Ethical Entrepreneurship (PODER).



Survival Guide

Etiquette

In Belize, patience and friendliness go a long way.

- Don't criticize local customs—typically there's a reason that tourists aren't aware of—and, especially with officials, maintain a courteous demeanor.
- Belizeans are known for their warmth and friendliness. Before asking for directions, a table in a restaurant, or entering a store or museum, greet them with a "Good morning." It will set a pleasant tone, and you will be greeted more warmly as a result. Take no photographs inside churches.
- Do not photograph indigenous people without first obtaining their consent. It is traditional to thank them with a small sum of money.
- Many buses feature three persons seating abreast, with the exception of first-class buses based in Guatemala and Mexico. Despite the fact that tourists are typically larger than locals, you should follow the guideline and create room for others. Stepping into the aisle to allow someone to take a center or window seat is acceptable.
- Wherever there is a lot of tourist traffic, such around Tikal, you'll discover a few English speakers; you'll have a lot less luck in places off the beaten route. In general, El Petén speaks relatively little English, and some tiny settlements in the region speak none at all. Furthermore, to avoid appearing rude or useless, many Guatemalans will answer "yes" or "si" even if they don't understand your question. To avoid becoming perplexed, ask queries like "Where is so-and-so?" rather than "Is so-and-so this way?"



Language

The major languages spoken in Belize are English, Spanish, and Kriol, which are all spoken by more than 40% of the population, according to the 2010 census. Mayan languages, as well as German, are spoken in some locations. Although English is the national language and the principal language of public education, it is only spoken natively by a small percentage of the population. Spanish is also taught at elementary and secondary institutions. Bilingualism is a relatively common occurrence. In Belize, the literacy rate for individuals aged 15 and up is 82.68 percent as of 2021.

Standard English and Belizean Creole:

Belize, a former British colony, has English as its official language. It is the primary language of government, education, and the majority of the media. During most informal, social, and interethnic communication, the majority of Belizeans, regardless of ethnicity, speak Belizean Creole (also known as Kriol), an English-based creole.

According to Belize's Official Education Policy of 2008, children should be educated in Creole when it is suitable, but classes should not be given in Creole. When a Creole language coexists with its lexifier language, such as in Belize, a creole continuum emerges between the Creole and the lexifier.

Code-switching is the term for this. As a result, substantiating or distinguishing the number of Creole speakers from English speakers is challenging. Belizean Creole is often regarded as the country's lingua franca. The Belize Kriol Project developed an English/Kriol dictionary in 2007, which includes translations and grammatical descriptions.

Spanish:

Mestizo, Latino, and Hispanic are self-identified by about half of Belizeans. About 45 percent of the population speaks Spanish as a first language, and it is taught in schools to children who do not speak it. In northern communities like Corozal and San Pedro, "Kitchen Spanish" is an intermediate form of Spanish blended with Belizean Creole. A major segment of the population is multilingual, and over half of the population is bilingual. Multilingualism is strongly supported in the society because it is such a small and multiethnic country surrounded by Spanish-speaking countries.

Spanish is the official language of about 21 different countries. It is the world's second most extensively spoken native language, after Mandarin Chinese; the world's fourth most widely spoken language overall, after English, Mandarin Chinese, and Hindi; and the world's most widely spoken Romance language. Today, Hispanic America is home to the majority of Spanish speakers. Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Puerto Rico all have Spanish as their official language.

Other languages:

Three Mayan languages are spoken in Belize: Q'eqchi', Mopan, an endangered indigenous Belizean language, and Yucatec Maya. The Arawakan-based Garifuna language is spoken by around 16,100 people. Mennonite settlements and villages speak German. In everyday life, the vast majority of Mennonites in Belize speak Plautdietsch, while a minority of about 10% speak Pennsylvania German. In worship, reading, and writing, both groups employ Martin Luther's German Bible translation and an old-fashioned Standard German.

Useful Phrases

PHRASE	IN SPANISH	PRONOUNCIATION GUIDE
Good morning	Buenos días	bway nos dee ahs
Good afternoon	Buenas tardes	bway nahs tar days
Good evening	Buenas noches	bway nahs noh chayss
Hello	Hola	oh lah
How are you?	¿Cómo está?	coh moh es tah
Fine, thank you	Bien, gracias	bee ayn, grah cee ahs
Please	Por favor	por fah vohr
Nice to meet you	Mucho gusto	moo choh goos toh
Where is?	¿Dónde está?	dohn des tah
I would like...	Me gustaría	may goo stah ree ah
How much?	¿Cuánto cuesta?	cwahn toh cways tah
I need...	Yo necesito	yoh nay say see toh
To the right	A la derecha	ah lah day ray chah
To the left	A la izquierda	ah lah eez kee ayr dah
Straight ahead	Derecho	Day ray choh
At the corner	En la esquina	a lah ays kee nah
Excuse me, sorry	¡Perdone!	perh dohn eh
Have a nice day!	¡Que tengas un buen día!	keh tehng gahs oon bwehn THEE ah
Good-bye	Adiós	ah dee ohs

<i>¿Dónde esta el cambio de moneda?</i>	Where is the money exchange?
<i>¿Dónde está la parada de autobús más cerca?</i>	Where is the nearest bus stop?
<i>Dónde está la estación de tren más cerca?</i>	Where is the nearest train station?
<i>Un billete para... , por favor</i>	A ticket to... , please
<i>Estoy perdido</i>	I'm lost
<i>Derecho</i>	Straight ahead
<i>A la derecha</i>	To the right
<i>A la izquierda</i>	To the left
<i>En la esquina</i>	At the corner
<i>Aquí / Allí</i>	Here / There
<i>¿Qué me recomiendas?</i>	What do you recommend?
<i>¡Estuvo delicioso!</i>	That was delicious!
<i>Soy vegetariano/vegetariana</i>	I'm vegetarian
<i>Soy alérgico/alérgica a...</i>	I'm allergic to...
<i>Me gustaría un vaso de...</i>	I would like a glass of...
<i>La cuenta, por favor</i>	The check, please
<i>¿Cuánto cuesta?</i>	How much does it cost?
<i>¿Cuánto va a ser?</i>	How much is it going to be?
<i>¿Puedo ver esa?</i>	Can I see that one?
<i>¿Tienes ésta en talla...?</i>	Do you have this in <n> size?
<i>¿Me la puedo probar?</i>	Can I try it on?
<i>¿La tienes en otro color?</i>	Do you have it in another colour?
<i>¿Aceptan tarjetas de crédito o débito?</i>	Do you accept credit or debit cards?
<i>¿Tiene cambio de un billete grande?</i>	Do you have change for a large bill?
<i>Me olvidé...</i>	I forgot my...

SAFETY

Traveling to a foreign country such as Belize can offer the experience of a lifetime. However, in the midst of all this excitement you must also be cognizant of your surroundings and take certain precautions to ensure your safety. Like many of the countries in Central America and around the world, Belize has certain neighborhoods you might be wise to avoid, and the country is currently experiencing a higher than average crime rate due to an increase in gang activity in certain regions of the country.

To help you safely enjoy all that Belize has to offer, below we have outlined a few travel safety tips you may want to keep in mind while visiting the country.

TRAVEL IN GROUPS

As the old saying goes, “there is safety in numbers.” Truer words have never been spoken. As you make your way through beautiful Belize, en route to the various sites and attractions you’ve mapped out on your itinerary, always try to travel with at least one other person (even more if you can). Research shows that criminals are less likely to approach you when they feel outnumbered.

MAKE COPIES OF ALL YOUR IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Documents can easily be misplaced or even stolen in the hustle and bustle of foreign travel, creating a nightmarish situation you just don’t need. This is why you should make copies of all your important papers. This includes copies of your passport, visa, driver’s license, social security card and medical insurance card. Travel experts suggest you keep one copy of these documents on your person at all times, and at least one other copy locked in the hotel safe.

BEWARE OF THE NIGHT

Sightseeing is an activity that should be limited to the daylight hours, as unsavory types tend to be hard at work during the nighttime, often preying on unsuspecting tourists. Enjoy your hotel during the nighttime hours, and if you must go out, try to stay in the immediate area.

GET VACCINATED

Check with your doctor regarding the vaccinations that would be appropriate when traveling to Honduras and don’t let a serious illness of some type ruin your long-awaited getaway.

FOOD

When buying street food and snacks in more rural areas of Honduras, take the usual precautions: don’t buy meat unless you can see it being cooked right in front of you. If you find yourself buying snacks out of a bus window, avoid anything with meat in it and try to go for fruit that you can peel.

CURRENCY

Belize's national currency is the Belize dollar (currency code BZD). To distinguish it from other dollar-denominated currencies, it is usually abbreviated with the dollar sign \$ or BZ\$. It's broken down into 100 cents. The official exchange rate is BZ\$2 = US\$1.



Bronze one-cent coins were introduced in 1885, followed by silver five-, ten-, twenty-five-, and fifty-cent pieces in 1894. The Royal Mint produced these coins, which were designed to look like other British colonial dollar fractional coinage used in Hong Kong and Canada. In 1907, cupronickel took the place of silver in the 5 cent coin. In 1942, nickel-brass was introduced to replace it. Cupro-nickel replaced silver in the 25 cent coin in 1952, and the 50 and 10 cent coins followed suit in 1954 and 1956, respectively. The 1 cent coin was changed to a scalloped shape in 1956 after it was reduced in size in 1954. Aluminum 1 and 5 cent coins were introduced in 1976. A decagonal nickel-brass one-dollar coin was introduced in 1990. From 1894 to 1976, the Board of Commissioners of Currency was in operation. The government issued notes in the denominations of one, two, five, ten, fifty, and one hundred dollars in 1894. After 1928, the production of the 50 and 100 dollar bills came to an end. In 1952, the first 20-dollar bills were issued. In 1973, British Honduras was renamed Belize, and the following year, a new series of banknotes bearing the new name was produced. The Monetary Authority of Belize was created on November 1, 1976, and took over note issuance. The first and only notes released under its name were dated 1st JUNE 1980, and for the first time included a \$100 bill. The Central Bank of Belize Act No. 15 of 1982 established the Central Bank of Belize on January 1, 1982. (Chapter 262 of the Laws of Belize Revised Edition 2000).

Credit Cards:

In Belize, most major credit cards are accepted, albeit MasterCard and Visa are more often accepted than American Express, particularly by smaller hotels, restaurants, and tour operators. Diners Club and Discover cards are rarely accepted in Belize, with a few exceptions. Some credit card issuers urge that you tell them of any upcoming trip overseas so that they don't become suspicious and block your transactions when the card is used multiple times in a

foreign location. Even if you don't call your credit card company ahead of time, if a charge is declined, you may always call the card's toll-free emergency number – a good reason to keep the phone number with you. But maybe the most significant lesson here is to bring multiple credit cards with you on your trip; a card may not work for a variety of reasons, so having a backup is a good idea.

ATMs:

Your card may function OK at the Atlantic Bank branch in Caye Caulker, but not at the branch in San Ignacio. There isn't much of a rhyme or reason to it, which is why you should always have a payment backup plan. ATMs with international access are currently available in Belize City, San Pedro, Caye Caulker, Placencia, Punta Gorda, San Ignacio, Belmopan, Dangriga, and Corozal Town, among other significant cities and tourist attractions. It's wise to assume you'll have to pay in cash at first, but then charge whenever possible, which should be the case at most tourist-oriented establishments.

TRAVELERS CHEQUES:

Most businesses that cater to travellers, particularly hotels and tour operators, will accept traveler's checks. They are less likely to be accepted at restaurants and stores.

BANKING HOURS:

In Belize, banking hours are often limited to 1 or 2 p.m. on most days, with some institutions closing for lunch. Modern amenities such as ATM machines can be found at many bank offices. In Belize, Belize Bank has eleven offices, Atlantic has eight, Scotiabank has six, First Caribbean has four, and Alliance Bank has three. Monday through Thursday, bank offices are open from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

CURRENCY CONVERSION RATE:

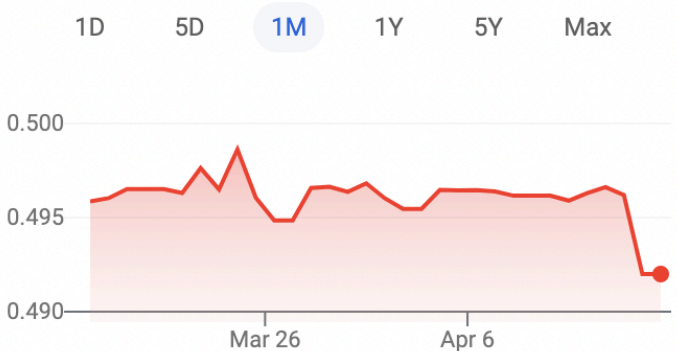
1 Belize Dollar equals

0.49 United States

Dollar

Apr 16, 1:01 AM UTC · Disclaimer

1	Belize Dollar ▼
0.49	United States Dollar ▼



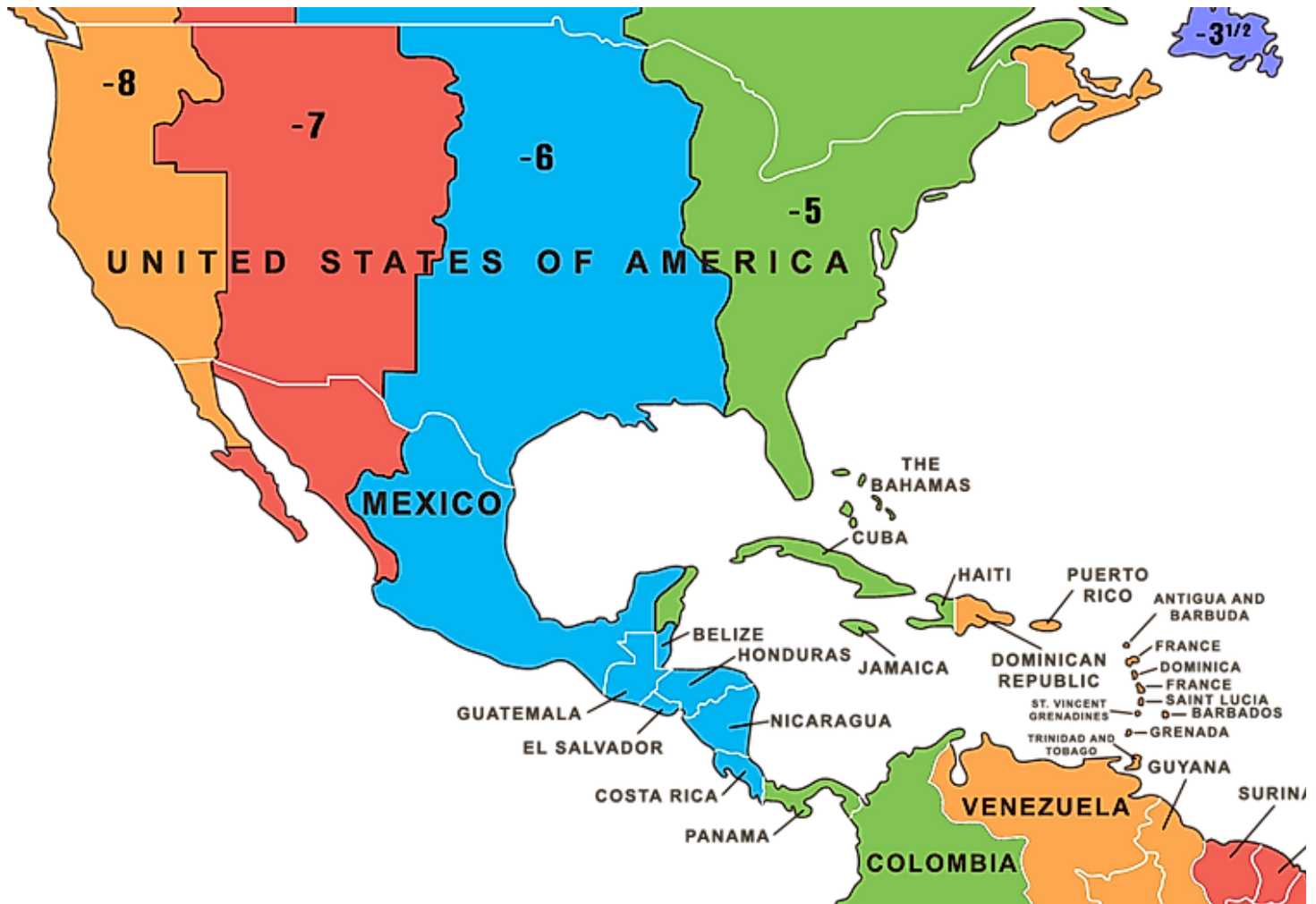
Feedback

IMR RECOMMENDATIONS ON PERSONAL FUNDS

- Please bring the amount that you are comfortable spending on gifts or small personal articles, including snacks.
- To determine if the currency of the country you are visiting is traded in the United States, please visit www.travelex.com. Travelex has offices in all major airports and cities and you may change money before the trip for a small fee.
- Trading in the United States is the easiest way for you to trade money.
- If the currency is not traded in the United States, you will usually be able to trade in the airport upon arrival or the team leader will arrange to change money for the team once during the trip. We do not guarantee that you will be able to change money in small towns or during clinic.
- You must bring currency newer than 2006 and in perfect condition - no tears, folds, old bills.
- New bills are preferred by the international banks, as are denominations larger than \$20. The best rate is obtained trading \$100 bills.
- If you are joining us from another country, please check the trading rules of your home currency.
- Credit cards may not be accepted outside of major cities, hotels, and large restaurants.
- IMR does not pay for alcohol. If you intend to purchase alcohol, you are required to obtain and pay with a separate bill. Please have local currency for these transactions.

TIME IN BELIZE

Belize is part of America's Central Time Zone.



EMBASSY INFORMATION

ASSISTANCE:

For Inquires:

Non-emergency Services - By appointment only.

Passport renewals: Monday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons 1:00pm-3:00pm.

Notary services: Tuesday mornings 9:00am - 11:00am

Consular Reports of Birth Abroad: by appointments only.

Email: ACSBelize@state.gov

FOR EMERGENCIES:

Assistance related to arrests, deaths, serious illness, or victim of crimes is provided:

Monday - Friday 8:00am - 5:00pm

After hours emergency number: +501- 610-5030.

EMBASSY INFORMATION:

Address for Embassy of the United States of America:

U.S. Embassy Belize

4 Floral Park Road

Belmopan, Belize

Telephone: (501) 822-4011

Fax: (501) 822-4012

WEBSITES

The following websites provide information on the country you are visiting. IMR highly recommends and encourages you to view these sites prior to departure. They are frequently updated and are a tremendous resource:

- Embassy of the United States for Belize: <https://bz.usembassy.gov/>
- State Department Travel Warnings: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/belizetravel-advisory.html#:~:text=Belize%20%2D%20Level%203%3A%20Reconsider%20Travel&text=Reconsider%20travel%20to%20Belize%20due,Some%20areas%20have%20increased%20risk.>
- Travel Health online: <https://www.travelbelize.org/health-safety/>
- World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int/>
- Center for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>
- CDC Travel Medicine for Belize: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/belize>
- CNN Weather Report: <http://www.cnn.com/WEATHER>
- Official Honduras Tourism Site: <https://www.travelbelize.org/>
- UNICEF Statistics: <https://data.unicef.org/country/blz/>
- Lonely Planet: <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/belize>
- Wikipedia Belize : <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belize>

