

Maya Ruins

Of course no visit to Belize would be complete without a trip to see some Maya ruins. Belize is after all the center of the Maya world. We recommend a visit to Xunantunich near the western border with Guatemala, though there are many wonderful archeological sites within Belize that are all must-sees. The ATM Cave for one (off the Western Highway near Belmopan), Cahal Pech (just outside of San Ignacio), and Altun Ha and Lamanai (both North of Belize City) are all excellent sites to visit. Caracol, which is deep into the Mountain Pine Ridge, is the largest Maya site in Belize and although is difficult to access it is well worth the trip.



To reach Caracol you will likely need to rent your own 4 x 4 vehicle and drive yourself there. Depending on when you go, you may need to travel with the military convoy which leaves the Da Silva Forestry Department at the entrance to Mountain Pine at 9:30 am every day.

Beach Destinations and Snorkeling/Diving

Belize has the second longest barrier reef in the world (after the Great Barrier Reef in Australia) and a trip to the reef is not something you want to miss. Many people spend a good portion of their trip to Belize on Caye Caulker or Ambergris Caye (San Pedro), which are both found off the coast of Belize City so a good way to start or end your trip.

We are close to some of the best beaches in the country, which can be found in Hopkins and Placencia. To reach either of these destinations from T.R.E.E.S you should take a bus to Dangriga and then transfer onto a Hopkins bus (they go twice a day) or onto the Richie's Bus Line to get to Placencia (twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon). There are many accommodations that range from budget to luxury in both of these beach towns. Ask us for suggestions on our favourite places to stay.



The Southern Cayes, which are beautiful and boast some of the best snorkeling in the country right from the beach, are all accessible via a boat from Dangriga (Tobacco Caye and Southwater Caye) or Hopkins/Sittee River Marina. There are many options for lodging on Tobacco Caye that are modestly priced, and Southwater Caye has a marine field station and a moderately priced resort. We have some great boat captains that we work with and we can help facilitate the transfer to any of the islands, either by motorized boat (Dangriga) or sailboat (Sittee River)

A beautiful park that is just 10 miles south from T.R.E.E.S (on the left side of the highway) and accessible by public transit is **Billy Barcadier Park**. The University of Arkansas (a group that has stayed with us in the past) works to help maintain this park and its visitor center, and has been conducting biological inventories of the flora and fauna contained within

the park. There is a network of trails and waterfalls with refreshing swimming holes. Entry to the park is \$8 BZD foreigners/\$2 BZD Nationals.

Other Nearby Attractions and Activities

Mayflower Bocawina National Park and **Cockscomb Basin Jaguar Reserve** are two must-sees for nature lovers and are only an hour (Mayflower) to an hour and a half (Cockscomb) down the highway from T.R.E.E.S. While you can take the bus to the access road for each park (with a transfer at the Dangriga bus terminal), there is no public transportation into either park. Some guests might like to rent a vehicle to visit these sites or arrange a tour into the parks with the numerous tour operators and guides that work there. It may be possible to hitch-hike into each park once you reach the access road, but you take the risk that a vehicle does not pick you up or that the driver that does is unsafe. Alternatively, you could negotiate a taxi hire from Dangriga to take you into Mayflower/Bocawina (about \$100 BZD) and a taxi hire at Maya Center to take you into Cockscomb (about \$80 BZD).

Camping is permitted in Bocawina though with no amenities except for toilets. You can also stay at Mama Noots which has a range of accommodations: <http://www.mamanootsbocawina.com/> They also have a tour operator based out of this facility that runs eco-adventure tours in the park. Mayflower-Bocawina NP is the site of the longest zip-line in Central America!

Tours at Cockscomb can be arranged through Maya Center (Ernesto Saqui with **Nuuk Chi'il Cottages**) upon arrival. Camping is permitted in Cockscomb and costs \$10 US/night per person plus park entry fee and includes some basic amenities (showers, toilets, and fire pits with grills for cooking) or you can stay at Ernesto's place which is clean and very modestly priced with excellent birding in the gardens. His wife, Aurora, is a herbal healer and you can spend the day learning about Maya healing with this amazing lady.

Tour Guides and Tour Operators

We work with several **licensed tour guides** that run adventure and wildlife tours in our area. We would be happy to organize a tour with them directly at no extra cost to you, and most will do guest pick-ups from T.R.E.E.S (though the price is slightly higher than what you see on their websites if you are requesting a pick-up). Visit their websites to choose your own adventures!

Upside Down Tours (Abel) – St. Herman's Cave cave-tubing, bird watching in Blue Hole National Park, Maya Ruins tours, and other guided adventure tours offered throughout the country. <http://www.upsidedowntours.com/>

Belize Inland Tours (Neko) – Similar tours to above, with also very high ratings! Neko is a fantastic birder so a good guide choice for those wishing to bird along the way to and from any tour. www.belizeinlandtours.com

Maya Guide Adventures (Marcus) – Amazing adventure tours that are unique to Belize such as cave kayaking and kayaking other rivers in the country, and waterfall rappelling. Website: www.mayaguide.bz

Hun Chi'ik Tours – The ATM Cave is a must-see site and this tour has been rated by some of our guests as the most amazing tour they have ever been on, period. Though there are several tour operators in the country that visit this site, we recommend this company and can schedule a tour for you. Because they generally go every day from San Ignacio, it

is usually easy to get on any of their tours as 1 person or a group of people. Because of where they are based, they do not do pick-ups from T.R.E.E.S. Guests can either take public transit to the entrance point off the Western Highway just west of Belmopan, or perhaps arrange a drop-off at the entrance with one of the T.R.E.E.S staff.

Bocawina Adventure Tours – Though they do offer tours to major tourist attractions throughout the country, their main offering is zip-lining on-site in Mayflower-Bocawina National Park, which is the longest zip line in the country, and possibly even Central America! <http://www.mamanootsbocawina.com/#!belize-adventures/>