

General San Pedro information

Here's some info regarding a visit to Belize, specifically San Pedro on Ambergris Caye. This information was current as of our last visit (Feb-Mar 2015).

If you check out the links inserted below they will give you additional information about San Pedro:

<http://ambergriscaye.com/pages/town/island.html>

Another site is the online version of The San Pedro Sun, a weekly tourism and community oriented newspaper published in San Pedro. sanpedrosun.net/index.html

And, finally, here is another website, written by a young woman who came to San Pedro for R&R and decided to leave her life in the Northeastern US and move to the island full-time. <http://www.sanpedroscoop.com/>

To get to Belize you can fly American via Miami or Dallas, or United through Houston. Then there is Delta via Atlanta or US Air via Charlotte. TACA flies from Dallas, Miami, and Houston. **United has a non-stop from Newark on Saturdays during high season (November through May).**

Once you are in Belize, there are 2 ways to get to the island, by small plane (13 place) or by boat. Plane costs more but only takes 15 minutes. If you go by boat you must get a taxi to Belize City (12 miles) and then the boat ride takes 1.25 hours.

We fly Tropic Air. In case that's your choice too, here is their link so you could make your reservations from Belize Intl Airport to San Pedro Airstrip and return.

<https://www.tropicair.com/reservations/ReservationSecure.cfm?CFID=350666&CFTOKEN=84631458>

Notice that Tropic says the 2 checked bags can weigh no more than 35 pounds apiece, but that has never been our experience. We pack our bags to meet United specs (50 or even 70lbs max per bag) and we've never been charged an overweight fee by Tropic.

We have never taken a water taxi from/to the mainland when arriving/departing the country because we come with so much baggage (no pun intended!) that it would not be practical. We do not recommend the water taxi because it takes much longer and can be crowded and uncomfortable, depending on the weather conditions. However, for completeness we are giving you the details below:

There are 2 water taxis and they both leave from Belize City. International airport is 12 miles outside of Belize City (in Ladyville), so you would need to take a taxi (approx \$25 US) from the airport to the water taxi dock. Both water taxi companies charge \$15USD each way, so if you take the boat it will be about \$55.00 per person (\$15 + \$15 + 1/2 of \$25 + 1/2 of \$25). The roundtrip airfare on Tropic Air is

currently \$145 US (it can fluctuate a few dollars due to fuel costs). So, if you take the boat you would save approx \$90 per person.

On the other hand, it will definitely take you longer to reach the island by boat and you'll have to leave the island earlier on the day of your departure.

Here are the 2 water taxi company websites. The 2 companies leave from different docks in Belize City and arrive to different docks in San Pedro but that is irrelevant since you'll need a cab to get you to the dock in Belize City and also a cab to get you to your accommodation once you reach San Pedro.

Caye Caulker Water Taxi leaves from the foot of the Swing Bridge in Belize City and docks at the Texaco Marina in San Pedro. www.cayecaulkerwatertaxi.com

San Pedro Belize Express Water Taxi leaves from the cruise ship dock in Belize City and docks in San Pedro on the southern end of town. www.belizewatertaxi.com.

Upon your arrival in Belize

After you deplane at International and go through Immigration and claim your luggage, you might want to stop at the Duty Free shop. It is a few feet *before* you reach Customs. You can buy alcohol there and still go through the "nothing to declare" line. The prices are in US dollars and you can pay either with US cash or a credit card and the prices are a fraction of what they would be on the island. For example, 1 Liter of Tanqueray is at least \$100 BZ in San Pedro, but at the Duty Free it is \$19 US (\$38 BZ). If you are flying over to the island, whatever you buy will need to go into your checked luggage when you check in at the Tropic Air counter. However, if you buy enough bottles, the clerk will box it and Tropic will accept the box as checked baggage. In our experience, they never charge for that extra "bag."

If there are specific things you want to do while in Belize, especially the Lamanai trip with Tanisha Tours or the sunset cruise with Lady Leslie, call them early in your stay. They need a minimum number of people to do the trip (usually 8) so you will want them to know of your interest ASAP.

Getting Around in San Pedro

By Land:

- **Taxis-**

You can usually get a taxi just by flagging one down on the street.

If you have a tight schedule, call **Miguel** at 624-7564. He works 7 days a week until 10 PM. Another nice driver is **Marcos** at 624-1232. They both know where Ken and Jenny live. You can also try **Giovanni** (all the time) at 665-0362 or **Orlando** (daytime) at 625-6549.

- **Bicycle-**

Some hotels provide bikes or have them for rent. Otherwise, Joe's Bike Rentals is in town, on Caribena St, between Middle and Back Streets and is good. There are other bike rental places around town also.

- **Golf Cart-**

If you want to explore the island North and South, or if you are staying a distance from town, a golf cart is a good option. You can rent carts by the half day, full day, or longer. A day will give you plenty of time to explore. There are many golf cart rental companies on the island. Abdul at Mermaid Supermarket (just south of Isla Bonita Yacht Club on Coconut Drive) rents C & S Carts and has a reasonable rate. The phone number is 226-3110.

By Water:

Water taxis-

There are many nice restaurants that are across the Boca del Rio (the "river" that divides the southern 6 miles of Ambergris Caye from the remaining 22 miles). The first few miles north of "the cut", as folks call it, are accessible by golf cart or bicycle, but as you go farther north it gets more difficult to navigate so a water taxi is a good option. They are available from the dock at Fido's Courtyard, just north of the middle of Barrier Reef Drive. Taking the water taxi on a moonlit night is an extra bonus, as is taking it on a moonless night when you can appreciate the stars and see the Milky Way. Several of the restaurants up north provide complimentary water taxi service from the Fido's dock but you must call the restaurant to make a reservation.

Medical-

Dr. Lerida (LAIR-i-da) Rodriguez, 226-2197 or 620-1974 cell. Office on Coconut Dr across from Isla Bonita Yacht Club--just a stone's throw from our condo.

Restaurants-

There are many places to eat in San Pedro. We say that you won't have a bad meal in San Pedro, it's just a matter of how upscale you want to get and that, of course, determines the price of a meal. Our favorites are listed in no particular order.

Pepperoni's Pizza (Supreme, Garlic Chicken and Garlic Shrimp are our 3 favorites). If you don't feel like going out, give them a call to place your order and they'll deliver (by bicycle)! Their number is 226-4515. Not open Mon or Tue.

Sunrise Island Cuisine is a short walk south on Coconut Drive at Perla Escondida condos. They serve B, L, D 7 days. Tell Margie that Ken and Jenny said "Hi."

Estel's Dine by the Sea is a great place for breakfast or lunch, on the beach in the middle of town. Walk with your left foot in the sand and your right foot in the water for about ten minutes and you are there. Go on Sundays from 10am-2pm for really good live music (lately it has been Amaurys, a Cuban guy who makes his own guitars...and plays them REALLY well). Closed Tuesdays. Ken recommends the breakfast burrito and Ken and Jenny both love the midday Sunday BBQ of pork chops, baby back ribs, chicken or sausage!

Blue Water Grill is a well run, upscale restaurant on the beach. Everything there is wonderful. B, L, D 7 days.

Black Orchid Restaurant & Lounge is 2.5 miles south of town (golf cart or taxi). Very good food and friendly wait staff. 206-2441. L, D. Closed Sun/Mon.

DiVu is located on the Wet Willy's dock on the far north end of town. Dining is outside on the dock (covered and open areas) and inside in the bar. Open B, L, D. Their carnitas nachos are fabulous (appetizer for 3 or 4 or a hearty meal for one).

Hurricanes Ceviche Bar is located on the dock just south of Blue Water Grill. It shares the dock with *Tanisha Tours* and is a good spot for lunch or dinner. It is owned by Daniel Nunez (Tanisha Tours) and his son Josh is usually tending bar.

Tastes of Thailand is open for dinner Tue through Saturday. It is a small place with very good food. It is on Sea Grape Drive, south of the condo--an easy walk. Call for reservations, 226-4778.

Hidden Treasures is upscale and good and has a romantic feel. It is open-air and not on the water; mosquitoes may be about, but they will have coils and repellent. Go on a breezy evening; it is worth it.

El Fogon is near the north end of the airstrip. It is open for lunch and dinner. You will find all the local executives eating there. True Belizean cooking!

Waraguma could kindly be described as a "hole in the wall." Don't be put off by the very rustic appearance, as they serve up some of the best and most inexpensive food in San Pedro. They are on Middle St (Pescador Dr), between Buccaneer and Black Coral Streets. April 2015 update--they will soon move to a new building on Back St (Angel Coral St)

Carumba is on Pescador Drive. Rene and Patty have a well trained staff and good food at reasonable (not cheap) prices.

DandEs Frozen Custard is a couple doors from Carumba. Dan & Eileen make outa-this-world custard ice cream. Ask to sample the soursop ice cream. Say 'Hi' for us. Don't believe any of the stories they may tell about us. Hours: 3 PM until 9:30 PM. Closed Mon and Tue.

Fidos (FEE-Doze) Courtyard is on the beach between Front Street (AKA Barrier Reef Drive) and the Caribbean. They have good food (lunch and dinner), a nice bar, live music every night, and 2 nice shops. One shop, Ambar, is all jewelry and the other, Belizean Arts, has jewelry in addition to original art and decorative items. **Rico's Surfside Restaurant** is open B,L&D, on the beach at Banyan Bay Resort. **Wild Mango's** is on the beach just past Blue Water Grill. Chef Amy Knox does great things with local fish and pork. In high season (Jan-April), you need reservations!

Coconut Cafe is a short walk toward town, on the left just past Wine De Vine. Ken has bestowed the coveted "Best Breakfast Burrito on the Island" award to this them. Order one and split it. Ken has never said that before! They have pizza, paninis and wraps. Tim and Donna are the owners. Sobe and Louie are the dogs.

Red Ginger Restaurant at the Phoenix Resort is on the north end of Pescador Drive. It's the place for an elegant meal in town. Reservations suggested. In addition to their regular menu, they have a 5-course tasting menu that is excellent. Monday nights their wine bottles are half price.

Fern's Deli is on Coconut Drive, across from Isla Bonita Yacht Club, but set back from the road. Belinda is the proprietor. They cook lunch and dinner to eat outside or to take out. Their main meal entrees are available at lunchtime. In the evening they prepare lighter fare. Stop in or call ahead to order: 206-2000.

Palmilla Restaurant at Victoria House has outdoor and indoor dining. It's a very elegant spot and their bar, Admiral Nelson's Bar, is a neat place with indoor and outdoor dining also. Reservations suggested for the restaurant. Take a taxi, it is about 1.5 miles south of the airstrip.

Elvi's Kitchen was established in the mid 1970s so is one of the oldest restaurants on the island. They have live music several nights a week and the place is always busy.

Aji Tapa Bar & Restaurant is 2.5 miles north of town (bike, golf cart, or water taxi) and serves B, L, and D. Reservations are recommended for dinner. Call 226-4047.

Some nice places to consider farther north, via water taxi, are:

- **Rojo Lounge** (226-4012) at Azul Resort
- **Mambo Restaurant** (226-5010) at Mata Chica Resort
- **Le Bistro** (226-5096) at Portofino Beach Resort
- **Rain** (226-4000) at Grand Caribe is a really nice, high-end restaurant, inside and rooftop. Great place to watch the sunset!

All of these will be fairly expensive, but have great ambiance and very good food and the water taxi ride adds to the experience. Some of the restaurants up north provide complimentary water taxi service so when you call to make a reservation they will tell you what time to present yourself at what dock (usually Fido's dock).

Provisions-

The Greenhouse is on Pescador Drive. Evelia Flores has refrigerated space for good produce. They also carry meats, cheeses, and more upscale groceries.

For general groceries there are several large supermarkets in town: Super Buy is in town on Back Street and south of town on Coconut Drive. There are many small mom-and-pop stores scattered around town. Abdul at Mermaid Supermarket (226-3110), on Coconut Drive just south of Isla Bonita Yacht Club, is convenient and prices are competitive.

No matter where you are buying, it is a good idea to check expiration dates on food and dairy items.

Tours and Activities-

Tanisha Tours (Daniel Nunez) Daniel offers many boat tours, but we recommend the tour to the Mayan ruins at Lamanai. It's an 11-hour day (7 AM – 6 PM) but it is well worth the time and money because it's an eco-tour AND an archeological tour all in one. If you pay cash it is \$125US (\$140 for credit). Daniel is worth every penny. <http://tanishatours.com/lamanai.html> Of the 11 hours, approx 6.5 hours are spent in a boat (crossing to the mainland and then up several rivers) and approx 1 hour is spent in a van. 226-2314

Lil Alphonse is a great guy for snorkeling. Would Samantha Brown of The Travel Channel steer you wrong? Alphonso's house is 226-3136 and his cell is 610-0105.

Severo Guerrero- 226-2324, fishing guide for flats or reef fishing. Severo makes a great shore lunch with your catch. We have known Severo since our first visit to San Pedro (1991).

Chito Guerrero- 607-0833, reef or outside the reef fishing, keeps his boats-- Bianca Michelle and Lil' Fern--in front of our condo. The man can find fish!

Belize Diving Adventures- Everette and his wife, Enes, are on the Isla Bonita Yacht Club dock just south of our dock. They are convenient and good for scuba dives. They also do snorkel trips to Hol Chan Marine Reserve.

Lady Leslie Sunset Cruise-- a sunset cruise on a 40' catamaran called The Lady Leslie (www.ladylesliebelize.com). The captain is Martin Leslie. We met Martin on our first trip to Belize in 1991. For \$50 US pp, Martin will pick you up on our dock at 4:45 and return you to the dock around 7 PM. In addition to being on a beautiful catamaran to watch the sunset and come back under the stars, you get your fill of rum punch, panty rippers, beer, and soda/water. In the food category they serve sushi, salsa and chips, conch fritters (the best we've tasted anywhere) and coconut tarts (also especially delicious). Martin can be contacted at: info@ladylesliebelize.com or 600-8435.

Entertainment-

Dennis Wolfe- is a Jimmy Buffet/Delbert McClinton kinda guy who plays all over town—a different place every night.

Elvi's Kitchen has live music a couple times a week.

Fido's generally has live music...sometimes it is Dennis Wolfe.

Many other places have live entertainment; check the San Pedro Sun or ask around.

Miscellaneous-

If you need to make calls to the States, we suggest going to Milo's on Pelican Street (between Front and Middle Streets) to get an International Calling Card. That will give you the best per-minute rate. Skype and Facetime can also be used.

Periodic power outages happen, although far less frequently than in the past. An outage is seldom longer than three hours.

Newspapers-

To get a feel for the place and what is going on around town during your stay you may want to buy a newspaper. *The San Pedro Sun* is published every Thursday and is available at shops and grocery stores all over town.

Internet Access-

Resorts will have wi-fi and there are a few internet cafes around town.

Changing US Dollars to Belize Dollars-

It really isn't necessary to change money because the Belizeans are very used to getting USD. The exchange rate is \$2 BZD for each \$1 USD so it is easy to figure out when you are shopping. If you do wish to change money or buy a phone card to call the US, Milo's Center on Pelican Street is the place to go. (If you change money at a bank they'll charge you a change fee so you'll get less than 2:1). Milo's will also take a US personal check. Phone 226-2196

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