

# Belize Transportation Guide

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*The Definitive guide of what to, and what not to do when traveling within Belize*



Travelling to a brand new country can be seriously daunting, heck, even travelling around in a country you've already been to can be an intimidating endeavour in terms of logistics. Sometimes schedules aren't met, and occasionally unforeseen mishaps eliminate entire routes from your possibilities; its life, travel life and sometimes you get stuck, waiting hours for your next ride.

Over recent years Belize has seen a boom in route frequency and a healthy increase in travel options for those traversing her interior; robust bus coverage from the wee hours reaching far into the night, Boats to and from the Cayes, and up and down the coast all day, and an intuitive airplane system with landing strips near most major destinations make getting where you want to go easier than ever.

With all these options it might become easy to get careless and throw caution to the wind because, why not, this guy over here said there's a bunch of ways to get around in Belize anyway, so why not be spontaneous? So for those of you looking to just dive in here's a few Dos and Don'ts for travelling in Mother nature's best kept secret.

## *Bus Transportation*



Upon first glance at the buses that run along our highways should you choose the road route (it's pretty scenic, we recommend it) you'll be surprised at how easy it is to use our public transport system.

The vast majority of the buses that run our public transportation system are re-purposed North American school buses such as the Bluebird line of transportation. Incredibly sturdy and driven at speeds no northern school district would approve of these buses constitute the backbone of our transportation infrastructure shuttling students, workers and travellers alike to their various destinations.

Even though they run every 30 minutes (for the most part) they aren't timely and sometimes take up to three hours to get where they are going depending on where it is, and that brings me to my first point:

**Do** – Pre-plan your departure time, there's usually a long line for whatever bus is rolling in next.

**Don't** – Arrive 5 minutes before you'd like to leave (not even 15 minutes is enough sometimes) as this will ensure your wait for the next bus or a standing trip on this one.

This doesn't mean there's no way to be timely in a bus however, there are options:

**Do** – Check for expresses and aim to get those, running early morning noon and evening.

**Don't** – be afraid to kick back when on one, you'll likely get a seat and that straight ride ensures your luggage will be extra safe.

And I realize that you probably have a guide book to Central America, or even Belize, but we aren't all cartographers so:

**Do** – ask the conductors about an ETA to your desired destination.

**Don't** – be afraid to ask for recommendations from them as they know the routes they travel well.

**Do** – Take into consideration what day you are travelling, weekend days like Saturday and Sunday are known to have less frequent bus routes.

**Don't** – aim for the last bus, the last bus run for the night tend to be very crowded and are known to take much longer than earlier times, avoid these runs if possible.

## ***Boats – Water Taxis***



Before anyone starts wondering, boat travel in Belize is coast exclusive, trust me, I'm sure a great deal of us here would want boat shuttles up the river, I mean it would be cool but it's impractical. There are two major "water taxi" companies that operate in Belize, out of Belize city to be exact; San Pedro Belize Express and Ocean Ferry water taxi, both ensure ample opportunity to arrive at your coastal destinations. Both companies offer daily service between Belize City, Caye Caulker, and San Pedro.

San Pedro Belize Express even offers a route from Chetumal, Quintana Roo Mexico to San Pedro, and Caye Caulker. If your destination happens to be on the more exotic side there's a host of boat captains who will gladly charter you to your preferred destination, this is of course in tandem with the established companies who offer charters as well (although less flexible ones) to the less populated islands.

It's almost a guarantee, however, that the vistas you behold on the water will be well worth remembering and so:

**Do** – Try to sit on the upper deck of the commercial boats (or bow of smaller, within safe reason) Best views, best breeze, best time!

**Don't** – Be afraid to change seats or get friendly with the locals (you never know what kind of party they're throwing)

Maybe it's because everyone is heading to the island, or maybe the sea is calming... whatever it might be even passenger boarding is more mellowed out than the buses (and you're all guaranteed to sit), which reminds me:

**Do** – Buy tickets ahead of time, the porters take your luggage at the gate and give you stubs so it's not lost.

**Don't** – Be afraid of seeing a crowd, when in need they'll pull a boat out of reserve to fill in the gaps.

The longest trip lasts 85 minutes on the boat and that's if you're heading to San Pedro, Perhaps a bit more

if the weather is bad but that never lasts long out there you definitely should:

Do – spend as long as you like out there, the return tickets are valid for up to three months so there's no rush to get back.

**Don't** – Forget your sunscreen, and take lots of photos!

## *Air Transportation – Local Flights*



What would travel be without some soaring through the clouds? In fact, the image of an airplane is almost synonymous with travelling (probably because many long journeys start or end with one), and for this Belize has you covered as well.

Now, I'm not talking about the big Southwestern Airlines Jets that touch you down at the Philip Goldson International Airport. I mean our daring aces in their trusty Cessna Caravans at Tropic Air and Maya Island air. Belize is an enigma in Central America for its expansive domestic air service. Years ago it

was quite difficult to reach certain areas of the country via road due to bad conditions and rough terrain, or the complete lack of a road; this gave rise to airstrips with many scattered across the country. In recent years, the surge of travel around Belize quickly has given rise to many new

In recent years the surge of travel around Belize quickly has given rise to many new airstrips, I can think of 3 within 45 minutes of my home, so it has become easier than ever to float across the country in comfort. Belize is a relatively tiny country so, most flights last about 20 minutes on average or about 40 max if you're flying from an island to inland Belize. If you're heading to the southern most districts it takes about an hour, so for those pressed for time or who like to be up in the air this is the perfect way to travel.

Belizean airlines have begun to expand their routes and now offer regional flight connections serving destinations like Cancun and Merida in Mexico, San Pedro Sula and Roatan in Honduras, and Flores Peten and Guatemala City in Guatemala.

**Do** – choose this mode if you like taking aerial shots, the planes fly between 8,000 to 10,000 feet allowing for awesome views with very little cloud cover. Flying to the islands give you stunning views of the coastal islands and the superstructure that is the Belize Barrier Reef. Likewise inland flights give you views of the majestic Maya Mountains, and southern flights give you both. Either way any flight is beautiful in Belize.

**Don't** – be alarmed by the rough ride, because they don't go to the stratosphere winds do affect the ride, but barely so.

**Do** – Ask to be co-pilot! By simply asking the check in agents or the pilot to sit up front can ensure you the best seat in the house (you also feel super cool being up there like you are part of a new club).

**Don't** – Be upset if you don't get the seat you want, because there are no assigned seating for the flights you will take. The seating is based on a first come first serve basis.

Apart from scenic I find this one of the more adrenaline filled rides:

**Do** – be prepared for one heck of a take-off, think slingshot, but in a good way. Throttles all the way and off we go!

**Don't** – lose your constitution over the short landings, the pilots in Belize are excellent and know these routes like the back of their hand. The aircraft are also very modern and are serviced regularly. Belize maintains a high aviation standard on air travel for optimum safety reasons.

**Do** – Follow all safety guidelines, listen to the pilot and staff regardless if you are an experienced flier. The airlines’ top priority is your safety, and so should yours.

**Don’t** – Be upset if there is a short delay, because of high demand and crowded skies delays can happen usually 15 minutes at the most, also delays for weather also happen such as high turbulence or lighting alerts. In these cases the aviation authority will ground all flights necessary to ensure your safety. The airlines will accommodate as much as possible when these rare delays do happen.

**Do** – Ask for a discount, both airlines will give complimentary discounts for the travellers who ask for them.

Seeing that this is the newest up and coming way to get around Belize never forget:

**Do** – Ask for new destinations, they might not all be listed as of your stay. New airstrips pop up every so often.

**Don’t** – be alarmed when they take a different route, sometimes they connect flights for conservation purposes.

## ***Private Air Transportation – Helicopters***



Belize is all about that vertical take-off too! Astrum Helicopters pioneered the concept of “helo” tours

and transportation, catering flyby and hovering tours of some of Belize's most notable landmarks and sites. Since their inception there have been countless groups on tours and there hasn't been a negative review to date. Lending themselves to being perfectly stable in the air [Astrum's helicopters tours](#) are a favourite for Photographers looking to get high stills of our Jewel. The company also caters day trips to places across the country and will land anywhere with an air strip or helipad near, so you can disembark, have some lunch, see the sights and be back on your way in your own private bird for the day!

Do – Bring your camera, you'll regret it if you don't

Don't – be afraid to look out the window

For those of you who want day trips across Belize:

Do – Be mindful of the weather, helicopters are more susceptible to the elements up there than planes (Safety First!)

Don't – hesitate to ask the staff at Astrum for tours even if there's clouds about, the expert pilots know the limitations of their crafts and will be sure to do their best for you

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