

# What is the nature of the plants and animals on the island?

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Wildlife: Jaguars and ocelots are to be found in the forest regions of the mainland. Naturally, conditions in inhabited areas is completely safe. Insect life is what can be expected in a subtropical climate. Lots of lizards on Ambergris Caye!

Ambergris Caye is a low-lying island, with no dramatic hills or mountains. Coconut palms - some of which are suffering from lethal yellowing disease - are the trees you will probably notice first. The island also has saltwater palmettos and other palms. For types of palms, how to grow them, what you can do with their harvests, how to heal them, their predators, and more, [click here](#) for our section on palms...

Mangroves - there are red, black and white mangroves here - are the most important tree on the island, because their root systems provide a home to a rich variety of sea life and literally prevent the island from being washed away. It is illegal to cut mangroves, but unfortunately this law is not always observed.

Sapodilla, the mimosa-like Acacia, coco plum and large Australian pines are among other fairly common trees on Ambergris Caye. In gardens around town, you will see many tropical flowering plants such as hibiscus and poinsettia.

This is not a lush jungle island, but there are many trees struggling to grow in the thin limestone soil and scrub vegetation in the sand.

The far north and south of the island are homes to the most wild creatures.

There are several kinds of sea turtles that come ashore on Ambergris Caye, mainly on the North End, the most common being the Loggerhead. Small whitetail deer can occasionally be seen, along with wild pigs, and coatimundis (locally called quash). Reportedly, three of Belize's five types of wild cats, the marguay cat, jaguarundi, and the ocelot have been seen at the north of the island.

Around the island you may see the common iguana and also its smaller cousin, the wish-willie, or the Central American basilisk, frequently called the Jesus Christ lizard for its ability to run lightly across water.

There are small salt-water crocodiles in the lagoons.

More than 250 species of birds have been seen on Ambergris Caye. Non-birding visitors may especially note the Frigate Birds and Brown Pelicans, common around piers. Seagulls, oddly, are not very common. Elbert Greer, who writes a weekly column for the San Pedro Sun, and Susan Lala at Caribbean Villas, are the island's resident birding experts.

It would takes pages to list all the undersea life around the island. Among the more interesting sea creatures are the sharks. Nurse sharks are the most common, but black-tip, lemon, tiger and even hammerheads come around. Sting rays are common, as are the larger spotted eagle rays. You will see many barracuda. Among sport and eating fish common around the island are bone fish, several types of groupers, tarpon, marlin, wahoo and snappers. Spiny lobster (legal season June 15 to February 15) and several varieties of conch (legal season October-June) are well known and delicious residents of the area. Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphins are often seen from the shore or following boats, and manatees may be seen on boat trips. The narrow beaches of Ambergris are not particularly fertile territory for shelling, but many shells can be found in the shallow water just off the beach.

The Field Guide to Ambergris Caye has lots of information in this area, Click here to view the Field Guide: <https://ambergriscaye.com/fieldguide/> . For underwater pictures, click here: <https://ambergriscaye.com/pages/town/dive.html> .

Mosquito control efforts keep the mozzie problem to a minimum in San Pedro Town and the hotel areas to the south of town. Most visitors here aren't much bothered by either mosquitoes or sand flies, the pesky no-see-ums which sometimes plague visitors in other parts of Belize.

However, both on the north and the south ends of the island, especially away from the sea breezes and in summer after rainy periods, mosquitoes are plentiful. Even when you are riding in a golf cart, mosquitoes

may swarm over you. The best protection is to spray with a DEET product. The best product we have found is Deep Woods Off, 99% DEET.

Africanized bees, cockroaches the size of battleships, non-poisonous tarantulas, scorpions and other creepie-crawlies do coexist with humans on Ambergris Caye, but it is rare that visitors will be bothered by them, or even see them. Supposedly two varieties of snakes are on the North End of island, a type of boa constrictor and the black-tailed indigo, neither one poisonous, but these are rarely seen.

The 1/2 mile from the beachline to the reefline has an abundance of wonders. Click here <https://ambergriscaye.com/fieldguide/transect.html> for detailed information about this area.

A detailed list of the various mammals, invertebrates, fish, birds, and other creatures that inhabit these waters can be read by reading the Field Guide: <https://ambergriscaye.com/fieldguide/animals.html> .

For a thorough examination of the plant life on and around the island, click here: <https://ambergriscaye.com/fieldguide/botany.html> . The tree, bushes, underwater grasses, a botanical sweep of the island...

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