

Is there a website that lists information about the National Parks and Marine Reserves?

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There are many Belizean protected areas and sites of nature conservation interest.

Click here (<https://ambergriscaye.com/pages/town/parkintro.html>) .

This guide explores the most popular state reserves, covering all the main habitats, from all areas of the country - from spectacular Toledo District to the forest highlands of Mountain Pine Ridge, to the stunningly coloured coral of the reef, atolls and cayes.

It's written for Belizeans and visitors alike, and keeps all types of budgets in mind, whether you're out for the weekend, a back packer wanting to experience the real thing on a shoestring, or a retiree looking for a guided tour in air conditioned comfort.

Jump on the bus, hitch a ride, sign up for a tour, step onto a boat or get in your car. Just get out and enjoy the nature of Belize!

San Pedro is enjoying a full dose of new and renovated parks for the enjoyment of all.

Marco Gonzales Park will get a suspended bridge to cross visitors from the lake at the west to the site. There will be resting areas with palapas, garbage cans, and signs.

Mar De Tumbo Park from renovated from nothing to parking area, five palapas, barbecue facilities, trash bins and lighting.

Esmeralda Park (by the library) boasts several palapas, trash bins, barbecue facilities, lighting, a study area for elementary school children, and a permanent area for craft vendors.

Central Park carries a giant size palapa with permanent counters, storage for ice and lots of landscaping. It will also boast good garbage bins, beach volleyball court, smaller round palapas, a jungle gym, a bell

structure as was 25 years ago, more games, 2 dressing rooms for shows, 3 bathrooms, and covering over stage. The basketball court will be removed and re-located.

Boca Del Rio Park is now completely filled with sand and it will have new sea games, barbecue pits, a basketball concrete court, beach volleyball sand court, bleachers for sports, jungle gym and several palapas and at least one-bathroom. Proper lighting will make the complements to this park.

Paradise Park (new on lot in front of the cemetery) this park has a brand new basketball concrete court to be combined for volleyball and tennis by seasons, lots of bleachers and good lighting. This park may serve for shows, pageants, etc., as it will be permanently enclosed with fence and a movable stage at hand.

Mangrove Park in the San Juan area has a natural park where proper lighting and maintenance will be available.

San Pedrito Park has a jungle gym with games, lots of sand fill and good lighting. If more land is available, a sports court will be constructed.

HINTS & TIPS

WHAT YOU'LL SEE & WHAT YOU WON'T

TV has given up as incredible close up of tropical life, but Belize is the real thing, not a studio. Most mammals are shy, well camouflaged or nocturnal. And while its true that Belize has over 540 species of birds, most live high in the forest and are hard to see, let alone identify. Most amphibians are only heard a few nights a year. Lizards move quickly and will have normally scuttled off before you see them. The same goes for snakes. So..

GIVE YOURSELF A CHANCE

Choose the more open sites to begin exploring like Crooked Tree and the reef. Then head into the forest. Go in small groups, in silence and walk very softly. Stop and wait to see what's moving around. The time of day is important. Birds especially are more active around dawn (5am-9am and dusk (5pm-6:30pm). Getting to the forest at these times isn't always easy, especially if you're traveling by bus, so its better to overnight at reserves. With a good torch, explore trails at night and you may get the odd pair of eyes staring back at you. if possible, use the services of a local licensed guide, who will be able to take you to the best places, remembering that if you're taken to nesting sites, manatee holes or other sensitive areas, make sure you never disturb the animals. And in the end, if you don't see the animals themselves, always keep an eye open for footprints, scrapes, and other signs of life. Then if all else fails, go to the Zoo. It's superb!

WHAT TO WEAR

The most effective and environmentally friendly form of insect repellent is clothing. Dark colours don't attract insects as much and are better camouflage for you. It sounds so obvious but shorts are not a good idea in the bush, especially as the ankles and back of knees are the most irritating places to get bitten. Long sleeved shirts are also good, and if you roll your sleeves up, don't forget to put repellent on your elbows, another irritating place for bites.

THINGS THAT BITE AND STING

On the reef, fire coral is quite common, but if you get stung, it serves you right because you shouldn't be touching coral any way. Unless you're extremely unlucky, any other bite or sting will only cause temporary irritation. For stings from marine animals, apply vinegar to neutralize any residual spikes. For other bites antihistamine cream is best. The local Rain Forest Remedies on sale work well. They also do a very effective balm for bites. Put it on straight after being bitten for maximum effectiveness.

WHEN TO GO WHERE

Choosing the right time to visit makes a big difference to what you will see. If birds are your interest they are most abundant and varied over the Autumn migration (late August to October), but many overwinter and are around until April. Spring migration isn't as good as many birds travel back through Guatemala. In the dry season (roughly February to June but variable) many birds are nesting (like Jabiru, Red-footed Booby and Scarlet Macaws) and the larger forest mammals are attracted to rivers to drink, where they can be more easily seen. If you're desperate to avoid biting insects, this is also a good time. If you can put up with them though, there's an increase in animal activity at the start of the rainy season (June, July). Plants of different kinds flower all year round, but many start at the beginning or end of the dry season. For diving or snorkeling, avoiding rough seas is the main consideration. May is the month when winds are calmest.

AS A VISITOR

The most important thing to remember is that reserves are special places set up to protect wildlife and to help people enjoy the natural environment. Loud music, partying and bar-be-ques are great but not at these sites. Treat reserves with respect, register as required, never disturb any wildlife, do nothing to detract from the enjoyment of other visitors and take out all rubbish you bring in. If you want souvenirs, get them from conservation bodies like the Belize Audubon Society (12 Fort St., Belize City 02-34985. Open weekdays 8am-noon, 1pm-5pm), Belize Zoo and Tropical Education Centre (Mile 29, Western Highway. Open daily 9:30am-4pm) and Programme for Belize (I King St., Belize City 02- 75616. Open weekdays 8am-noon, 1 pm - 5pm).

GETTING AROUND

Many reserves are accessible by bus. Just tell the ticket guy where you want to get off. If you choose to

hire a car, take extra care, especially if you're a tourist. For Mountain Pine Ridge also remember that logging and military vehicles use the area, so expect more traffic.

Posted : **Marty Casado** - Thu, Dec 7, 2006 12:01 AM. This article has been viewed 5935 times.

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