

# Holidays & Festivals in Belize

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It seems like festivals and holidays come in rapid fire in Belize and that is because...they do. And rather than just continuing to wing it...I thought I'd put together a comprehensive list because 1. I need to make sure I attend each and every one at least one time in my life and 2. because you should too.

Belize is a country of people that love to party and parade and party some more. For such a tiny place, you'll find that this list of festivals is quite an extensive one.

## JANUARY

- New Year's Eve/Day – Classic parties around the country. Fireworks in San Pedro and parties that go until dawn...and beyond.

## FEBRUARY

- San Pedro Carnival/Carnaval (February) – a tradition on the island filled with painting, dancing, cross dressing and tons of Mardi Gras-esque fun. Next year's will be the end of February with the weekend before and up to Fat Tuesday, February 28th, 2017.
- NICH (National House of Culture and History) Belize City Street Art Festival
- Harley-Davidson Rally. Yes, you read right. 2016 will be the third annual. Here is 2014. And 2015.
- Placencia Art & Music Festival – it is always the weekend closest to Valentine's Day. (Here's my experience in 2014. Fun)

## MARCH

- Baron Bliss Day and La Ruta Maya Challenge: A four stop mega-canoe race. The overnight stops turn into mini-festivals. Here is my 2013 trip to Burrell Boom to see the finish there. And the less exciting finish line in 2014. Next year? I'm going to the early morning start.

## MARCH/APRIL

- Easter – OH BOY. It's a BIGGIE here in Belize. An actual 5 day holiday weekend. It's March 27,

2016. Early.

- Good Friday – Sales of Alcohol are banned in the entire country. Benque in the far west of Belize celebrates this solemn day in a gorgeous fashion. Sawdust carpets and the Passion of Christ.
- Friday at midnight, Saturday and Sunday – it feels like the entire country is at the beach and PARTYING. Caye Caulker, San Pedro and Placencia are the hot spots and dance contests, loud music and drinking are the center of the festivities.
- Easter Monday: An official holiday and most are sleeping off their goma (creole for hangover) and travelling home.

## **MAY**

- Belmopan Agriculture and Trade Show – Usually the first weekend in May. AWESOME. Hot sweaty and awesome. Animals, plants, rides, food, CROWDS, a rodeo, dirt bikes... I've been twice. 2012 Part One and Part Two and 2014: One and Two. You must go once in your life. Here's 2012 on the fastest moving ferris wheel in the world. That look in my eyes behind my sunglasses? 2012 Terror.
- Mango Festival in Hopkins. Newly revived and pretty awesome. I JUST attended and ate my heart out.
- Cashew Festival in Crooked Tree. A bit of a mysterious one. I can never really get a hold on when this one is. Does it even happen at all?
- Chocolate Festival in Punta Gorda – Fantastic three day event in beautiful Punta Gorda in the South. The Saturday street festival is the highlight. Even if you miss this event, visiting gorgeous Southern Belize should SO be on your list.
- San Pedro Eco-Lagoon Challenge – a team sea kayak race around Ambergris Caye. 2016 promises a large cash prize so this 20+ mile, two day race should get even more competitive.

## **JUNE**

- LOBSTERFESTS – San Pedro (one week), Placencia (here's 2014) and Caye Caulker. (Attached to each name are my most recent visits to each). Here is this year's schedule. It's not over yet!
- Dia De San Pedro – A nine day religious event celebrating St Peter – the patron saint of fishing and the town. It ends with a feast and a carnival. It is usually the last week of June.

## JULY

- Benque Viejo Fiesta – Here is an article in the [San Pedro Sun's My Beautiful Belize](#). I have never been...yet.

## AUGUST

- Costa Maya Festival – A huge uniquely Latin International Festival held in San Pedro. This year the dates are August 4th to 6th. A huge concert, comedians, a real-deal beauty pageant and lots more. [Here's the website](#).
- Tres Pescados Fishing Tournament – The same weekend as Costa Maya, boats go out looking for the Grand Slam – Bonefish, Tarpon and Permit. [Here's a look at last year's...](#)

## SEPTEMBER

Belize practically shuts down for the months of September. Somehow the two official holiday on the 10th and 21st meld together for SEPTEMBER CELEBRATIONS! It's my favorite month of the year.

Honestly.

- Belize Market Place Expo (September 5th and 6th, ITVET Fair Grounds, Belize City) – an expo of basically every vendor in Belize. Games, food, music, fun. Here's my trip there in 2014. PLINKO!
- Battle of St George's Caye Celebrations – September 10th marks the Battle of St George's Caye and there are regattas, parades and celebrations. Most notably, Belize City's HUGE Carnival. Here it is in 2013 (Part One and Two) and 2014. SUPER FUN and not for the faint of heart. Or those who have no tolerance for sweating.
- Sir Barry Bowen Belikin Bash – Free concerts around the country with the BIG ONE in Belize City. Last year, I got ALL ACCESS.
- Belize City Jouvert – a tradition in Belize City pre-Carnival that is spreading around Belize. Last year Orange Walk and San Pedro celebrated. EARLY morning, people parade through the streets painted in mud & chocolate – [this site has some great pictures of the festivities](#).
- September 21st/Independence Day Celebrations – huge parades around the country.

The queen of parades takes place in Orange Walk but I've never been because I love our local San Pedro JUMP UP celebration way too much. Here's Part One last year.

## OCTOBER

- Halloween – There are celebrations around the country for this totally American holiday but Ambergris Caye has REALLY embraced the day...and makes a week of it with parties, parties, parties. Parties for people – the biggest at the Holiday Hotel.....and pets.

## NOVEMBER

- BTB Annual Village Arts & Crafts Expo – People around the country in Belize City displaying their arts and crafts. Here is last year's.
- Garifuna Settlement Day – November 19. Celebrated around Belize – especially in predominantly Garifuna towns and villages. Like Dangriga and Hopkins, Punta Gorda and Seine Bight. The all night partying to the gorgeous morning re-enactment of the landing...it's well worth getting up early for. Here's my beautiful morning in Punta Gorda.

## DECEMBER

- [Placencia's End of the World Marathon and Half Marathon](#) : More and more participants each year and contests for the best water stations. Here's an example from last year (and a post about it) – Maya Beach's Superhero Station.
- Lighted Boat Parade – Usually the first weekend in December, this (almost) yearly event on Ambergris Caye is so lovely. Here is 2014's parade. And 2015. Awesomeness.
- Mistletoe Ball – Placencia. Placencia goes all fancy and rings in the holiday season with a ball. Keep an eye on [their facebook page for more information](#).
- LOVEFM Christmas Parades – Probably the country's most popular radio station, LoveFM hosts evening parades around the country. Check their facebook page for the schedule but the one in San Pedro has grown exponentially and is now a focal point of the Christmas season. Here's 2013 in downtown San Pedro.
- Christmas – is well...Christmas. The houses of San Pedro light up beautiful...the weather is beautiful...it's festive but low key. Snorkel Christmas day...or go for a sail. Beautiful.

There is a lot of information about Belizean holidays here:

<https://ambergriscaye.com/pages/town/holidays.html>

# Public and Bank Holidays, 2018

Monday, January 1st: New Year's Day

Monday, March 12: National Heroes and Benefactors Day (in lieu of Friday, March 9th)

Friday, March 30th: Good Friday

Saturday, March 31st: Holy Saturday

Monday, April 2nd: Easter Monday

Tuesday, May 1st: Labour Day

Monday, May 21st: Sovereign's Day/Commonwealth Day (in lieu of Wednesday, 20 May)

Monday, September 10th: St George's Caye Day

Friday, September 21st: Independence Day

Monday, October 15th: Pan American Day (in lieu of Friday, 12th October)

Monday, November 19th: Garifuna Settlement Day

Tuesday, December 25th: Christmas Day

Wednesday, December 26th: Boxing Day

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