

## 2022-Belize it or Not; *Oh Yeah!*

*I'm so glad you have signed up for this **UnBelizable** Adventure or are seriously pondering joining Holistic Journeys in 2022 for **Back to Belize** (one of my favorite places and one where I was gifted to start many international travels). The trip dates are February 26<sup>th</sup> to March 7<sup>th</sup> and we are over the halfway mark in registration, with more folks seriously considering, I hope you will be one.*



*I usually start these updates with all the fun and amazing facts about Holistic Journeys destination of choice. As you may or may not know, Belize is the second smallest country in Central America, (8,867 sq miles) yet, it's incredibly diverse with over nine different cultures representing its some 400,000 population. Belize's Nature is an exquisite mix of reef, rainforest, savanna, wetlands and upland Mountain Pine Ridge. It also boasts the mysterious and daunting Maya Archeological history. There is just so much to see in this tiny 'gem' of a country.*

*Alas, this year we still face the challenges surrounding the pandemic and this seems to be what's on most folk's mind. That said, here's the facts that we know right now, remember, it's all subject to change, I anticipate for the better. I am committed to do my best to stay updated and to share new information as it arises closer to our departure date. I am planning for a safe and amazing eco-adventure in 2022.*

*No matter your age; young, middle, old, young at heart, there's a seat for you at the table of life's adventure, but only if you take it. This quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson sums it up for me; **"The years in your life are less important than the life in your years."** So, join in, you are invited!*

The big question, how can you join Holistic Journeys **Back to Belize** 2022 Eco-wellness Adventure? The answer: You just have to take the plunge and sign up. Early Bird savings have been extended until November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021, but still the price for this experience is hard to beat and it includes almost everything. You are only responsible for your air flight, a few dollars in your pocket for 2 travel lunches or airport treats and of course alcohol and tips along the way. A **50%** deposit is due upon registration. Full cost is **\$2,875.00**. Early bird discount or returning Adventurer discount (always applicable) is **\$125.00**. You can contact me, Rebecca Wood to register or you can access information and needed forms on my website; [www.hopewoodholistichealth.com](http://www.hopewoodholistichealth.com).

Final payment is due any time prior to 60 days **before** the departure date Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022. We should have a good handle by then on what safety issues or concerns may be regarding the pandemic or travel requirements.

## Refund policies for 2022:

1. Choice of **refund** or **transfer** of funds to future trips *if this trip is cancelled due to Covid-19, 60 -30 days prior to trip date Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>, minus a \$75.00 processing fee.*
2. **No** refund if trip is cancelled due to personal choices or circumstances after the 60-day demarcation. Payments *minus \$75.00* may however be **transferred** to future tours, services or events of Hopwood Holistic Health or Holistic Journeys if for some reason you need to cancel your trip. This transfer is good for 1 year (12 months) extending from the date of the cancelation.

## Trip Expectations:

1. All participants are *required* to have travel insurance that covers trip cancelation, transportation and housing in the case of Covid-19 or other emergencies. You will be surprised and happy at all that trip insurance does cover, so just get it. I have been very happy with Allianz [allianztravelinsurance.com](http://allianztravelinsurance.com) but of course the choice is yours.
3. This year all participants *are required* to have appropriate vaccinations for the tour and be willing to follow all Covid-19 policies put forth by US, Belize or the airlines. No one likes it, but this is how we travel more safely and or travel at all.
4. All participants *are required* to fill out *Registration* and *Health forms* and submit a copy of passport, Covid vaccination card and travel insurance information *30 days prior* to departure date. You can send this electronically to me but please have a screen shot and a hard copy for travel. *Please note, Holistic Journeys respects your choice or reasons for vaccination, but for peace of mind and ease of travel our trip, currently, requires proof of vaccination, this does not include the booster.*

That said, enjoy reading about this amazing Holistic Journey; **Back to Belize** and please, join in, better yet, bring a friend! Feel free to contact me with any questions at 740-590-3945 or [becaherbtravel@gmail.com](mailto:becaherbtravel@gmail.com)

A recommended packing list will be sent 60 days out and monthly updates will appear on the website [www.hopewoodholistichealth.com](http://www.hopewoodholistichealth.com) and sent to all registered folks after November 1, 2021 deadline. Please sign up for the blog on the above website and get updates sent directly to your chosen email.

*Be and Be Well, Rebecca*

*"All my Life through, the new sights of Nature made me rejoice like a child"  
-Marie Curie.*

**Covid-19 travel facts:** Check out [info@travelbelize.org](mailto:info@travelbelize.org) for updated information on travel.

Travel plans continue to remain uncertain, but we can plan and take as many precautions as we can to ensure a great experience. Our final decision being made 60-30 days out. Rest assured 'Wanderlusters' of Holistic Journeys are raring to go, and Holistic Journeys is committed to

making the best connections and choices so you can make a quality decision and enjoy a fabulous adventure. *Here's why Belize, is a great destination for adventure.*

*First and foremost, there are **few crowds**. Belize has always been just below the radar on most bucket lists, though slowly changing in the past few years as more people discover its diversity and ease of access. Even before a global pandemic, 'over tourism' in Belize wasn't an issue – a fact many travelers appreciate when they wish to escape the world and relax. You can take photos of looming Maya sites without people being in the background, no waiting in lines for tourist attractions, and no worries of being caught up in stifling crowds. Some other reasons;*

1. **One flight away.** Sitting just below Mexico, Belize is easily accessible from major airports in North America, being only a flight away from many cities, yes, I know from Ohio its two flights. This means shorter flight times and often less layovers, Average round trip cost is still hovering around \$400-\$575.00 from CMH, DAY and CVG. *We ask that you arrange to arrive at the Belize International Airport by 2:00pm on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022 or let us know what your travel connections are. Also, if you want to join me for a pre or post-trip peek of Southern Belize, some of the reefs and experience a few of my favorite places, let me know. We must plan soon.*
2. **Effective Management.** Though there's no way of knowing how long COVID-19 will last or what surges may be on the horizon, I will be checking and reporting vaccination rates, active cases, and travel recommendations regularly as we look toward our travel date of Feb. 26th.
3. **Rest & Relaxation.** It's not just the stress and uncertainty of this pandemic plaguing the world, but the need and opportunity to manage our personal mental health and wellness in this overly busy world. Make yourself a priority, enjoy a trip infused with relaxing activities and a peaceful atmosphere, adventure, culture and AHHH. I believe immersing in other cultures, seeing and experiencing the world from new perspectives brings us all closer understanding who we are and the commonalities vs. differences in all people. Belize has been known to cater to wellness with travelers' wellbeing being of utmost priority. Just being in Nature, taking time to be, to forest-bath, waterfall chase or step back in time – and Belize has it all.

**GOLD STANDARD ENTITIES** With the safety of travelers being top priority, visitors to Belize during Phase 3 of the country's tourism reopening are encouraged to utilize the certified **Gold Standard Guidelines** that have been created. Approved entities are operating within a **tourism safety corridor** and have adapted new behaviors and procedures while ensuring minimal impact on guest experiences and as important, Belizean residents.



Belize's primary goal is to assure both travelers and residents, that Belize's tourism product is safer than ever before, the following series of newly enhanced health and safety protocols have been put in place to protect everyone.

**Safety and Health Standards in Belize:** Currently these include:

-Mandatory use of face masks in public spaces

-Enforcement of physical distancing measures in public spaces and capacity restrictions at restaurants (currently 50%), grocery stores, retail stores, etc.

-Introduction of the “*Tourism Gold Standard Program*” which seeks to enhance the tourism industry’s health and safety standards by adapting new behaviors and procedures to ensure both employees and travelers are confident in the cleanliness and safety of Belize’s tourism product. Some of these measures include:

-Online check-in/out, contactless payment systems, and automated ordering/booking systems

-Hand sanitizing stations

-Enhanced cleaning and sanitization of public spaces and high touch surfaces

-Capacity restrictions for all tourism sites to ensure physical distancing can be maintained

-Smaller tour groups to provide a more intimate tour experience

### **Questions you may have and answers as of August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**

#### **If I test positive can I access a flight back to the US?**

No. All arriving passengers who test positive at the international airport will be placed in mandatory quarantine for a minimum of 14 days at the passengers’ expense. It is therefore recommended that you obtain travel insurance prior to your trip to Belize.

Yes, we recommended that you bring along your results of an accepted COVID-19 test and your vaccination record, as this will provide for a ‘fast track’ arrival process. Depending on the results of your health screening, you may be randomly selected for secondary testing. Breath, relax we will wait on you.

If you are unable bring along a record of your COVID test, you will be required to test upon arrival; the cost is **US\$50.00**. Only cash is accepted at this time; credit card machines and ATMs are not available in the Health Testing Unit.

An official email or other correspondence from the facility where your COVID test was taken with your name clearly indicating your result will suffice as proof of your negative test.

If you can provide proof of COVID-19 immunization, you are no longer required to present a negative test result for entry. Belize will accept an official vaccine card reflecting the receipt of the dual or single dose vaccine at least two weeks prior to arrival. Children 5 years and older must present a negative test. This is subject to change; we will monitor this.

We highly recommend that you take a screenshot of the test results and have a hard copy of all forms to facilitate processing with Health Officials.

**Travel Between Places:** Tourists visiting Belize can move about freely, however it is recommended that they remain within the *Tourism Safe Corridor*. The Safe Corridor includes *Gold Standard* certified accommodations, tour operators, tourism transportation providers, restaurants, tourism sites and attractions, and gift shops. These Gold Standard and certified entities have all been trained and have implemented enhanced health and safety measures. *All accommodations and transportation providers meet these requirements.*

A curfew is currently in effect from 9:00 pm to 4:00 am daily. Persons are not permitted to be in any public space during this time and risk a fine if found in violation of the regulation. I promise no bird, nature, cultural tour or Yoga will start before 4:00am and you all know me, I'll be in bed before 9:00 pm.

Yes. You can spend time at several different Gold Standard resorts during your time in Belize. Transfers to each resort can be arranged by the property and carried out by a Gold Standard tour operator or certified provider. As mentioned, Holistic Journeys has that covered.

**Return Flights:** Depending on your destination, the following will apply:

Canada: Molecular Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) or Loop-mediated Isothermal Amplification (LAMP) test conducted within 72 hours of the scheduled departure to Canada with written documentation of the lab test result.

USA: PCR or rapid Antigen test taken within 3 days (72 hours) of scheduled departure to the US with written documentation of the lab test result.

Documentation of the test result can be provided in paper or electronic format.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness recently released a list of approved testing sites throughout the country. Below you'll find up to date information on where to find your nearest testing facilities.

**Philip Goldson International Airport** Belize Medical Associates Email: [Bma\\_marketing@belizemedical.com](mailto:Bma_marketing@belizemedical.com) Telephone: 501-663-0030

**Corozal District** Public Testing Facility for Travelers **Corozal Community Hospital:** Email: [drhm.office.cch@gmail.com](mailto:drhm.office.cch@gmail.com) Telephone: 501-422-3903

**Orange Walk:** Public Testing Facility for Travelers Northern Regional Hospital Email: [rhmnorth@health.gov.bz](mailto:rhmnorth@health.gov.bz) Telephone: 501-322-1560

***“The answers to our questions are everywhere; we just need to change the lens with which we see the world” Janine Benyus, Biologist***

## Belize By Region

From reefs to jungles to beaches to the mysteries of ancient Maya, Belize has it all. Just make sure to schedule some time to relax.



course the cultures, cultural cuisine and traditions of Belize.

**Northern Belize** is a destination for those wanting to get closer to Mother Nature, avoid large crowds and experience everything from the archaeological wonders of the Maya sites to exploring the jungles, rainforests, lagoons and of

**Winding rivers. Ancient legacies.** Northern Belize is home to one of the largest Maya sites.

In Northern Belize you will find the sweetest measure of tranquility as this is the sugar of Belize. With its cultural influences, soothing river and coastal water adventures, there's much to savor, particularly the local flavors. **The New River**—an ancient Maya waterway—showcases the wildlife and beautiful scenery of Northern Belize. With traditions imparted by the Mestizo and Maya cultures, you'll awaken your taste buds and wanderlust based on these unique cultures in Belize. There's enough adventure to excite the inner explorer through ancient Maya regions, transforming a laidback day into the ultimate quest! Northern Belize bucket-list sites, such as: Lamanai in Orange Walk District and Cerros in Corozal District, we plan to see them all and more.



**Our Journey begins; Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary.** Welcome to Belize. Our first three days in Belize will be at the Belizean owned Birdseye View Hotel, take a virtual tour and see for yourself. [https://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel\\_Review-g2151505-d293309-](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g2151505-d293309-Reviews-or5-Bird_s_Eye_View_Lodge-Crooked_Tree_Belize_District.html)

[Reviews-or5-Bird s Eye View Lodge-Crooked Tree Belize District.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g2151505-d293309-Reviews-or5-Bird_s_Eye_View_Lodge-Crooked_Tree_Belize_District.html)



Known as one of Belize's top birding spots, Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary's 16,400 acres includes more than 3,000 acres of lagoons, swamp and marsh. We are likely to see up close and personal, crocodiles, iguanas, turtles, coatis and (depending on luck and time of year) the jabiru stork. With

a wingspan of up to 12 feet, the jabiru is the largest flying bird in Central and South America. Some say they're bigger than some of the local puddle jumpers (airplanes).

While birding is great any time of year, the peak time is the dry season from November to May. At any time of year, even on a one- to three-hour tour, you're likely to see 20 to 40 different species of birds everything from snowy egrets and snail kites to ospreys and black-collared hawks. There are two types of duck, Muscovy and black-bellied whistling, and all five species of kingfishers. So many birds, no matter how much time you spend here.

Not in the mood to hike around looking at birds. You can rent canoes, bikes, even horses to see your feathered friends. The Belize Audubon Society manages the sanctuary, and the visitor center has free trail maps, if you don't want to join in one of the scheduled tours this is always an option.

**Day 1-3** we are met at the airport by one of The Birdseye View staff and transported to this Belizean owned hotel perched right on the lagoon. While there we are scheduled for two motorized lagoon tours, a birding walk-about in the pine ridge and a tour of nearby Al tun Ha Maya Archeological site. We also have plenty of time to walk the trails around the lagoon, tour the cultural center and take a leisurely canoe for an up-close and personal look at the thousands of birds along the shores. We have a lovely roof top or covered first floor veranda to enjoy morning yoga, coffee or tea so pack you travel mat and yoga towel as none will be provided and hotels don't usually like to see their linens outside.

**Day 4-6 Lamanai** <http://www.nichbelize.org/ia-general/welcome-to-the-institute-of-archaeology.html>



We leave Crooked Tree after B on March 1<sup>st</sup> and will be transported to the shores of the New River just S of Orange Walk town. We will be picked up by guides from Lamanai Outpost Lodge and shuttled 30 miles up the New River from Orange Walk to the Lamanai Maya temples. On the boat ride, in addition to some amazing scenery, we might see wildlife like snail kites, jacana, morelet's crocodile and iguanas. Lamanai was occupied for more than 3,000 years,

up until European contact. This Archaeological Reserve not only contains a museum with ancient Maya artifacts, but remnants of two 16th century Spanish churches and a colonial sugar mill established in 1860.

A major attraction of Lamanai is the well-preserved mask of a Maya ruler emerging from a crocodile headdress. Lamanai, one of Belize's largest Maya sites, sits on the bank of the 30-mile-long New River Lagoon in the Orange Walk District. It features monumental architecture of temples and palaces dating from the

Classic and Pre-Classic Periods. Set in tropical forest and providing amazing views from several of its large temples, Lamanai provides a unique glimpse into the culture of the Maya, the biological diversity of the tropical rainforest and the changes of landuse over time.



Lamanai is the community with the longest history of human habitation in Belize. It was settled around 900 B.C and was still occupied two and a half thousand years later, when Spanish missionaries arrived in 1544. During their almost century- long domination, the Spanish built two Churches that were used in their efforts to Christianize the site's inhabitants. Eventually, in 1640 the Maya in several frontier towns rebelled against churches and villages throughout Belize. By the 1800's, investors began a sugar operation at Lamanai. A dramatic fall in world sugar prices, and outbreaks of malaria among the workers resulted in failure of the enterprise, and the mill and farm were abandoned, just a few years after its establishment. Sugar, with all its good (rum) and bad habitat loss, pollution and dangerous work conditions is still a thriving business throughout Belize and much of Central America.

Here's a fun fact; Did you know liquid mercury was discovered in an offering that was placed below the ballcourt marker at this site! This represents one of only two examples of mercury found in the Maya world (the other was at Caracol in the Mountain Pine Ridge of Belize).

Holistic Journeys will stay three nights in the Jungle at the Lamanai Outpost Lodge. <https://lamanai.com>. We will be shuttled after Breakfast on March 4<sup>th</sup> back down the New River and picked up at the boat landing for our private transport (2-2.5 hours away) to Orchid Bay and the Crimson Orchid Inn for the last leg of our journey. Take a peek via virtual tour and be amazed again at your accommodations. You may just want to stay! <https://www.thecrimsonorchidinn.com>

**Day 7-10** David Berger, long time Belizean guide for the Crimson Orchid Inn will meet and transport us to our last Belizean experience, near the very tip of Northern Belize.



The Inn sits on/near the turquoise waters of the Chetumal and Corozal Bays. Stephen Honeybill, the owner will meet us and share the history and unique attributes of the Inn and many natural, cultural and just plain amazing Belizean venues nearby. Our last three nights will surely add lasting memories of a unique side of Belize, many don't get to see. Our tours once at the Crimson Orchid Inn will be guided by David and will include; Shipstern Nature Reserve, the town of Sartenaja, Cerros, Santa Rita and a fishing or snorkeling experience in or

near Bacalar Chico World Heritage site.

### **Shipstern Nature Reserve**

Located in Corozal District, Shipstern Nature Reserve is a 31-square-mile semi dry tropical rainforest, with more than 300 different species of birds awaiting discovery. With 13 species of egrets, American coots, keel-billed toucans, fly-catchers, warblers and several species of





parrots, it's safe to say that if you can't find the bird you're looking for, you may not be looking hard enough. Originally a self-sustaining business devoted to the exportation of butterflies, this 22,000-acre reserve protects a wide array of habitats, from wetlands and lagoons to wet and dry tropical forests. Shipstern is home to all five cat species found in Belize, the endangered Baird's Tapir, some 300 species of birds, including wood stork nesting sites, and a myriad of other plant and animal species. Perhaps we will even be able to tour Wild Tacks, an Animal Rescue and Rehab in the town of Sartenaja.

The reserve boasts a one-of-a-kind observation tower that stands approximately 40 feet above the forest canopy, providing visitors with an excellent view of the Corozal Bay, the Forest Canopy and the Shipstern Lagoon.



enjoy a panoramic view of the town.

If birds aren't all your speciality, no worries, **Shipstern** has plenty of pumas, jaguars and raccoons to observe. Plus, the butterfly farm at the visitor's center. Most find this little farm quite intriguing. There's also a Mahogany museum and botanical trail for your exploration. It's safe to say that if you like Nature, you'll love Shipstern Nature Reserve. Located about one mile from the town square, this great historical Maya site commemorates the birthplace of the Mestizos. Once atop the main temple, visitors can

It's just a short trip to ancient Maya sites from the Crimson Orchid Inn, **Santa Rita** is just outside of town and gives you a chance to see some without traveling to a remote area. Santa Rita was founded in 1500 BC and was one of the district's major trading centers. There are few structures uncovered and no guides to show you around. But with a little imagination, you should be able to transport yourself back in time or, at least, get some nice pictures.

We will also take a short boat ride across the Corozal Bay to **Cerros** or an adventurous trip by road. As the only Maya site in Belize situated on the coast, Cerros is located on a northern peninsula in the Bay of Chetumal, across from Corozal Town.

Our accommodations at the Crimson Orchid Inn sit just off the Bay of Chetumal. It will be an amazing place to enjoy tranquil views of the bay, the food, accommodations and chat with our amiable host, Stephen Honeybill and guide David.



Cerros Maya site was the first Maya trading center built along the seaside in 50 B.C. Maya traders arrived by canoe from the coast through the Bay of Chetumal, as well as from upriver on the Rio Hondo in the north and the New River to the south.

Three large buildings dominate several plazas flanked by pyramids. While two of these structures are facades adorned with stucco masks, the masks has since been covered to protect them from erosion. With the tallest structure rising 72 feet above the plaza, the panoramic view atop offers the Bay of Chetumal, Corozal Town and the mouth of the New River, which leads to the Lamanai temples.

The Maya living here also built an extensive canal system and utilized raised-field agriculture. It's truly a sight to see.

The most famous building at Cerros is a temple decorated with two pairs of large painted stucco masks that flank the central stairway. The lower eastern mask represented the rising sun. Its western counterpart was the setting sun. The upper eastern mask was Venus as the morning star and, to the west, Venus as the evening star. One theory holds that when the site's ruler conducted rituals on the temple, he was symbolically placed at the center of the cosmos as a demonstration of his power and right to rule. The Preclassic dates of the masks on Str. 5C2nd are great examples of the early achievements of ancient Maya astronomy and the complexity of their religion and cosmology.

Did-You-Know? Ancient canals used for water management and flood control encircle the site core. Global warming, in the form of rising sea levels, has been affecting the site. Several mounds are now under water along the northern coastline.

On our last morning, March 7<sup>th</sup>, will be transferred by private shuttle bus to the Belize International airport It's about a 2.5 hour drive, so it will be an early day with plenty of time to reflect, relax and shop for those last minutes gifts, once checked in. Please make your return flight is an afternoon flight for everyone's convenience or if you are planning to stay in Belize or travel on to Mexico, let me know and I can help find appropriate accommodations or transportation.

Now, *It's Time to Take Time*, Please join me and Holistic Journeys, *Rebecca*