



# Guyventures: Take Her On An Adventure Trip To Western Belize

Where You Should Take Her On Vacation (Hint: Not The Beach)



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*A Guyventure is a story – one you can brag to your friends and family about, sure. But more importantly, it's an experience you can scribble in your bucket list and eventually stack on top of a mountain of incredible lifelong memories. Get a move on. There's a whole world to explore.*

Belize is confounding. A place cannot be this beautiful – it's unfair.

Nestled below Mexico's southeastern corner, its borders slice through western Guatemala and its coastline looks out onto the Caribbean. A former British colony, Belize is officially an English speaking nation in the heart of the Spanish speaking world. But as I learned when traveling there – in Belize, official is little more than a guideline.

Vastly different cultures blend to make up what Belize is today and, impossibly, they manage to thrive together. Regardless of where their ancestors came from, an impressive percentage of Belizeans speak English, Spanish as well as Creole (similar to Jamaican Patois) – pretty much everyone I spoke to did. There are also indigenous languages stemming from the ancient Maya, Garifunas, Mennonites and a growing population of immigrants from places like Taiwan and El Salvador. What pops out as a lovechild from these rich cultures is a fascinating country with ruins that'll make you stop in your tracks, a mish-mash of dangerously delicious cuisine and the chill vibes you should probably expect from a nation that's beaches face the Caribbean. On top of all that, Belize has so much beautiful nature it seems greedy.

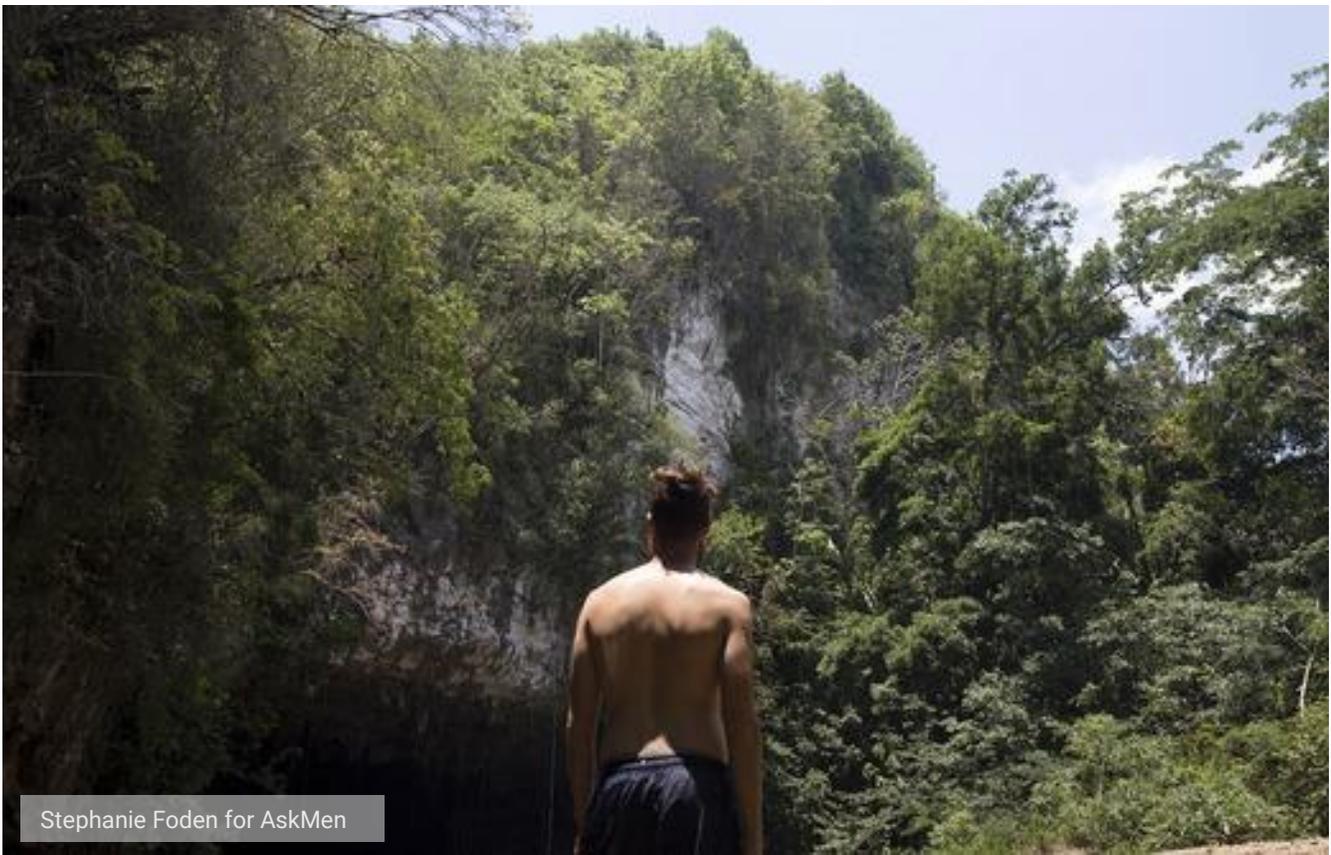


To the east, white sand beaches stare out at islands (cayes) that boast some of the best scuba-diving in the world. But while nobody can complain about sipping coconuts under an umbrella after swimming with whale sharks and over 500 species of fish, the coast is getting a tad on the pricey side. If you're looking for something a little different, and perhaps more adventurous, then inland is where you need to be.



The Cayo District in western Belize is home to lush rainforests with virtually every forest animal you can imagine. Below the swinging spider monkeys, flapping toucans and vibrant flowers, highways of crystal-clear streams crisscross through massive caves and pour out gaping holes, leaving the darkness inside to fend for itself. When the Mayas roamed here 3,000-years-ago, they considered the caves a sacred place – far different from any associations we may have with hell.

Above and below ground, western Belize is a playground for adventures such as zip-lining, kayaking, mountain-biking, hiking and horseback riding. Just watch your step. At the famous Actun Tunichil Muknal (ATM) cave, you risk stumbling on Mayan artifacts and preserved skeletons of real sacrificed humans – one tourist dropped their camera and busted a skull, so cameras are no longer allowed. At Jaguar Paw Jungle Resort, you can zipline through paradise or float in a tube before being sucked into the darkness of the "Maya Underworld." As with many incredible experiences, it's beautiful to see, but best when shared.



Back on the surface, the Mayan empire stretched from Mexico to Honduras, but Belize's Cayo District together with Guatemala's Peten district next-door was the center of it all. At Xunantunich, you can wander past the massive El Castillo pyramid, which stands at 130 feet tall and is the second tallest building in Belize following a pyramid at Caracol, another ancient kingdom. Just an hour over the border, you'll find the wonder, Tikal, which spans 220 square miles.

Over in San Ignacio, Belize's adventure hub, the fusion of cultures is on full display, both with the diverse characters you'll meet and the food you'll taste. Along with traditional rice and beans, Belizean food is a mixture of Latin-influenced foods like tamales and tacos – but they also love the fried stuff. A fry jack is deep-fried dough eaten for breakfast with butter and jam. Over at the taco carts, you'll find stuffed jacks, a deep-fried stuffed taco with meat and cheese and salbutes, a – you guessed it – deep-fried tortilla taco topped with cheese, chicken and tomato.



It's fun to meander around San Ignacio Market on a Saturday, plucking the strangest looking fruit you can find to go along with a \$2.50 Belizean dollar breakfast burrito (the Belizean dollar is tied to the US dollar 2-to-1). It's doubtful you've ever had a tortilla so buttery and delicious.

San Ignacio has plenty of places to crash after your day of adventuring. We were invited to stay at [San Ignacio Resort Hotel](#), and if you want to splurge and get treated like royalty, then this hotel will be your palace. As a matter of fact, Queen Elizabeth herself stayed there back in 1994.



Stand out on your balcony in a bathrobe with a glass of rum punch or local Belikin beer and look out at the birds perched on the trees, as royalty does. After dark, enjoy a romantic steak dinner served at on property at Running W Steakhouse and Restaurant with meat raised in the hotel owner's family farm before returning to your quarters and soaking in the suds of the hot tub on your balcony. Enjoy that glass of wine until the day's adventure is washed off in the suds, then crash onto the luxurious bed made for the king and queen that you are.



A bonus to staying at San Ignacio Resort Hotel is you get easy access to the Belize Iguana Project, or as the caretaker called it: Jurassic Park. Since 1996, the project has looked after green iguanas endangered by hunters, poachers, cars and predators. Feel free to cuddle one of the scaly beasts, they won't bite. Take extra care of one iguana named Kim K – a rare disease left her thick with a curvy tail.

In western Belize, you might not come home with sand in your toenails, but if you pass by the selfie mob at the beach and head inland, you'll meet a fascinating mixture of rich cultures, enough adventure sports to build a lifetime of memories and a ticket for two to the Maya underworld.



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