

San Ignacio Resort – an In-town Hotel Surrounded by Nature

By Lorry Heverly

The San Ignacio Resort Hotel has the best of both worlds. Nestled on a hill in the heart of San Ignacio, the property is close to town, yet surrounded by 14-acres of rainforests in the lush Macal River Valley. Bird watching and wildlife viewing abound along private nature and medicinal trails in the resort's jungle reserve and riverside beach.

Convenient touring

San Ignacio, in the Cayo district of western Belize, is 72 miles (or a one and one-half hours drive) from Belize City and nine miles from the Guatemalan border. This location offers a myriad of nearby attractions from major Maya archaeological sites to canoeing, caving, bird watching and horseback riding.

The in-house tour company with a fleet of air-conditioned vans and



A Green Iguana Habitat resident and friend.

naturalist/guides offer a selection of tours for hotel guests. Half day tours include the nearby Maya archaeological sites of Cahal Pech, El Pilar and Xunantunich, which is reached via a hand-cranked ferry.

A day trip to Caracol, Belize's largest and highest temple is combined with the natural beauty of waterfalls, pools and caves of the Mountain Pine Ridge.

Tikal, one of the most majestic and well-known of all Maya sites, is just an hour and a half from the Belize-Guatemalan border. Much of this powerful ancient city is covered by jungle, but the excavated temples and palaces rising from the Guatemalan rainforest are amazing.

The ancient Maya considered caves a sacred place where priests would hold ceremonies and com-

mune with the gods of the underworld. The Cayo district is filled with caves and there are several unique ways to experience them. The Barton Creek cave can be toured by canoe. At Caves Branch, adventure seekers can explore an extensive cave system by inner tubing along underground passages where the Cave Branch River cuts through the jagged, limestone mountains. Canoeing along the picturesque Macal River, horseback riding and visiting a butterfly conservatory are other options.

"Many guests wish they had more time to see all the sites and attractions in the area," says Mariam Roberson, managing director of the resort, who recommends a four-night stay.

San Ignacio Resort is a friendly, family-run property that prides themselves on making guests feel at home. Opened in 1976 by Mr. Escandar Bedran, a pioneer in tourism and a leader in Belizean development, daughter Mariam Bedran Roberson joined her father in the operation of the hotel in the early 1980's.

Today, Mariam and her four sisters carry on their father's dream and his love for San Ignacio.

Resort amenities

The 20-room resort hotel offers two types of rooms, with or without a balcony, for the same rate. The 14 deluxe balcony rooms are air conditioned with a private bath, two double beds, telephone and cable television.

Six rooms without a balcony in-



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clude one queen and one double in addition to a private bath, telephone and cable television. Rooms sport a comfortable, Colonial decor, bathrooms feature hand-painted tiles and all offer exceptional views of the rainforest.

Summer rack rates are \$84 single, \$110 double and \$130 triple, and taxes. Ask about the summer special with the fourth night free on all three-night bookings through October 31.

The public areas are inviting and filled with local art. A gift shop features local crafts and souvenirs. The swimming pool offers a refreshing option after a day of adventure in the tropics and tennis courts are lighted for evening games.

On the property is the Green Iguana Habitat, a conservation project where young iguanas are raised for a year in a protected habitat then released into the wild. Guided tours to the iguana exhibit and bird watching excursions along the medicinal and jungle trails are available for a nominal fee.

Rainforest dining

Guests can dine alfresco, overlooking the rainforest, or indoors in a refined Belizean hardwood setting at the Running W Steakhouse. The restaurant is renowned for its prime cuts of farm-fresh beef, Maya dishes and Belizean specialties. Breakfast with the birds is a treat for early rising guests dining on the tree level, wraparound balcony of the Running W. A giant tulip tree, laden with fruit, attracts an assortment of indigenous birds, including toucans, for a sit-down bird watching experience.

The Stork Club Bar & Grill offers casual dining with a full menu and live music most evenings. Room service is available 24 hours. A meal plan can be added to a room upon request. MAP rate, including breakfast and dinner, is \$31.17 per person, daily, and tax, while the AP



One of the San Ignacio Resort Hotel decks overlooking the poolside patio.

plan, for three meals is \$44.91 per person.

San Ignacio Resort Hotel, 011-501-824-2034, www.sanignaciobelize.com

STAY RELAXED

Overlooking the Caribbean Sea, this hotel offers quick access and fantastic day tours to the ruins, reef, rainforest, and caves.

The hotel has 102 beautifully appointed rooms with full amenities, two outdoor swimming pools, Jacuzzi, full-service marina, dive shop, gift shop, fitness room, business center, tour desk, meeting facilities, deli, 2 restaurants and bars.

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