

Lights, Camera, Adventure

Belize & Tikal Coppola Resorts Experience



Day 01 - Blancaneaux Lodge

Met on arrival into Belize International Airport for your charter flight to Blancaneaux Lodge. On arrival you'll enjoy a welcome cocktail and there is time to relax before the pre-dinner trip briefing. Dinner will be at the Montagna Restaurant, followed by an over-view of the conservation work undertaken by Blancaneaux Lodge and its conservation partners. During the stay at Blancaneaux Lodge each guest will have the opportunity to plant a tree on the property. This action helps offset the carbon generated while on the tour. For those guests that wish their trip to be 'carbon positive' we offer additional tree planting opportunities (at an additional cost) to help replant recently deforested areas of the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve. Overnight Blancaneaux Lodge in a luxurious cabana (D)

Day 02 – Caracol, Rio Frio Cave, Rio On Pools & Waterfalls

Optional early morning birding is available before breakfast. After breakfast we'll leave on our tour to the Maya site of Caracol. Firstly we will visit the Rio Frio Cave system before continuing on to Caracol, the largest and most important Maya site in Belize. The site of Caracol is one of the highest in the Maya lowlands, situated at 1600 feet above sea level in a karst limestone landscape of hilly rainforest. During the late Classic Period the population of Caracol's political unit lived in an area of at least 365 square kilometres. The site has 40 carved monuments depicting succession and

conquest with some depicting wars waged successfully against the neighbouring polities of Tikal and Naranjo. At the heart of the site lies the impressive Caana pyramid that reaches 135 feet in height and houses a series of courtyards, residential areas, burial chambers and temples. From the top of the Caana there are unbroken views over the rainforest of the Chiquibul National Park. The epicentre of the site is home to howler and spider monkeys and the birding is excellent. Rare species such as Keel-billed Motmot are resident at the site and a wide range of raptors including Bat Falcon, Great Black-Hawk and Ornate Hawk-Eagle are regularly seen by visitors. On our return to the lodge we'll stop in at the Rio On Pools where a series of spectacular waterfalls tumble over granite boulders. For the adventurous there's time for a refreshing dip in the pools before we return to the lodge in the late afternoon. Evening at leisure or optional natural history activities. Overnight Blancaneaux Lodge. (B,L,D).

Day 03 – Relaxing at Blancaneaux Lodge

Today is a leisure day. There are many optional activities or tours available to you. Relax by the pool, enjoy a Thai massage, explore the organic garden, take a jungle trek to Howler Hill and learn about our jaguar research, or go horseback riding and swim at Big Rock Falls. During the May to August period there's a unique opportunity to take part in monitoring the nesting site of the endangered Scarlet Macaw with National Park rangers. Our conservation officer will be happy to discuss the ways we contribute towards conservation through our support for jaguar, raptor, scarlet macaw and bat research. Overnight Blancaneaux Lodge. (B,L,D).

Day 04 – Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve

We'll leave the lodge early this morning as the day will be dedicated to birding and natural history. We will focus mainly on the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve (MPR) due to its unique and varied habitat. The Forest Reserve is home to many rare and endangered bird species – the Orange-breasted Falcon, Black-and-White Hawk Eagle, and Solitary Eagle. Along with the adjacent Noj Kaax Meen Elijio Panti National Park it's also home to all 5 species of Belize's big cats – the jaguar, puma, ocelot, margay and jaguarundi. We'll drive to 1000 Ft Falls and continue on up to the Cooma Cairn observation tower for views over the Bald Hills. On the way we'll be looking for orchids and the roosting sites of the rare Stygian Owl. We'll enjoy a picnic lunch and there is time to swim in remote mountain streams and tumbling waterfalls. As we drive around we'll be on the lookout for jaguar and puma tracks and will stop at motion sensitive camera trap sites used by Dr. Marcella Kelly's Ix jaguar research project. We'll return to the lodge in the late afternoon. Overnight Blancaneaux Lodge. (B,L,D).

Day 05 - Yaxha & Lake Peten Itza

Today there's optional early morning birding with the morning at leisure. After lunch we'll drive out of the MPR and head west to the Guatemalan border. It will take about one and a half hours to drive to the spectacular Maya site of Yaxhá located within the Yaxhá-Nakum-Naranjo National Park. The site is located on the shores of Lake Yaxhá with the highlight of the visit being the panoramic view from atop Temple 216. The site is extensive with impressive temple complex, ball courts and plazas. It is however the outstanding natural history that often delights visitors the most. Large troops of howler and spider monkeys lazily pose on the edges of plaza groups, and spectacular raptors such as the Ornate Hawk Eagle and Bat Falcon pose in the rainforest canopy. As dusk draws in we'll linger atop Temple 216 enjoying wine and snacks as the sun sets over the western horizon. Leaving the ruins we'll soon reach the shores of Lake Petén Itzá, one of Guatemala's largest and most spectacular lakes. Driving along the lake's northern shore we arrive at the charming 10-room La Lancha. The resort is perched high above the lake with winding forest trails leading to the lakeshore. On arrival there's time to freshen up before dinner. Overnight La Lancha. (B,L,D)

Day 06 – Tikal National Park

Today we'll explore the magical world of the Tikal National Park, a 576 square kilometre UNESCO World Heritage site. The park is a short drive from La Lancha and we'll have plenty of time to explore this extraordinary Maya site in the company of an expert local guide. The tour will include highlights of the more than 3,000 excavated structures at the site including the Grand Plaza composed of the Central Acropolis, Temple 1, Temple II and the Northern Acropolis; Temples III and IV; the Mundo Perdido and Temple V. We'll take a picnic lunch at the site and there is plenty of time to enjoy the superb natural history as we explore the site. While wandering the ancient causeways it's usual to hear the howler monkeys eerily roar and acrobatic spider monkeys leap between gaps in the forest canopy. Below the rustle of leaves often gives away foraging coatimundi, paca and white tailed deer. The Maya site of Tikal is justifiably regarded as one of Central America's best birding locations and your guide will help identify many of the park's 285 species. As we head back to La Lancha there is time to browse the artisan crafts at the park entrance and also at small gift shops in roadside villages. Overnight La Lancha. (B,L,D).

Day 07 – Placencia

After an early breakfast we will take the short drive to Flores International Airport on the south side of the lake. From here we'll take a one-hour flight back to Belize International Airport where we'll connect to Placencia. On arrival in Placencia airstrip it's a short 5-minute drive to Turtle Inn. After a brief orientation by your new hosts you'll be shown to your spacious cottage. The rest of the day is free to relax. Turtle Inn has 3 restaurants and two infinity pools. The Sunset Spa offers wonderful Thai massage therapies and a range of body wraps and facials. In the evening a representative of SEABelize a local NGO with co-management of a number of marine reserves in southern Belize will give an introduction into the conservation of mangrove, cayes and barrier reef. Southern Belize is a critical marine habitat for numerous rare and endangered species and the role of local NGOs and their partners is critical to maintaining healthy and sustainable ecosystems. Directly offshore at a cut in the barrier reef is the Gladden Spit Marine Reserve, a snapper and grouper spawning aggregation site that annually (between late March and early June) attracts large numbers of Whale Sharks. Directly behind Turtle Inn is Placencia Lagoon, an important breeding area of the endangered West Indian Manatee. At the end of June Hawksbill Turtles start to come ashore and lay their eggs among the cottages at Turtle Inn. The resort marks, monitors and protects the nests in partnership with SEA Belize allowing the turtles to increase their chances of survival in the marine realm.

Overnight Turtle Inn (B,L,D).

Day 08 – Belize Barrier Reef

After breakfast we'll head to the dive shop to select our snorkel gear. We'll soon be around the tip of the Placencia Peninsula heading due east towards the Laughing Bird Caye National Park and beyond to the barrier reefs. As we quickly move over the water dolphins often follow the boat or ride its pressure wave. Soon we're among the coral and mangrove cayes. Once we reach the cayes your guide will provide an orientation and ensure that everyone is comfortable and ready to safely explore Belize's magical marine world. After a fun filled day of snorkelling we'll return to the resort in the late afternoon. Overnight Turtle Inn. (B,L,D).

Day 09 – Relaxing at Turtle Inn, Placencia

Today is a free day to relax or take optional tours. Enjoy a Thai massage in your own room, cycle into Placencia village, search the lagoon for shy manatee or explore the world's only jaguar preserve. Head south into Toledo District and see how the indigenous Maya grow shade cacao and learn to make chocolate, or visit the Maya site of Lubaantun home of the mysterious Mitchell-Hedge's crystal skull. Explore,

read a book or simply chill out by the pool with a cocktail. Tonight we've left dinner open for guests to explore the numerous dining options in Placencia village.
Overnight Turtle Inn. (B,L).

Day 10 – Monkey River

After breakfast we'll slowly head south by boat carefully winding our way through the patchwork of mangrove cayes that hug the coast. The birding is fantastic. Magnificent Frigatebirds soar overhead, squadrons of Brown Pelicans skim the waves and Ospreys keenly observe the translucent waters from their lofty perches. Roseate Spoonbills and Wood Storks can often be observed November through mid-April and Boat-billed Herons' share roosting sites with Neotropical cormorants and Black-crowned Night-Herons. As we enter Monkey River we slow the motor to a gentle hum and slowly make our way upriver. Iguanas can be seen high in the overhanging canopy, American crocodiles bask on the mud banks and Belize slider turtles warm themselves on the exposed trunks of submerged trees. We'll take a walk through huge stands of bamboo and mangrove to see the troops of noisy howler monkeys that the river is named after. In the evening there will be a cocktail reception to recap the trip's adventures followed by a farewell dinner.
Overnight Turtle Inn (B,L,D).

Day 11 – Belize International Airport / Departure

Today it is time to say farewell to Belize. After breakfast it is time to take the short flight north to Belize International Airport for onward connections.
(B)

Expedition Enquiries

For questions on this expedition or for a more detailed itinerary please contact our central reservations office. Call 501-824-4912; or e-mail info@blancaneaux.com

Expedition dates:

Starts every Saturday year-round from August 22, 2010.

Group Size:

Minimum group sign up 4 persons, maximum 12 persons.

Any individual or couple can sign up for the itinerary with the minimum group sign up of 4 persons being confirmed to participants 45 days in advance of departure. In case the minimum sign up figure of 4 persons is not reached deposits are fully refundable or an alternative custom quotation given.

Departures Autumn 2010 – August 22 to 11 December, 2010

Per person double share: \$2830 US + \$451 tax/service charge

Single Supplement: \$500 US + \$95 US tax/service charge

Departures Winter/Spring 2011 – January 08 to May 21, 2011

Per person double share: \$3550 US + \$576 US tax/service charge

Single Supplement: \$750 US + \$143 US tax/service charge

Terms & Conditions:

Please ensure that you have read our booking terms and agree to our liability waiver prior to making a reservation.