

Belize

Reefs, Rain Forests and Ruins

Available to Roosevelt and Ballard High School Students

13 Nights/14 Days

April 6-20, 2013

Our adventure begins in Crooked Tree Village where will experience Creole hospitality and share some science and fun with local school children. Here also are freshwaters of Crooked Tree Lagoon. This is one of premier winter migratory bird habitats that at this time filled with thousands of migratory birds as well as year-round local resident birds such as the Jabaru stork and other non-avian wildlife including howler monkeys and iguana.

Into the rain forest interior of Belize and overnights at an eco- lodge on banks of the Macal River. Authentic, first hand learning about rain forest natural history, cultural history, wildlife, including birds such as Keel-billed toucan, Howler monkeys and many other rain forest species. We will hike, mountain bike, cave, canoe, and have a truly authentic experience of this unique region of Central American.

Onward to the ancient Maya City of Tikal. Just over the Guatemalan border into the heart of what was once a thriving ancient Maya civilization; Mysterious temples rise tall above the rain forest canopy. On these same preserves that established to protect the antiquities, Central American wildlife has also found refuge. Sightings of howler monkey, spider monkeys, toucans, parrots and numerous other neo-tropical species are likely.

Out to the coral reefs of Belize. Our adventure continues... yet relaxes to a Caribbean pace, as we travel via boat transfer to The Belize Barrier Reef and Pelican Beach on South Water Caye; where for several we will swim, snorkel, sea- kayak, photograph and study this wonder-filled, coral reef environment.

Anticipated Daily Itinerary

Meals: B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner

Note: Bottle water and soft drinks are NOT always included with meals but may be purchased.

April 6 Depart Seattle (Saturday evening).

Transfer on your own to SEA-TAC airport. Overnight flights to Belize [**Meals on own**]

April 7 Arrive Belize International Airport – Crooked Tree Village

Arrive transfer us to Crooked Tree Village. Located on island in middle of a wildlife sanctuary, we will traverse the causeway and enter the Creole village of Crooked Tree. Relax and freshen up from our travels. Overnight at **Crooked Tree Lodge** and some at nearby **Tillett's Village Hotel**. [D]

April 8 Lagoon Tour and teaching science at the village school

We will wake early to head out by small boat on a guided exploration of Crooked Tree Lagoon. Managed by the Belize Audubon Society, this is exciting bird-watching habitat for novice and avid birdwatchers alike. Thousands of migrating birds gather here for the winter, joining numerous resident tropical species including Jabiru storks, Snowy egrets, Boat-billed herons, ibis, and kingfishers. Howler monkeys, crocodiles, and other wildlife are also sometimes spotted.

Returning for lunch; then off to school... Seattle teachers and students will teach a physics and rocketry lesson to the children of Crooked Tree School, equivalent to US grades K-6. Overnight at **Crooked Tree Lodge** and some at nearby **Tillett's Village Hotel**. [BLD]

April 9 Crooked Tree village school and travel to the rain forest interior

After breakfast head back to the Crooked Tree village school to finish up water rocket construction and launch day. Late morning we head toward the rain forest interior of Belize on the Western Highway. A stop along the way at the Belize Zoo which was begun as wildlife rescue and sanctuary, it now is the premiere education center for visitors and Belizeans alike. Free for all Belizeans, foreign tourists entrance fees help pay for local school group visits. The zoo acts to build appreciation and protection nationwide for Belize's natural and wildlife resources. Then we travel further west into the rain forest interior of Belize and to our accommodations on the banks of the Macal River. Overnight at Crystal Paradise Resort with dinner. [BLD]

April 10

Early breakfast, and head to ATM cave (all day activity). Actun Tunichil Muknal (Cave of the Crystal Sepulchre). Known locally ATM, is notable as a Maya archaeological site that includes skeletons, and ceramics. There are several areas of skeletal remains in the main chamber. Access to the Maya sacrificial site within the cave involves hiking, wading, and swimming, but nearly a mile (1.6 kilometers) underground you will reach the resting place of the "Crystal Maiden," a complete female skeleton that sparkles from eons of crystal calcification.

National Geographic Top Ten Sacred Caves: <http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/top-10/sacred-caves/>

Students are required to bring water usable sandals/shoes like Chaco's, Teva's, and Keen's which will also be used for Cave tubing later on the trip. Overnight at Crystal Paradise Resort. [BLD]

April 11 Traditional Mayan Healer, Butterfly Farm and Botanical Gardens

After breakfast head to the Medicinal Trails, where we meet with a traditional Mayan healer whose active medical practice uses local plants to treat illness. Lunch and then towards the Green Hill Butterfly Farm and Botanical Gardens to learn more about the natural history of neo-tropical forests. Overnight at Crystal Paradise Resort. [BLD]

April 12 To Yaxha and Tikal

Rise early to travel over the Belize/Guatemalan border toward Tikal. Stop at the Yaxha Maya Ruin site. Less famous and less restored but a unique opportunity to see modern archeology at work. Yaxha has more than 500 structures. The top of Temple 216 (restored) provides a view of the two lakes on one side and the jungle and the stepped-pyramids on the other. Wildlife sightings at this ancient Maya site and at Tikal can be as intriguing as their cultural history. Observe parrots, toucans, guans and oropendulas flying over the canopy and monkeys cavorting in the awakening rain forest. Over 285 species of birds have been identified here including toucans, hawks, motmots and parrots. Frequently seen are Howler and Spider monkeys, coati, peccary and deer. Tikal, a Classic Maya site at its height in 500 AD supported a population upwards of 100,000 individuals. By comparison London, England at that same time was newly established as a Roman outpost with a few hundred inhabitants. Our overnights will be at one the few onsite accommodations: **The Jungle Lodge** [BLD]

April 13 Tikal

Continue to explore this magnificent ancient Maya site. A local Maya guide will illuminate the archeology and culture of Tikal as you explore pyramids soaring above the jungle canopy and innumerable multi-leveled palaces, ball courts, plazas, temples, terraces, shrines and carvings. Lunch cost and the afternoon is OYO. (Students have the option of several restaurants on site and pay for lunch on their own). Take a siesta and/or there are two museums on the Tikal site that are great places to visit during the hot midday hours and provide shelter for more delicate Mayan artifacts and stone carvings protected here from the natural weather caused erosion and the additional modern pollution such as acid rain. Meet up to climb one of the temples for the sunset. Overnight, **The Jungle Lodge [BD]**

April 14 Meet up for a Tikal Sunrise Climb of Temple IV or other location.

Early morning hike in dark on the rain forest trails of Tikal lead us to Temple IV. We climb its stony stairs to just above the forest's canopy. From this vantage we can witness the sunrise, as the mists of morning dissipate and the rain forest awakes. Monkeys, birds and other wildlife are at their busiest in these magic hours of early morning. The light and sounds can make for a truly wonder-filled experience, (and a great time for photography!)

We leave the Tikal historical site after breakfast and head back toward Belize. At the Tikal National Park entrance we stop for a rain forest canopy zip-lin tour. Return to Belize and San Ignacio Town. Overnight at Cahal Pech Village Resort. [BLD]

April 15 Cave Branch River Tubing and Garifuna culture of Dangriga town.

Short drive to the River of Caves, an ½ day long inner tubing float trip in the "River of Caves," past underground waterfalls, limestone features, a crystal cathedral chamber and within the cave system ancient ceremonial places of the Maya. Then head to Dangriga for a Garifuna Drummer presentation and dinner. Overnight at Pelican Beach Dangriga Resort on the Caribbean coast.

April 16 To The Barrier Reef

AM boat transfer to Pelican Beach on South Water Caye. Dinner tonight is in the ocean view palapa style restaurant and lounge area at the head of the main dock. Overnight at Pelican Beach-South Water Caye Resort. [BLD]

April 17, 18, 19 Reef and Caye

Our adventure continues... as we travel via boat transfer to The Barrier Reef of Belize and Pelican Beach Resort on South Water Caye. Here we will swim, snorkel, sea-kayak, photograph and study this wonder-filled, coral-reef environment. Scheduled is a visit to The Smithsonian Institution's Carrie Bow Cay Field Station; where we visit with marine biologists who are actively doing research and investigations of coral reefs ecosystems at the station. These trips and destinations will depend on weather conditions. The last day has many options but is not preplanned. All meals and overnights at **Pelican Beach Resort. [BLD]**

April 20 Departure from South Water Caye and Belize

Return to Dangriga Town by boat and transfer to the airport in time for our international departure. [B]

End of Services - Actual routes and activities may vary. Local field coordinators reserve the right to change hotels to similar or next best quality.

Websites of our accommodations and services:

<http://crookedtreelodgebelize.com/>

<http://www.crystalparadise.com>

<http://www.junglelodgetikal.com>

<http://www.cahalpech.com/>

<http://www.pelicanbeachbelize.com/>

<http://www.experiencebelize.com/> Luis Godoy or Belizean host and guide.

Land \$2989

Air: \$711

Total Land & Air \$3600

Deposit: \$300 due by Monday/December 3, 2012 to reserve our group airfare on American Airlines. Sign-ups after that date are dependent on air and land availability.

INCLUDED: Round trip airfare from Seattle to Belize. Services as specified in the land itinerary above including accommodations, local land and air transportation, guided tours and excursions, park and entrance fees, meals as specified [B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner]

NOT INCLUDED: Belize has a \$35USD per person departure tax that cannot be prepaid and is assessed at airport check-in. Unanticipated airport taxes, optional or suggested services on your own, insurance of any kind, personal expenses, extra beverages & alcoholic drinks, medical costs, hospitalization and evacuation and any other extra expenses due to unanticipated changes in your itinerary for reasons beyond our control. Meals, bottle water, soft or hard drinks, souvenirs and other local and personal expenses not specified in the above itinerary are not included.

You will need to carry about \$75-\$125 per person extra in cash and/or credit cards to cover the Belize International airport departure fee, other fees, taxes, beverages and other optional items not included in your itinerary. Souvenir costs would be additional.

NOTES: We highly recommend purchasing traveler's insurance for trip delay, trip cancellation, baggage, accident or sickness. We have arranged our trip utilizing the travel services of local outfitters and operators who are independent contractors. These local outfitters, lodges, hotels and other suppliers of your travel services will make every effort to conduct this trip as described in the itinerary. It is however possible that due to transportation schedule changes, weather, delays and unforeseeable acts of God, humans, or nature, this itinerary may vary from what is described. Participants must assume all risks whether identified in advance or unforeseen. Extra costs due to unexpected changes in your itinerary for reasons beyond our control are not included. We cannot guarantee specific species of wildlife viewing.