

Thank you for considering a yachting holiday with TMM in Belize! As you are probably well aware, Belize boasts some of the most pristine, unspoiled, natural beauty you will find anywhere in the world. An ample supply of deserted islands and beautiful cruising grounds await you! We have put this informative package together to help you decide on your sailing destination. Following you will find some of the “most frequently asked questions” about Belize. We have done our best to omit the sales hype, stick to the facts and hopefully answer many questions for you!

What can you tell me about chartering in Belize?

Whether it's calm water cruising, world class diving, rain forest trekking, Maya ruins, cave exploring or simply relaxing under a coconut tree enjoying the warm trade winds, you will find most things you are looking for in a charter destination right here in “Little Old Belize”.

What can you tell me about the Barrier Reef?

You may already know the #1 tourist attraction in Belize is the Barrier Reef. This reef offers not only unlimited dive locations, but great protection from the large open ocean swells. Most people find this a very comfortable place to cruise and it's certainly not without its challenges! Navigating is easy and you nearly always are within sight of an island. Keep identifying islands as you sail along, and you “should” never get lost. The challenging part is learning to read the shallow (sometimes known as “skinny”) waters and recognizing coral!

What charts or cruising guides are available?

The best charts available for Belize navigation are contained in the Cruising Guide to Belize & Mexico's Caribbean Coast by Freya Rauscher. If you are booking your trip through TMM, upon confirmation we send you a free copy of the Freya Rauscher Guide. Additionally, a copy is aboard all boats complete with extra coordinates for GPS and local tips to make the trip easier. (It's now in its second edition and all anyone needs to research to familiarize themselves with offshore Belize). If you are booking your charter through another agency we suggest you contact them regarding the guide as we encourage them to purchase in bulk and pass the savings on to you. Should your agent not have the guide available please contact: <http://cruisingguides.com> When this guide is followed with a large degree of sobriety, it makes your trip quite safe. However, you do need to watch the road carefully and learn to read the water! We don't recommend setting sail for your next anchorage plugged into your GPS, putting it on autopilot, and heading below to make a drink!

Despite our giving you directions that steer you clear of coral heads, you still have to keep a diligent watch at all times. It's very easy to follow the islands as you sail along and I think becomes quite fun to guess your position based on sighted angles you can gather with the hand held compass. Between that and a GPS, you should never feel lost in Belize.

What provisions and water are available when sailing inside the barrier reef?

Although there are several restaurants at various islands along the reef, provisioning must be done at the start of the charter in either San Pedro or Placencia. In San Pedro you can order a standard split provisioning package from TMM or purchase a custom order from <http://lagniappebelize.com> You can also self provision in San Pedro as the stores are well stocked. If you are sailing from Placencia, we strongly recommend that you have us provision the boat for you as supplies can be very limited. Split and custom packages are available from TMM Placencia. Please see the provisioning section of the website for more information. Once away from our base you can purchase ice and water at Caye Caulker and South Water Caye. Having said that..... water conservation is the key in Belize - so no singing in the shower!!

Why doesn't TMM allow bareboating outside the reef?

The reefs are not very well charted, which makes it dangerous coming in through unmarked “cuts” in the reef. Once inside the atolls the shoal waters are full of coral rock formations that lie in many areas in such numbers that the charts simply say “numerous coral heads or patch reefs”. Additionally, communication is non-existent and we may not be able to come to you even if we knew you were in trouble. We do not have a dedicated search and rescue organization in Belize and therefore we prefer to steer people clear of any potential difficulty.

If for instance you put a hole in the hull of your vessel outside the reef, we would have to wait for a calm weather window to bring a crane and barge to assist us. Once out there, we would have to complete the repair and wait for another weather window at our expense before bringing the barge back inside the reef. These calm times in the blue can be few and far between, so it can turn into an expensive, time consuming operation. However, if you stay inside the reef we can be there in a day, and have our boat back in

service within a week.

With so much to see inside the reef, it won't spoil your sailing adventure to steer clear of the outside. Many people want to go to the outer atolls for the diving, but in reality the southern reef is every bit as spectacular.

How do I get to Belize?

U.S. gateway cities are Miami, Houston and Dallas (all 2.5 hours). Carriers are American Airlines, Continental or TACA. Although TACA is a "Central American" company, don't be fooled into thinking it is inferior. In our opinion TACA is a high quality company providing excellent service and aircraft to their clients. Because of constantly changing flight schedules, I won't elaborate on times, other than to say that most flights arrive between 12:00 noon and 3:00 p.m.

Once in Belize how do we get to San Pedro or Placencia?

Once at Belize International, a 15 minute commuter plane with Tropic Air takes you on your first breathtaking experience with the largest barrier reef in the western hemisphere. Many people have trouble booking Tropic Air from abroad, therefore, we can make those arrangements here for you and then bill you upon arrival. We will provide you with a reservation # and will have vouchers waiting at the Tropic Air desk at Belize International Airport the day of your arrival. If incoming flights are delayed, it's not a problem! They fly every hour and they know you are arriving on the international flight we tell them; they simply get you on the next flight available. If you have too much luggage, they may put some of the pieces on the following flight. Don't be alarmed! This works well and they're very good about making sure you get your luggage by the end of the day. In return for this inconvenience, they don't charge people for excess luggage.

Flight cost: San Pedro \$109.00/person round trip. Placencia \$164.00/person round trip. The planes are new Cessna 208 Caravans. Please note that there is a Belize City "Municipal Airstrip" as well as Belize City "International". **The only time to use the municipal airstrip is if you are traveling inland after your charter with us.**

TMM's bases - How do we get there?

For Placencia we will schedule the taxi to meet you at the Placencia airstrip and take you to the TMM base or your hotel. Placencia is one of those rare locations that seems to move at it's own pace entirely. The area is very peaceful and is a great spot to get away from the world in general. There are several hotels ranging from small local establishments to first class resorts. The "down town" area hosts several fun restaurants and bars and there are two small grocery stores that are handy for last minute extra items (like more beer!). Our base is located on the inner canal and is just a short walk to the center of town.

For San Pedro - Tropic Air will fly you to the newly renovated airstrip in San Pedro, Ambergris Cay. Our office is located 5 minutes walking distance south of the San Pedro airstrip. Although it is only a short walk to our base, most people require a taxi to carry their luggage. Because we never know exactly when people will be arriving, we ask that you simply grab any cab that's waiting at the airport and ask to be taken to TMM (unless overnighing at a Motel elsewhere of course!) The taxi is \$5.00 and includes an adequate tip to cover the driver helping you with your luggage. (We will reimburse you later with ice!)

For those of you who choose to get a bit of exercise and walk to our office, we are located in a 2-storey green building at the south end of the interlocking brick road. Our entrance is at the rear of the building.

The TMM base in San Pedro, Ambergris Cay is one of the most perfect places in Belize to begin your yacht charter. The town of San Pedro has long been the tourist capital of Belize with the main attraction being diving and water sports. San Pedro is a very laid back fishing village with sand streets and a population of about 4,000. There are more golf carts than cars, and a plethora of restaurants, bars, dive shops and souvenir shops. The cost of living in San Pedro is rather high due to two things, the cost of shipping from the mainland and of course tourism!

What are the local motels like?

In San Pedro we are now utilizing a very nice motel right across the street from the Tropic Air terminal called the "Sunbreeze". It is quite nice, with a beautiful pool in the courtyard. Our dock is only 200' away which makes flow to your yacht very easy. The "Sunbreeze" recently completed the islands first air-conditioned restaurant called "Carrusos", and of course there is a convenient "watering hole" by the pool.

Another option which is clean, neat, and new is "Coconuts". They offer a continental breakfast and free bicycles that make life quite convenient for their guests. The cab ride won't cost any more as it is only a 4-5 minute ride south, but it does mean you'll have to cab back to your boat in the morning.

TMM Placencia has recently constructed 6 hotel rooms at the base. These air conditioned rooms each have two queen size beds

and are good value for the night prior to the charter, rates are \$100-\$125/night plus tax depending on the season and the number of people in each room. The other hotels in the area that are recommended are Roberts Grove, Kitty's Place, Turtle Inn and Rum point Inn.

Dining out - Are there many restaurants?

Yes, there are plenty of restaurants to choose from in San Pedro. Most are within easy walking distance (we'll give you a map once you arrive). Prices are about half of what you will pay in San Pedro, but of course everything is less developed in Caye Caulker. From there south you can dine out at St. George's Caye in a very nice dive resort and then try a fisherman's meal at Ricardo's Fish Camp on Bluefield Range. Next is Tobacco Caye, where there are a few basic local restaurants, and then in South Water Caye there are two more choices. That's it until you reach Placencia, and you would need 10 days to arrive there. If you are sailing to Placencia you can re-provision there as well as having plenty of dining options ashore.

Cell Phones

We put cell phones on all boats because VHF communication is only good for approximately 15 – 20 miles. Cell phones provide excellent coverage within the barrier reef. A bonus is that you can use your calling card and not have to pay locally. Additionally, you are not charged for any incoming calls! The cell phone rental charge of \$1.00/day includes 10-15 minutes of local calling time. Sorry but cell phone numbers are not available prior to arrival.

Can you provide us with snorkel gear, windsurfing equipment or scuba gear?

- **SNORKEL GEAR** is included with your charter, so please be sure to get fitted before leaving the TMM base.
- **WINDSURFERS** can be rented for \$155.00 per week plus a \$100.00 security deposit. This popular watersport is perfect inside the reef with an undisturbed breeze and calm waters, which is ideal for beginners when winds are light! Please visit www.sailsportsbelize.com for a listing of the available rental boards.
- **FISHING GEAR** – we rent fishing poles for \$30.00 per week .Tackle is available locally.
- **DIVING EQUIPMENT** – Belize is renowned for its excellent diving and no doubt a lot of you will come to scuba dive. For optimum safety and specific locations, we encourage you to dive with the local dive shops along the way. We will provide you with a list of these shops and their phone numbers on board in the boat binder. Most dives need to be booked a day ahead. Booking a dive before you come down is not recommended as all diving is weather dependent. Although we rent scuba equipment, we only do so if you are taking a TMM skipper with you on your charter.

Scuba shops are available at the following locations:

- Caye Caulker – Frenchies Diving Services
- St. Georges Caye – St. Georges Lodge
- Tobacco Caye
- South Water Caye – IZE International Zoological Expeditions, Living Reef Dive Center and Blue Marlin Lodge

The average cost is \$45.00 for a 2-tank dive.
The benefits of going with a local scuba diving shop are:

It's safer. Shops offer expertise with local knowledge of wind and sea conditions and should have oxygen available along with an emergency evacuation procedure to get you back to San Pedro for re compression if necessary.

They know all the best dive spots and will ensure that you maximize your diving experience.

They save all the damage that occurs from tanks on fiberglass boats as well as coral that is unwittingly killed by those who didn't mean to!!

Can I fish in Belize?

YES you can fish in Belize and you do not need a license. Trolling while sailing is most popular, but you can also toss a line just about anywhere and catch a fish or two. Most people catch jacks and barracuda while trolling inside the reef, but you might also catch a small snapper while at anchor.

Should I visit inland Belize?

Maya ruins, rain forests and jungle trekking, river rafting, cave exploring – what more could anyone want?

It's small but powerful, meek and mighty, adventurous yet comfortable. That's inland Belize! Your trip is not complete without a peek at the other half of Belize. Try to obtain a copy of Destinations Magazine and you'll see what we mean! It's gorgeous when you get off the main highways. Prepare yourself for challenging driving as the roads often require 4-wheel assist!

Should I rent a car to tour inland Belize?

It's certainly nice to have the freedom and it is our preference to rent a car. Car rentals are expensive here due to the costs of importing and maintaining them in these harsh conditions. All prices (per day) include insurance and taxes: