

UnBelizeable trip to Belize...
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Without a doubt, Belize is one of the most beautiful countries I have ever visited. This trip was a great experience that allowed me to learn about a different culture and even about myself. Going abroad during winter was a good idea because I got to appreciate so much the warm and nice temperatures in Belize. I enjoyed every moment of this trip and tried to make every second count. Some of the things Belize offered me were exquisite food, amazing views of its majestic lands, the option to study its biodiversity, the privilege to interact with very kind people and the opportunity to know more about the Belizean culture.



I tried typical dishes from Belize and I liked them a lot. Beans, rice, oranges and pineapple were some of my favorite food. I loved the fact that most of the food was organic and harvest by nearby farmers. I also loved how cordial and respectful Belizeans are. I was welcomed everywhere I went; people were extremely receptive and eager to have our whole group around. Furthermore, Belizeans were very innovative and resourceful. We had the privilege to witness and learn how to make chocolate from the very beginning (pod from cacao tree) by a very smart Mayan businessman. I was very impressed seeing how they nearly produce waste and reuse some of that in new products such as wine and vinegar.

Even though Belize is a relatively small country, in term of cultures it's a like a melting pot. Thanks to its history, Belize has various indigenous groups, Africans, Spanish and British roots in their culture. According to Belizean people, even within the indigenous groups there is variety of customs and beliefs but they all share making chocolate as a common practice, which in my view is just fascinating. A lot of

the cultural indoctrination has to do with the location within the country. For instance, the south of Belize shares more cultural similarities with Guatemala because they are so close. This is reflected by more Spanish-speaking people in this region and even more dietary customs similar to the one in Guatemala. Those living in the city (Belize City) normally share more common ground with what used to be British colonies back in the times. This means most of the residents of Belize City do not speak Spanish or any other different language (s) than the ones spoken at home.

We observed several dozens of birds and others species of animals. Many of the observed species were new to me, some were very colorful, with unique behaviors and different sizes. I still remember how amazed I was when I observed for first time the red-lored parrot and the magnificent bill of the toucan. In addition there were mammals like the black howler monkey that were nearby because I could hear their growling sounds.

My group conducted a research in Punta Gorda which is located in the southern part of Belize. We stayed at the Cotton Tree Lodge, place literally located in the middle of the jungle. This hotel was very unique in its design and services, things like satellite internet, different type of food and luxurious cabanas made of Punta Gorda a comfy home for all. Our research consisted of learning about the various qualities of plants in the forest and how they can impact your chances to survive. We were able to build shelter by utilizing palms, eat by recognizing potential sources of energy from plants, drink water by identifying roots and plants that provide this precious natural resource, and protect us against insects and dangerous vegetation. In addition, we learned about plants that can help treating certain medical conditions and even plants that were used by old generations as anesthetics. I was very thankful we had a very smart and knowledgeable guide who knew the region and its plants.

My only advise to those considering to go to Belize is to bring open minds and enjoy every second of the trip. This trip indeed was unBelizeable and If I had the chance to do it again I would never hesitate to do it. Experiences like this can help you know so much about what you really like and how amazing this part of the world is. Belize's official language is English so there is no language barrier that can frustrate and potentially takes good moments away. Belize or not this was a dream come true!

