



Blue Water Paradise

Mayan Ruins, Jungle Waterways, and Coral Reefs

January 17-24 / February 14 - 21 / February 21-28 / April 18-25

EASY TROPICAL SEA KAYAKING, EASY DAY HIKES, SNORKELING
8 DAYS, 1 NIGHT HOTEL, 6 NIGHTS ON CATAMARAN
1 DAY OF TRANSPORT TO AND FROM YOUR HOME

[Castine Kayak Partnering with Explorers Corner!](#)

Belize is a kayaker's tropical wonderland of turquoise blues, emerald greens and coral whites. Two of nature's most productive and diverse habitats – the magical tropical rain forest and abundant coral reef – are waiting to reveal their interconnected wonders to those who choose to adventure with us on our sporty catamaran, the *M/S Legacy*. We've been looking forward to launching in this dynamic area for years and are excited to finally share the experience with our fellow explorers.

During our stay we'll listen to the pulsing sounds of the rainforest overhead as our kayaks glide through secluded channels and lagoons. Out on the cayes we island hop, walk pristine coral beaches, and snorkel through an endless underwater garden of colorful sponges and tropical fish. Come meet a gentle manatee at her favorite underwater hideout, or help spot a keel-billed toucan in the jungle canopy!



© Doug Peebles



Our home and adventure center for most of the journey will be aboard the *M/S Legacy*, where we can watch dolphins surf the bow wake or see a leviathan whale shark pass through the transparent depths. At sunset, we'll retire for drinks and a fresh hearty meal. The *Legacy* comes equipped with everything we'll need to explore this rich marine coastal environment, including sea kayaks and snorkeling gear for everyone.

What better way to visit the barrier reef, which runs the entire length of Belize's 185-mile coastline? As the largest reef in both the Western and Northern Hemispheres, it is second only to Australia's Great Barrier Reef. We will

visit a variety of spots, as the area inside the northern reef has a flatter bottom of grassy beds and patch reef, while the structure in the south takes on more relief with natural pinnacles, tiny atolls and sink holes.

We'll also have inland adventures into the jungle to paddle secluded tropical rivers, cool off in sparkling waterfalls, and visit a Garifuna village. Belize has a rich and alluring human history: an amalgamation of cultural infusions including indigenous Maya, Creoles descended from black African's brought in as slaves to provide the backbone of the logging trade, Confederate expatriates escaping the victorious Union, Mennonites from Europe, Mestizos fleeing Central American wars and British expatriates—particularly Scots.

A treasure trove of Mayan archeological sites stretch the breadth of the country, giving us a great excuse to go hiking. And speaking of treasure: the intricate reefs and cayes (pronounced keys) that make for such great snorkeling and sea kayaking were once the ideal hideout for the real pirates of the Caribbean including Blackbeard himself.



We're very excited to offer this destination for the first time this season. Belize is such a dynamic country to visit that this adventure will become a "not to be missed" Explorers' Corner classic. We also provide many **single and multi-day extensions** to help you extend your adventure and can help your group plan a **custom trip**.



Day 1. Saturday: Arrive Belize City. Our representative will transfer you to the Radisson Fort George. The hotel maintains a colonial air, sitting near the tip of the fashionable Fort District's waterfront (facing the Caribbean Sea) and boasts its own marina. If you are arriving on an early flight, you may choose to visit one of the Mayan ruins not far from town, the renown zoo or join a guided city tour (we have single and multi-day extensions available for advance booking, or you can make arrangements with the hotel when you arrive). Tonight's dinner is on your own at one of the hotel's three restaurants or nearby in the Fort District.
(No meals, in transit)... [Fort George Hotel](#)

Day-to-Day Itinerary

This itinerary is intended to serve as a guideline. Part of the spirit of Explorers' Corner is to seize opportunities: we'll take advantage of a spectacularly nice day to stay out adventuring into the sunset; we may linger in a secluded bay to enjoy the solitude; or we may head inland during inclement weather to learn more about a local archaeological site. This spirit of adventure and flexibility are key to our approach to travel.

Day 2. Sunday: Southern Lagoon After an early breakfast we make the short transfer to our waiting yacht, the *M/S Legacy*. Your captain, guide and crew will welcome you aboard, introduce you to the vessel and show you to your quarters. The *Legacy* will pass by Fort George lighthouse as we begin our search for Manatees, visiting the usual haunt of these large blimp-like mammals - commonly called sea cows - which are often described as "so ugly that they're cute".

Setting a course south, you'll see that the Caribbean shore is virtually deserted:

preserving it as a prime nesting site for green, loggerhead and hawksbill turtles to use May through October. As we near the mouth of the Bar River we'll drop anchor and hop into our sea kayaks for a journey up the red mangrove lined channel to the outstanding wildlife habitat of Southern Lagoon.



The surrounding marshland and mangroves, backed by the picturesque Maya Mountains, makes for beautiful views and excellent manatee breeding and calving grounds. This is where you'll find the largest population of manatees in the Caribbean. Our destination is Gales Point, a tiny peninsula that juts out from the southern part of the lagoon, where warm underground springs lure manatees to feed on their favorite snack: a thick matt of turtle grass. Manatees, especially the young, are curious and may approach, but they're also shy and easily spooked by sudden movements. We will kayak amongst these creatures but cannot snorkel with them.

After a visit to the colorful Creole village of Gales Point (we may hear their drumming school in the background), we set our sites on Western Lagoon to seek out the opening in the mangroves that leads to shore. A ten minute walk across

the savanna brings us to the jungle's edge, where an easy climb arrives at the mouth of a cave nestled into the limestone. Using flashlights we will explore the stalactite and stalagmite formations while keeping our eyes open for Mayan pottery shards.

If there's time, we'll head up the lush jungle waterways of the Manatee River and Soldiers Creek, lined with wild orchids and stands of bamboo. This is considered an excellent wildlife habitat, home to howler monkeys, a variety of birds and even jungle cats.



Returning to the *Legacy* don't be fooled into thinking that all the large shadows passing beneath the boat are manatees; monster sized snapper, grouper and jump giant tarpon inhabit these waters. We'll be ready for a feast and good night's rest after today!

B, L, D... M/S Legacy

Day 3. Monday: Mayflower Ruins, Sittie River, Garifuna Village.

This morning we head west by minivan toward the Mayan Mountains to the Mayan ruin known as Mayflower. The tiny complex is nestled in the jungle beside the attractive waters of Silk Grass Creek. A trail threads through the area, rewarding hikers with visits to waterfalls and opportunities to swim in rock pools. The jungle canopy reaches up to 130 ft (40

meters) in places. Nearly 300 species of birds are found in this region. Reptiles and amphibians, such as red-eyed tree frogs and iguanas, inhabit the area.



We then follow the scenic Sittee River to our put-in. This afternoon we'll kayak the quiet waters of the Sittee and paddle down a man-made cut that takes us into hidden Anderson lagoon. The Sittee River was once an important highway for the sugar and timber industries; today you'll find thick vegetation where many animals thrive. Jaguar has been seen making river crossings, not to be mistaken for the manatees and dolphins inhabiting the river mouth.

This region is home to the Garinagu, who speak Garifuna (the name by which these people are commonly called). They trace their intriguing ancestry to a fusion of the Carib people - on an exodus from South America - and a band of enslaved Nigerians who managed to escape their Spanish captors during a shipwreck off the coast of St. Vincent in 1635. Those who made it ashore found refuge with the Carib, eventually giving birth to a new culture with its own language. The Garifuna practice a mystical spiritualism that emphasizes the casting of spells.

We end this day in the village of Hopkins near the mouth of the Sittee. This Garifuna village offers the quintessential white

sandy beach lined with tall coconut palms, where local fisherman keep their colorful handmade dories and dry their nets. We'll bask in the warm setting and toast the tropical sunset, perhaps to the rhythm of Garinagu drums.

B, L, D... M/S Legacy

Days 4 - 7. Tuesday thru Friday. The Barrier Reef & Cayes.

Before us stretches a sparkling turquoise sea kayaker's wonderland of crystal white islets called cayes, crowned with emerald mangroves and royal green palms. The reef has the affect of lifting the entire coast and cordoning it off from the depths. This forms an oceanic basin naturally planted with a living explosion of richly blooming coral gardens constructed and inhabited by a plethora of neon creatures. Our sea kayaks are ideal for jumping off for snorkeling when we see something of interest.



We plan to use these days to their fullest. Depending on the time of year, weather conditions, interests of the group, and other factors (such as the best times or seasons to view certain species) we plan to maximize our itinerary and adjust our plans accordingly.

B, L, D... M/S Legacy

What follows are brief summaries of some of the places we may visit. It is not possible to visit all of them on any one trip, but you will see the best based on conditions.



South Water Caye Marine Reserve: The reserve covers over 60 square miles, harbors 10 large mangrove cayes, 2 ranges and many smaller cayes. There are two research stations in the group, one operated by the Smithsonian on Carrie Bow (or Ellen's) Caye and another on South Water Caye, which accepts the overflow of researchers from the Smithsonian. South Water Caye is one of the few cayes that sit directly on top of the main ridge of the barrier reef. Between Carrie Bow and Wee Wee Caye, pinnacles known as sand bores rise from the floor breaking the surface to create a nesting site for sooty terns. Rays and barracuda frequent the channels between these natural towers. Weather permitting, we may paddle from Southwater Caye to the Twin Cayes. While paddling the channel that separates the 'twins', we'll look for the manatees and rays that inhabit the waterway.

Tobacco Range & Caye: This caye and its island group called the 'Tobacco Range' rest right on top of the reef. The range forms a great lagoon inhabited by boobies, frigate birds and cormorants. Tobacco Caye is something of a paradise for way off the beaten track backpackers and sea kayakers and offers some of the best kayaking and snorkeling in Belize. The palm-fringed coral island of Tobacco Caye is covered with coconut palms, where pelicans circle in search of a meal.

You might want to take some time out ashore on this friendly island to hear the local fish stories while enjoying a drink at the island's castaway-like outdoor bar and deck.

Bluefield Range: The four Cayes that make up the range form intricate channels small enough that sometimes only kayaks can navigate them. Look for up-side-down jellyfish anchored in the currents.



Turneffe Islands Atoll: Turneffe is the middle of Belize's three great atolls, just 25 miles from Belize City, and is home to a number of shallow lagoons. The atoll offers another "string of pearls" set of cayes with mangrove clusters and intertidal areas. You can find an assortment of creatures here from wading birds and osprey to manatees and crocodiles. Fisherman frequent its crystal flats in search of bonefish and tarpon. Some locations offer tie-down buoy to hitch your kayak to while you snorkel. The

dives here are considered among the best in the Western Caribbean, including the famous Blue Hole. The atoll is comprised of a score of mangrove islands, which are nurseries to the coral reef, giving rise to numerous schools of fish. Brightly colored sponges and coral abound, as do many of the 460 species of colorful reef fish.



We know you'll enjoy visiting a selection of these just-mentioned areas; we'll focus on the locations best suited to the conditions during your specific trip.

Day 8. Saturday: Return Home.

Early this morning we'll find ourselves back at Belize City Harbor quite early in case anyone has an early flight. We've arranged an airport transfer from the Fort George Hotel if you plan to fly home or on to further adventures.

If you elect to purchase an **extension to Tikal and Guatemala** at the end of the trip, you will need to be ready early to catch the 8:30 am flight. We have additional **single and multi-day extensions** you may book in advance. If you hadn't planned an extra excursion, but find yourself longing for one more

adventure before your flight home, day trips can be ordered up with only one day's notice in time to make a late afternoon flight.

[B... Return home](#)

Please let us know if you would like to discuss planning a custom group trip to this region or if you'd like information about extensions we offer for this region for individuals and groups.



Land Cost

High Season (Nov. 1 – May 31)
\$3,690 per person (8-12 members)
\$3,890 per person (6-7 members)

Low Season (June 1 – Oct. 31)
\$3,490 per person (8-12 members)
\$3,690 per person (6-7 members)

Single Supplement Hotel – \$72 per person
(Not available aboard the yacht)

Cabins are not equal in size nor shape and are all shared: allotment will be based on need at the guide's discretion.

*Price does not include international airfare or mandatory trip insurance.

Prices are given in US Dollars.

**Minimum 6 people on trip or trip subject to cancellation

What's Included?

- Charter boat cruise
- Expert leadership and support personnel
- All accommodations as noted
- Meals as noted (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)
- Land excursions and sightseeing as noted
- All kayaking gear, safety equipment, and camping gear

What's Not Included?

- Airfare to/from Belize City
- Insurance of any kind: mandatory evacuation insurance, suggested cancellation insurance
- Visas
- Fishing licenses
- Excess baggage charges
- Airport or departure taxes
- Medical immunizations
- Extensions or optional add-ons
- Items of a personal nature (clothing, sodas, liquor, snacks, laundry, etc.)
- Optional tipping of guides, yacht crew, porters, or drivers



Castine Kayak Partnering with Explorers Corner!

Explorers' Corner endeavors to foster a community of explorers that dare to make true travel dreams-only limited by the world and our imaginations. Explorers' Corner is a mostly-referral specialty adventure travel company offering unique destinations and/or experiences, custom adventures and "old-world" one-to-one customer service.

We're here to answer any of your questions about this trip or any other trips we offer. Don't hesitate to visit our web site at www.castinekayak.com or call us at 207-866-3506 or email us at castinekayak@gmail.com.

The World is Ours to Explore!