

BLACK ORCHID MANAGEMENT, LTD.

Travel Tips & Trip Planner

ARRIVAL INSTRUCTIONS

(Please print these instructions and bring them with you for reference, when traveling to Belize.)

Please take a moment to read the following instructions when planning your trip and arriving in Belize. You should find these suggestions, not only informative, but helpful in answering most of your questions and will assist you in avoiding some of the common mistakes we see others making. We have tried to include as much information as possible, so that decision making will be fairly easy. Here are some basic things you need to know.

PRIOR TO ARRIVAL INFORMATION

INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES SERVING BELIZE

1. American Airlines – www.aa.com or 1-800-433-7000
2. Continental Airlines – www.continental.com or 1-800-231-0856
3. US Airways – www.usairways.com or 1-800-622-1015
4. Taca Airlines – www.taca.com or 1-800-400-8222
5. Delta Airlines – www.delta.com

LANGUAGE – English is the official language of Belize. Most Belizean speak English, so you will not have any trouble communicating while in Belize. There exists in Belize, a dialect of English known as Belizean Creole, which is widely spoken through the country. Other languages spoken here include, Carib, Mayan and Spanish.

ELECTRICITY – The electricity and electrical outlets in Belize are the same as the United States using 110 volts/60 cycles. Although in some of the more remote locations, diesel generators supply the sole means of electricity. A small surge suppresser is highly recommended for computers and other sensitive equipment. Visitors from countries such as Australia and Europe should bring power adapters.

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CURRENCY – The Belize dollar is tied to the U.S. dollar and exchanged with most merchants at a fixed \$2.00(BZD)=\$1.00(USD). When exchanging money in a bank, Central Banking exchange rates will apply. Most places readily accept United States dollars and/or credit cards, so there is no need to exchange currency before arriving. However, your credit card company, may charge a slight exchange fee for processing your currency conversions.

Belizean banks cash travelers checks, give cash advances on Visa and Master cards and have wire transfer services. In addition, Belize has five commercial banks: Belize Bank, Alliance Bank of Belize, Atlantic Bank, First Caribbean International Bank, and Scotia Bank (Belize). ATM machines are located countrywide, but few accept debit cards from US banks.

HEALTH SERVICES – In Belize City you will have access to a well staffed hospital and several private doctors. On Ambergris Caye, you will find several doctors, who run their own private clinics.

If you're traveling to the Cayes to sun, swim, fish and dive, there are few health precautions to take. Your food will be safe to eat, you'll have bottled beverages or treated water to drink, and your accommodations will probably be screened to keep out troublesome mosquitoes and other insects. Your biggest problem could be overexposure to the sun. Take it in small doses at first, and remember to wear a shirt when you go snorkeling, so your back doesn't get fried.

Potable water is available in most areas of Belize, but it is advisable to ask, and if in doubt, drink boiled or bottled water. Public water supplies in the major towns are general chlorinated. In some rural areas, water for domestic use is runoff from roofs, stored in cisterns or catchments, this may not always be safe to drink. An easy treatment is to add a couple of drops of laundry bleach (easily carried in a dropper bottle) to a quart of water. Shake and let stand a half-hour.

There are currently no endemic diseases in Belize. No inoculations are required for entry, however, please consult with your local health department concerning the need for gamma globulin or Havrix injections for hepatitis, anti-malaria tablets (if traveling extensively into the rainforest) and up-to-date tetanus are recommended.

TIME ZONE – Belize observes the Central Standard Time (US and Canada); Mountain Standard during Daylight Savings time in the U.S. Daylight Savings is not observed in Belize.

CLIMATE & WEATHER – The climate in Belize is sub-tropical, tempered by trade winds (brisk breezes) from the Caribbean Sea. The annual temperature average is a warm 80 degrees, and the humidity is nicely tempered by the sea breezes. Trade winds blow along the coast and Cayes most of the year, keeping temperatures comfortable, even in the hottest months.

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November to January are traditionally the coolest months with a 75°F average and May to September are the warmest at about a 81°F average.

BELIZE IN WINTER – Belize has proven to be the choice location for those wanting to escape the harsh winter of the North. Winter lows are seldom below 60 degrees Fahrenheit – even at night. Besides the favorable temperature, Belize is also a favorite destination because of the following:

- Belize is one of the most accessible of all tropical locations by geography and entry requirements.
- This is the dry season in Belize which means that you should have no problem predicting bright, sunny skies during your vacation.

BELIZE IN SUMMER – Belize is also the ideal place for those needing a summer break. A summer high temperature usually never exceeds 96 degree Fahrenheit. Although Belize is a tropical country, the offshore breezes often provide cooler temperatures during the summer months than experience in many cities to the north. During the summer months it is also true that:

- Belize receives fewer visitors, which gives you the opportunity to find the privacy and isolation you desire.
- Although it is the rainy season, showers are sporadic, and short, and followed by clear skies and sunshine.
- The best feature about spending a summer vacation in Belize is the savings. Rates start from around May 1st and remain significantly lower until November as compared to prices encountered during the winter months.

TEMPERATURES – The coolest time of the year in Belize, is from November to March. When the air is not heavy with humidity and cool gentle ocean breezes blanket the coast. You can expect temperatures to be (between November to March), to be in the high 70's or 80's, and lows generally in the 60's (15 Centigrade). In the highlands, nighttime temperatures can even drop to near freezing. Average annual temperature at Belize City is about 80 degrees (27 Centigrade).

The warmest time of the year in Belize, is from March to September, and the air is often uncomfortably humid on the mainland, though sea breezes provide some relief along the coast. The temperature in Belize City is usually in 80's and 90's Fahrenheit (27 to 35 Centigrade), dropping to the 60's or 70's (18 to 24 Centigrade) at night.

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The average high temperatures are as follows:

Jan.(80-70) – Feb.(80-71) – Mar.(83-84) – Apr.(85-76) – May(87-79) – Jun(87-79)

July(86-79) – Aug.(86-77) – Sep.(86-77) – Oct.(84-75) – Nov.(84-75) – Dec.(82-73)

WATER TEMPERATURES – The average water temperature is 83 degrees.

DRY SEASON – Dry season, also coincides with tourist or high season. The northern winter and spring. It coincides with the driest, coolest, most pleasant time in Belize, generally late November to April (and for divers, the waters offshore are clearest in March and April). This is when the island is at its driest coolest.

WET SEASON – Wet season, also coincides (or includes) hurricane season which lasts from early June to late October. This is the wettest time of year for Belize, generally speaking. For this reason, the island operates at a much slower pace, and tourists will often find discounted hotel and rooming accommodations.

But it hardly ever rains all day, because weather forms in a different way than in the temperate latitudes, where a mass of clouds could stay in one place for days. Most rains are daily revolving storms, which blow in from sea and blow away, leaving plenty of time on any day for hiking, fishing, and generally being outdoors.

Since the rainy season roughly coincides with summer in the north, it is therefore more lightly traveled. Most hotels lower their rates during this time, although the downside is that temperatures can get unpleasantly hot.

RAINFALL – Rainfall averages about 50 inches a year (1,250 mm) in the north of Belize, but increases sharply toward the South to about 170 inches annually. At Belize City, annual rainfall is about 74 inches (1,900 mm); at Cayo in the west, about 70 inches (1,800 mm); at Dangriga, about 95 inches (2,400 mm); at Punta Gorda, rainfall can total 160 inches (4,060 mm) in the year. Average humidity is 85 percent.

PACKING POINTERS – Remember the slogan down here is “No Shirt, No Shoes, No Problem”. Bring twice the money and half the clothes, that's what they say.

With a tropical climate, you will find, that you are perfectly content and comfortable with simple lightweight clothing. Avoid polyester clothing (or any blends) it does not allow for air flow, and you will find it to be hot and uncomfortable.

CLOTHING – The climate in Belize is subtropical with an annual average temperature of 80 degrees F. So dress accordingly. You'll mostly wear casual, tropical light weight

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clothing, jeans (maybe), shorts, and short-sleeved shirts or t-shirts. Pack a hat to protect your head. Include a sweater, lightweight waterproof jacket (for evenings on the beach or boat rides), tropical weight long-sleeved shirt and long pants (if going into the jungle). Be sure to take a change of clothing in your carry-on luggage, just in case your luggage is temporarily lost or misplaced in transit.

EYE WEAR & CARE – Bright, sunny days require sunglasses, polarized is best. Lens cleaners may not be readily available down here, so please bring your own. Take plenty of eye lubricant (moisturizers) and cleaning solutions. Lens wearers who also use eyeglasses should plan on wearing glasses – rather than lenses – more often to give your eyes a break.

FOOTWARE – Sandals or “flip ons” are the preferred footwear. Bring a good pair of walking shoes, hiking boots or tennis shoes (with several pairs of socks) if you are planning on doing any jungle excursions.

SUNSCREEN, LOTIONS & REPELLENTS – It's necessary to protect your skin from the sun's ultraviolet rays. Pack plenty of sunscreen. Your favorite brand may not be readily available and an unfamiliar brand may cause a bad reaction. As bugs do live in jungles and in beach areas, take along insect repellent. If you tend to have very sensitive skin, think about bringing some hydrocortisone cream.

CAMERAS & FILM – Specific kinds of film, assuming you have not gone digital, may be hard to find. Bring extra batteries for your camera, along with plenty of film. Upscale gift shops sell pocket-type and underwater disposable cameras. To be safe, bring your own.

DIVING, SNORKELING, FISHING EQUIPMENT – Bring your own or leave it at home. It's your preference. If you have a prescription lens mask, be sure and bring that, along with your PADI certification card. Many divers will want to bring their own BC, regulator, wet suit, fins and mask. Leave your weights at home. They are normally included included in your tour rates. Do not bring spear guns. They will be confiscated at the airport. Although most fishing trips include bait and tackle, serious fly fishing and spin casting anglers will probably want to bring their own gear.

BIRD WATCHING – A good pair of binoculars and a guide book are invaluable to increase your birding enjoyment.

JUST IN CASE – Take a small flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries and water bottle for caving, hiking and water adventures.

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Photocopy important documents such as passports, driver's license, credit cards, prescription medication forms, airline ticket and other important information.

ESSENTIAL – Carry essential medications with you. Bring an extra supply of prescription medications to carry along with you on a daily basis, especially when traveling to remote areas. Bubble wrap is an excellent way to protect fragile gift items you want to take home, such as woodcarvings and other items.

1. Bring along any prescription medicines, that you or your kids may need while in Belize.
2. Be sure to bring, use and re-apply high protection sun-block generously. It is hard to keep kids out of the sun and even on an overcast day one can get badly burnt, potentially ruining your vacation.
3. Although lifejackets are a requirement for all boat operators, smaller sizes are not common, so bring along life jackets for babies and small children. Kids can also wear these when playing in the pool.
4. Communicate with guest services about the interests your family has in additional activities while in Belize. There is an assortment of tour packages available to choose from.
5. Stock up on high-energy snacks like granola bars and bottled water in cities or major towns before going on tours so that your children always have something available to eat and drink.
6. Pack water toys, stuffed animals and books to keep your children busy especially on the journey to Belize.
7. You will find a selection of disposable diapers, cereals and formulas in town, however, if you have a preferred brand, be sure to bring your own.

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WHAT TO PACK FOR A WEEK STAY – Most of what you will be wearing, will be casual. For evening attire, even the nicest restaurants on the island accept casual attire. Clothing selections should be items that are lightweight and loose cotton fitting attire. Belize can be hot, so prepare adequately for the sun. As a basic rule, if you cannot get along without it, bring a spare. This applies for contact lenses, glasses, sunglasses, flashlight and any personal medications.

- Passports – Driver's License – Credit Cards – Money – Travelers Checks
- Airline Tickets
- Emergency Contact Information
- 2 swimming suits
- 3 pairs shorts/capris
- Long Pants – Long Shirts
- Comfortable Evening Attire (dresses, pants & shirts)
- Sandals (1 pair, comfortable)
- Tennis shoes w/ 2-3 sets of socks (1 pair, comfortable)
- Swim Shoes (esp. recommended for elderly, we have lots of tile down here and tile is slippery when wet)
- Lightweight jacket for walking on the beach and while riding in boats.
- Lightweight rain jacket w/hood (if you are coming during the raining season)
- Dark Sunglasses
- Sunscreen lotion (plenty)
- Hat (wide brimmed)
- Camera
- Dry Bag (for camera, cell phones or Ipods) when participating in water activities
- Small Flash Light (for possible power outages)
- Insect Repellent
- Binoculars
- Small Dry Pack w/ Bars & Favorite Snacks
- Health Kit (special medicines, lotions, personal sanitary items)
- Baby Items (diapers, formulas, bottles, blanket, stroller, diaper bag, wet ones)
- Reading material (books, magazines, maps, guidebooks, these instructions)
- Prescription glasses & prescription diving mask (if applicable)
- Diving & Snorkeling Equipment (if you desire)
- Dive Certification Card

If coming to dive or snorkel – If you're diving or fishing you can bring your own equipment if you wish (prescription mask, snorkel, fins, suit, etc. – BUT NO WEIGHTS). Diving and snorkeling gear is available for rent at the various dive shops. Please keep in mind, when you book a

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diving, snorkeling or fishing trip with Black Orchid, your dive, snorkeling and fishing gear is included.

If you are coming to go on some of the various tours – If you plan to take any of the jungle tours on the mainland, you will need to bring a good pair of walking shoes, hiking boots (or tennis shoes), loose cotton pants, dark sunglasses, a wide brimmed hat, insect repellent and your camera.

THINGS TO AVOID – Remember no liquids in your carry on luggage.

- Avoid polyester clothing – leave it at home
- Leave fancy/expensive jewelry & watches at home (save it for city life)
- Do not bring diving weights or spear guns
- No fresh fruit or meat (especially pork) can be brought into the country
- If bringing more than \$10,000.00 USD in currency, you will need to declare it
- No ammunitions or firearms
- No illegal drugs

GETTING TO BELIZE – Given our proximity to North and South America, as well as the Caribbean, getting to Belize is easy. Less than two hours by air from any major US southern gateway (Charlotte, Dallas, Houston, and Miami), Belize currently hosts five major airlines, that serve Belize from the United States and neighboring Central American countries. These carriers are: Delta, American, Continental, US Air, and Grupo TACA. These major airlines have daily direct flights from US and Central American gateways, all coordinated with European connections.

There is no direct flight from Mexico, but there are flights to Cancun with a 6 hour bus trip to the Belize Northern Border, down to the town of Corozal, then you can catch a commuter plan (Tropic Air) to the island.

The Philip Goldson International Airport (BZ) is the main port of entry into Belize. From Belize City, you have one of two choices to get from the Belize mainland to the island of Ambergris Caye.

Most visitors reach the island by either taking a boat or an aircraft across lower Chetumal Bay from Belize City. Locals refer to passenger boats as "skiffs" and their smaller canoe-like vessels are "dories". The crossing takes about 1-1/4 hours by skiff (or) less than 15 minutes by a 15 passenger commuter aircraft.

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ENTRANCE & EXIT REQUIREMENTS – All visitors need a passport and onward or round trip ticket in order to enter Belize. A visitor's permit will be stamped into your passport at your point of entry, for a stay up to 30 days, unless you are a Belize resident or citizen. This permit allows you to stay in the country for 30 days.

If your passport expires in 6 months, you need to renew it prior to leaving your home country. Citizens of some other countries are also required to obtain a visa.

A visa is required to be issued before arrival for citizens of China, Columbia, Cuba, India, Libya, Pakistan, Peru, South Africa, and Taiwan. For non-US citizens, please contact the nearest consulate or embassy of the country to which you are traveling to determine your entry/visa requirements. Contact the Immigration and Nationality Service, Belmopan, Belize for issuance.

No visas are required for citizens of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, British Commonwealth nations, Mexico, Central or South America, the European community, or U.S. dependencies. In general, cruise ship passengers are exempt from entry requirements. Due to recent changes in U.S. regulations, American traveling by airplane are required to present their passport at U.S. airports in order to re-enter the United States.

If your visit exceeds 1 month, you will need to obtain an extended stay permit from the Immigration Authorities in Belize. AIDS test required for those staying more than 3 months; US test accepted if within 3 months of visit. For longer stays and other information, contact the Embassy of Belize, 2535 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202-332-9636) or the Belize Mission in New York at (212-599-0233). For information regarding visas in Belize please call 011-501-822-2423. The immigration office for San Pedro, is located above the Scotia bank building across from Tropic Air.

DEPARTURE TAX (Visitor Fees) –The Belize government currently charges a departure tax of \$39.25 USD per person (payable only in USD currency). Make sure you reserve enough cash from your vacation, to have on hand for your flight home.

COMPLETING ENTRANCE DOCUMENTS – About 45 minutes prior to landing, airline personnel will hand you two documents required to enter Belize. One, is a custom declaration form. The second is a welcome to Belize arrival form. Both of these forms need to be completed as they will be examined by an Immigration Official inside the airport.

- 1. CUSTOM DECLARATION FORM** - (For head of households ONLY). Only one form needs to be filled out per family. On this form, you will be asked for the following information: Your name, birth date, number of people traveling with you, your home address, passport information, countries you have recently visited, flight or vessel number and the purpose of your visit. Additionally you will be asked if you are

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bringing into the country, any of the following: fruits, vegetables, plants, seeds, food, insects, meats, animals, wildlife products, disease agents, cell cultures, snails, \$10,000.00 US or more of cash, commercial merchandise, firearms, etc. The purpose of this form is for the government to regulate and control what can and cannot be brought into the country and also provides a means by which to collect a customs fee on anything being brought into Belize.

2. WELCOME TO BELIZE - ARRIVAL RECORD FORM - (One form per person). On this form, you will be asked to complete the following: Name, sex, nationality, place of birth, date of birth, passport information, date of issuance, place of issuance, permanent address, occupation, intended stay address in Belize. The purpose of this form is for the Belize Tourism Board to track and monitor where tourist revenue is being generated from. This helps the government to know where best to spend their marketing dollars.

ARRIVING AT PHILIP S. GOLDSON (BELIZE) INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - Upon arriving at Belize International Airport, you will be asked to exit the plane via an exterior staircase. Airport personnel will direct you to immigration (your point of entry into Belize). Bathrooms are located immediately inside the lobby area for your use, should you need them.

You will be asked to form one of two lines. If you are a visitor coming to Belize, you will need to get in the lines to the left. Lines to the right are reserved for "Belizean Residents & Citizens". Here you will need to have ready your entrance documentation, your passport and the forms you filled out on the plane, ready for examination. Once cleared, you will be asked to go to baggage claim.

BAGGAGE CLAIM - Feel free to take a baggage cart (free of charge). As your baggage comes through on the carousel, retrieve your bags and place them on the baggage cart. You will now need to go through customs. There are two lines. For visitors with a return trip ticket home, claiming zero declarations, you will need to get into the line that forms to the right. For visitors (claiming custom declarations), or Belizean residents and citizens, you will need to get in the line that forms to the left.

BELIZE CUSTOMS - Customs does allow visitors to bring anything they will reasonably need, including fishing and diving equipment, to include apparel, jewelry, binoculars, cameras, laptops, including fishing and diving equipment. Each person is allowed twenty ounces of imperial liquor, 200 cigarettes, and one bottle of perfume may be entered duty-free. Don't bring any firearms for hunting unless you've arranged for clearance in advance. Pets can be brought to Belize only with written permission obtained in advance from the Ministry of

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Agriculture. Proof of inoculation against rabies and a veterinarian's certificate of good health, are required.

If you are declaring items on your entrance forms, please bear in mind, that the customary fee (duty charged) is usually 35-37% of the value you claim on your entrance paperwork. If custom officials dispute your valuation, they will look up in their books what the government has indicated as a value on this item and you will be charged accordingly. Most visitors coming to Belize for vacation, will not have items to declare.

Pets can be brought into Belize only with written permission obtained in advance from the Ministry of Agriculture. Proof of inoculation against rabies, and a veterinarian's certification of good health, are required.

VISITORS TO BELIZE – Are permitted to stay in Belize for up to 30 days. Extensions are routinely granted at Immigration offices located in San Pedro on Ambergris Caye, Punta Gorda, Belmopan, Orange Walk, and Belize City at a cost of \$25.00 USD per person, per month (after thirty days).

TAXI'S SERVICE TO BELIZE CITY - Taxi are generally easily available, and they are recognizable by their "green license" plates. Although there are no meters on taxis in Belize, drivers generally all charge fairly standard rates. To avoid any problem or dispute, always verify the fare cost prior to hiring a taxi. Never get in a taxi that does not have a green license plate and never share a taxi with strangers. A taxi fare from Belize International airport to Belize City tends to be around \$35.00 USD.

CONNECTING TO CHARTER FLIGHTS – Once you have cleared customs, you will need to go to connect with your island air commuter flight. Baggage Porters will be on hand to assist you in getting your luggage to the local commuter flight check in counters. If you allow a porter to handle your luggage, there is a customary tip fee of \$2.00 BZ or \$1.00 US per bag. Porters can be fairly bold, if you have not tipped them correctly. If you are coming into Belize with a lot of luggage, I suggest using a porter. If you are comfortable handling and carrying your own luggage, simply tell the porter that you do not need his services.

GETTING FROM BELIZE CITY TO SAN PEDRO, AMBERGRIS CAYE ISLAND – You have two choices:

1. Water Taxi – a 1 hour 20 minute water taxi for approximately \$33.00 round-trip (approximate), (2 bag minimum) or
2. Commuter Aircraft – a 15 minute charter flight for approximately \$109.00 round trip (approximate), (multiple bags allowed).

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These rates are for reference only. Please refer to the appropriate web-sites for current pricing. The resort is 30 miles from Belize City on the island of Ambergris Caye. (Note: Prices may be subject to change without notice).

CHARTER FLIGHTS

The charter flight must be scheduled prior to departing for your trip. This charter can be arranged through our office. When you are ready, we will be happy to telephone and make your reservation for you.

SUGGESTIONS – We love suggestions. If there is anything not included in this printout, that you think needs to be added, just let us know. You can contact us at: black.orchid.management@gmail.com