

Top 10 Things to Do in Belize

Belize City, San Ignacio, 7 Days

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Though small, the Central American country of Belize offers many opportunities to experience traditional Mayan cultural sites, and local arts and handicrafts in a relaxing tropical setting. Here we've compiled a top ten list of the best things to do in Belize. For a genuine look at the ancient Mayans, walk through the spectacular ruins of Xunantunich, or wade through Actun Tunichil Muknal Cave to discover Mayan artifacts. St. John's Cathedral combines English architecture and native history, and provides a look at the country's colonial background. If you are seeking more current local culture, museums and art galleries abound. There are plenty of opportunities to shop as well, and the two activities often go hand-in-hand. We give you the top local art galleries where you can find jewelry, pottery, sculpture, and more. Also included are performing arts spaces, like the Bliss Institute of Performing Arts where you can catch a theater or dance performance. Experience the modern and ancient culture that Belize has to offer.



My List

location:

San Ignacio



Xunantunich

DESCRIPTION: Xunantunich is the site of some of the most impressive Mayan ruins in Belize. Just outside San Ignacio near the Guatemalan border, the collection of excavated temples, royal residences, and ball courts are a must-visit site for any amateur archaeology or history buff. © Josh



location:

San Ignacio



Actun Tunichil Muknal Cave

DESCRIPTION: Wading through the Roaring Fork River, you can work your way deep into the cave, where you'll find the remains of Mayan pottery, and even skulls and bones! It's a truly unique experience that will make you feel like Indiana Jones. Just make sure to go with a licensed, reputable guide. © Josh



contact:

tel: 227-2137

location:

Belize City

hours:

Daily 8:30am-5pm



St. John's Cathedral

DESCRIPTION: This old brick church is the oldest Anglican cathedral in Central America, and the oldest standing structure in Belize. Built in 1812 by slaves using bricks brought over as ballast, it is also the only Anglican church outside of England where kings have been crowned -- during the 1800s four Mosquito Indian kings held their coronation ceremonies here. © Frommer's

contact:

tel: 227-2110

location:

Belize City

hours:

Mon-Sat 8:30am-5pm



Bliss Institute of Performing Arts

DESCRIPTION: Totally rebuilt and reopened in 2005, the Bliss Institute is a busy little complex that is the cultural heart of Belize City. Housing a performing arts space, rehearsal halls, a cafeteria, the National Institute of the Arts, and a couple of gallery spaces, this is the place to check for live theater, dance, and music performances while you're in town. It's also a good place to stop and see if there's an interesting exhibit of art or photography. The main building's circular design takes advantage of the complex's setting, with large picture windows overlooking the Belize Harbour. The gallery spaces are fairly small, so you will only need about a half-hour, possibly less, to tour the institute. © Frommer's

contact:

tel: 223-3636

location:

2 S. Park St Belize City



National Handicraft Center

DESCRIPTION: This place still houses a wide selection of local and regional crafts and souvenirs all under one roof, but it's no longer the main game in town. In fact, it's lost a lot of its luster and traffic to the Belize Tourism Village. Still, you'll find a decent selection of Mayan stone carvings, coconut shell jewelry, and wooden knickknacks, as well as some oil paintings, prints, and a small selection of books. Moreover, the prices here are slightly better than those at the Belize Tourism



Village, and if you see something you really like, you might even be able to bargain for it. © Frommer's

contact:

tel: 222-4286 www.oldbelize.com

location:

Belize City

hours:

Tues-Sat 8am-4pm; Sun-Mon 10am-4pm



Old Belize

DESCRIPTION: This attraction aims at providing a comprehensive experience of the natural, cultural, and political history of Belize, with exhibits recreating everything from a rainforest, to a Mayan ceremonial cave, to a logging camp, to a Garífuna home. Admission includes a 45-minute guided tour, but you'll probably want to stay longer to explore some exhibits on your own, visit the gift shop, or eat at the restaurant here. There's even a pretty decent little beach here, with a waterslide and children's playground area, and separate zip-line cable adventure. Plan on spending between 1 and 2 hours here -- more if you're going to eat or hang out at the beach. While certainly touristy, if you only have a limited amount of time in Belize City, or the country in general, this place does give a good overview. © Frommer's

contact:

tel: 223-4093 www.imagefactory.bz

location:

91 North Front St Belize City

hours:

Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

contact:

tel: 203-1222

location:

8 Fort St Belize City



The Image Factory

DESCRIPTION: This is Belize City's top art gallery. With a large stable of local and regional artists to choose from, this non-profit gallery and arts organization has regularly rotating exhibitions, as well as a semi-permanent collection of art, photography, sculpture, and craft works. © Frommer's



Maya Jade

DESCRIPTION: This place bills itself as a museum and gallery, and while there is a whole room of museum-style displays explaining the history of Mesoamerican Mayan jade use and artistry, this is nonetheless predominantly a retail operation. That said, the small selection here includes some very well done necklaces and earrings that you won't find elsewhere. © Frommer's

contact:

tel: 227-0565

location:

24 Albert Street Belize City



Belize Handicrafts & Gift Center

DESCRIPTION: This place features the wooden sculptures of Stephen Okeke. Okeke works in both large and small formats, in one-off and commissioned designs. He carves wood directly, but also puts out limited editions of molded pieces made from a combination of sawdust and resin. The gallery also carries a wide selection of mass-produced wooden sculptures and craft items, as well as a smaller collection of assorted local crafts and jewelry, books, and of course hot sauces. © Frommer's

contact:

tel: 223-7773

www.fineartsbelize.com

location:

1 Fort St



Fine Arts

DESCRIPTION: This is the best gallery and gift shop I've found in Belize. They have a large selection of original art works in a variety of styles, formats, and sizes. Browse primitivist works by Walter Castillo and Pen Cayetano, alongside more modern abstract pieces, traditional still lifes, and colorful representations of Belize's marine, natural, and human life. © Frommer's



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Belize City



Belize City Snapshot

Local Info

Introduction

Long ago stripped of its status as the country's capital, Belize City remains Belize's business, transportation, and cultural hub. Sooner or later you'll probably have to spend some time here, unless you do all your in-country traveling by air or have a very precisely planned itinerary. In fact, since the country itself is so small, Belize City makes a good base for a host of interesting day trips to most of the country's major destinations and attractions.

With a population of some 71,000, Belize City is surrounded on three sides by water, and at high tide it is nearly swamped. It's a strange, dense warren of narrow streets and canals(the latter being little more than open sewers, and pretty pungent in hot weather), modern stores, dilapidated shacks, and quaint wooden mansions, coexisting in a seemingly chaotic jumble.

The city was originally settled by the ancient Mayans, who lived up and down the coast here. By the mid-1600s, pirates were using the current site of Belize City as a hideout and provisioning spot. Soon after, the British arrived and set up a logging base here, fueled by slave labor. Logs were harvested inland and floated down the Belize River for milling and shipping. This logging base soon became a colonial settlement and the seat of Britain's colonial empire on the Central American isthmus. Belize City itself is said to sit on a foundation of wood chips, discarded ship's ballast, and empty rum bottles.

Belize City has historically been beset by tragedy. The entire population abandoned the city and moved to St. George's Caye in 1779 following a Spanish attack. The Baymen, as the British settlers called themselves, returned and resettled the city in 1784. Massive fires razed much of the city in 1804, 1806, and 1856. Deadly hurricanes inflicted heavy damage in 1931 and 1961. Between these events. the residents endured smallpox, yellow fever, and cholera epidemics. Belize City had been declared the capital of British

Honduras in 1892, but after Hurricane Hattie struck in 1961, the country's capital was relocated inland to Belmopan.

Despite a reputation for crime and violence, periodic devastation from passing hurricanes, and the loss of its capital status, Belize City remains the urban heart and soul of Belize. Most visitors treat Belize City merely as a transition point and transportation hub. This is probably what you'll want to do too. But if you've got a day or two to burn on a lavover here. Belize City is a good place to walk around, admire the fleet of working wooden fish sloops, do some craft and souvenir shopping, and stock up on Marie Sharp's Hot Sauce to bring home with you.

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Hotel Insights

Hotels

Belize City is small, and your options on where to stay are limited, especially for a capital city. The most picturesque and safest neighborhood by far is the area around the Fort George Lighthouse. Here you'll find most of the city's best shopping, dining, and accommodations. Still, since the city is so compact, and it's not really recommended to walk around anywhere at night, you're best off choosing a hotel that best meets your needs, style, and budget. There are really only three large, modern hotels in town, and they're all listed below. If your tastes tend towards smaller, more intimate lodgings, there are several good options in different price ranges to choose from.

When getting a price quote from or negotiating with a hotel in Belize, be careful to be clear whether or not you are being quoted a price in Belize or U.S. dollars. There is a 9% tax on all hotel stavs in Belize, which isn't included in the rates listed here.

Around Town

In addition to the places listed here, D'Nest Inn(tel. 223-5416; www.dnestinn.com) is a cute, well-run little bed-and-breakfast

located about 4.8km(3 miles) outside of downtown, just off the Northern Highway.

Near the Airport

The airport is located just 16km(10 miles) north of downtown Belize City, a 15- to 20-minute drive, depending on traffic. The area around the airport is decidedly undeveloped and of little interest to visitors. Few international flights arrive late enough or leave early enough to necessitate a stay near the airport. If you really want to stay just a stone's throw away from the airport. try the Global Village Hotel(tel. 225-2555; fax 220-3000;globalhotel@btl.net). While large and modern, this place has virtually no atmosphere or life of its own, and there's not much else nearby either. I really recommend you take the short taxi ride into Belize City, or stay at one of the places listed here.

In addition to the place listed here, the Belize River Lodge(tel. 888/275-4843 in the U.S. and Canada, or 225-2002 in Belize; www.belizeriverlodge.com) is an upscale fishing lodge located on the banks of the Belize River, just a few miles from the airport, while the Black Orchid Resort(tel. 866/437-1301 in the U.S. and Canada, or 225-9158 in Belize; www.blackorchidresort.com) is a small resort hotel, also on the banks of the Belize River near the town of Burrell Boom. © 2000-2010 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Restaurants Insights

Restaurants

Despite its small size, Belize City actually has an excellent and varied selection of dining options open to visitors. While Belizean cuisine and fresh seafood are most common, you can also get excellent Chinese, Indian, and other international fare at restaurants around the city.

Note: When the cruise ships are in town, the restaurants in the Fort George area can get extremely crowded, especially for lunch.

Fort George

In addition to the places listed here, you can get good burgers and bar food at the



Belize City Snapshot continued

Bayman's Tavern at the Radisson Fort George Hotel.

Business District

In addition to the places listed here, Nerie's, which has two locations(124 Freetown Rd., tel. 224-5199; and at the corner of Queen and Daly sts., tel. 223-4028) is another simple restaurant specializing in Belizean cuisine, and it's very popular with locals.

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Nightlife Insights

Nightlife

Again, Belize City is a small, provincial city in an underdeveloped country, so don't expect to find a raging nightlife scene. The most popular nightspots-- for both locals and visitors alike-- are the bars at the few high-end hotels in town.

The Performing Arts

It's really the luck of the draw as to whether or not you can catch a concert, theater piece, or dance performance— they are the exception, not the norm. To find out if anything is happening, ask at your hotel, read the local papers, or check in with the Bliss Institute(tel. 227-2110).

The Bar Scene

The bar and club scene in Belize City is rather lackluster. The most happening bar in town is the **Riverside Tavern**. This is especially true on weekends, and whenever there's an important soccer, basketball, or cricket match on

Travelers and locals alike also tend to frequent the bars at the major hotels and tourist traps. The liveliest of these are the bars at the Radisson Fort George Hotel& Marina, the Best Western Belize Biltmore Plaza, and the Princess Hotel& Casino, all of which often have a live band on weekend nights. Of these, I prefer the Club Calypso(tel. 223-2670), an open-air affair built over the water at the Princess Hotel& Casino, although it's sort of a crapshoot as to which bar will be hopping on any given night.

Casinos

For gaming, the Princess Hotel& Casino is the only game in town, and the casino here is large, modern, and well equipped. While it's not on the scale of Vegas or Atlantic City, the casino is certainly respectable, with enough gaming tables, slots, and other attractions to make most casual gamblers quite happy to drop a few dollars.

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Things to Do Insights

Attractions

There really isn't much reason to take a guided tour of Belize City. The downtown center is extremely compact and lends itself very easily to self-directed exploration. There are only a handful of interesting attractions, and all are within easy walking distance of the central Swing Bridge. Below you'll find reviews of the most interesting attractions, as well as a walking tour of the city.

If you really feel the need for a guided

tour of the city, ask at your hotel desk for a recommendation, or call **Discovery Expeditions**(tel. 223-0748; www.discoverybelize.com) or **S&L Travel and Tours**(tel. 227-7593; www.sltravelbelize.com). A half-day city tour should cost around BZ\$80 to BZ \$100(US\$40-US\$50/£21-£27) per person, but can easily be combined with a visit to one of the several popular nearby attractions. All the above companies offer a whole range of day trips and combinations to the attractions close to the city and even further afield.

The Top Attractions

Belize City is very light on true attractions. The museums mentioned here are quite quaint and provincial by most international standards, although they are worth a visit if you are spending a day getting to know the city, residents, and local history.

Attractions Outside Belize City

The attractions listed below are within an hour of Belize City; both can be reached by public transportation. In addition, the Mayan ruins of Altun Ha and Lamanai and the

Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary are all easily accessible from Belize City. All are popularly sold as day tours, often in various mix-and-match combinations. If you're interested in visiting one or more of these attractions as part of an organized tour, ask at your hotel, or call Action Belize(tel. 223-2987; www.actionbelize.com), Discovery Expeditions(tel. 223-0748; www.discoverybelize.com), or S&

L Travel and Tours(tel. 227-7593; www.sltravelbelize.com). Prices range from about BZ\$100 to BZ\$280(US\$50-US\$140/£27-£74) per person, depending on the tour, means of transportation, and the attraction(s) visited. Tours, especially those to Altun Ha and Crooked Tree, are often combined with lunch and an optional spa treatment at Maruba Resort Jungle Spa.

Belize Zoo-- Founded in 1983 as part of a last-ditch and improvised effort to keep and care for a host of wild animals that were being used in a documentary film shoot, the Belize Zoo, Western Highway, Mile Marker 29(tel. 220-8003; www.belizezoo.org), is a national treasure. Gentle paths wind through some 12 hectares(29 acres) of land, where the zoo houses over 125 animals, all native Belizean species. According to their own promotional materials,"The zoo keeps animals which were either orphaned, born at the zoo, rehabilitated animals, or sent to the Belize Zoo as gifts from other zoological institutions."

Walking around the zoo, you'll see several species of Belizean cats, April the tapir, and other wild animals in idealized natural surroundings. The animals here are some of the liveliest and happiest looking that I've ever seen in a zoo. It's obvious that they're well cared for. All the exhibits have informative hand-painted signs accompanying them. It's best to visit early in the morning or close to closing time, when the animals are at their most active and the Belizean sun is at its least oppressive.

The entrance is a couple of hundred yards in from the Western Highway. Any bus traveling between Belize City and Belmopan or San Ignacio will drop you off at the zoo entrance. Admission is BZ



Belize City Snapshot continued

\$16(US\$8/£4.25) for adults and BZ\$8(US \$4/£2.10) for children, and the zoo is open daily from 8am to 5pm.

Adjacent to the zoo is a sister project, the Belize Zoo Jungle Lodge(tel. 220-8003). Set on 34 hectares(84 acres) of untouched savannah, the center has a nature trail, observation platform, classroom, and some simple guest rooms. An overnight stay here costs between BZ\$60 and BZ\$144(US\$30-US\$72/£16-£38) per person, including hotel taxes, breakfast, and dinner. While most of the beds here are in dormitory-style rooms, a couple of private cabins are definitely worth the extra dollars. Folks who stay here can take a nocturnal tour of the zoo for BZ \$30(US\$15/£7.95).

Community Baboon Sanctuary-- There aren't really baboons in Belize; this is iust the local name for the black howler monkeys who reside in this innovative sanctuary. The sanctuary is a community program run by local landowners in eight villages to preserve the local population of these vociferous primates. The howlers found here are an endangered endemic subspecies found only in Belize. There's a visitor's center(tel. 220-2181) and natural history museum in the village of Bermudian Landing, and it is here that you pay your BZ\$10(US\$5/£2.65) admission fee, which includes a short guided hike. If you want a longer guided hike, you should hire one of the many local guides for a modest fee. The preserve stretches for some 32km(20 miles) along the Belize River, and there are several trails that wind through farmland and secondary forest. You will undoubtedly hear the whooping and barking of the howler monkeys as they make their way through the treetops feeding on fruits, flowers, and leaves. In addition to the nearly 1,500 howler monkeys that make their home in the sanctuary, there are also numerous other bird and mammal species to be spotted here. With your guide's help, you should be able to spot the monkeys and, if you're lucky, any combination of peccaries, anteaters, pacas, and coatimundi. Bring binoculars if you have them. At the visitor's center, you can also hire a canoe for a leisurely paddle and float

BZ\$50(US\$25/£13) per person. Finally, the several small villages that comprise the conservation project are wonderful examples of rural Creole villages. Be sure to visit one or two, stroll around, talk to the residents, and see what kind of craftwork and food you can find. In each village, there are families that rent out simple rooms. Ask at the museum and information center, or reserve in advance via their website at www.howlermonkeys.org.

Bermudian Landing village, site of the sanctuary's visitor center, is about 32km(20 miles) west of Belize City. If you are driving, head north on the Northern Highway and watch for the Burrel Boom Road turnoff, Buses to Bermudian Landing leave Belize City several times a day. Call the sanctuary's visitor's center for current schedule and departure point. The one-way fare is BZ\$5(US\$2.50/£1.35).

Shopping

You won't be bowled over by shopping options here in Belize City, and very few people come to Belize specifically to shop. You will find a modest handicraft industry, with different specialties produced by the country's various ethnic communities. The Creole populations of the coastal area and outer cayes specialize in coral and shell jewelry, as well as woodcarvings with maritime(dolphins, turtles, and ships) themes. The Belizean Mayan population produces replicas of ancient petroglyphs and different modern designs on varying sized pieces of slate. Finally, the Garífuna peoples of the southern coastal villages are known for their small dolls.

My favorite gift item in Belize continues to be Marie Sharp's Hot Sauce, which comes in several heat gradations, as well as some new flavors. The original blend of habanero peppers, carrots, and vinegar is one of my all-time favorite hot sauces. The company also produces mango chutney and an assortment of pepper jams. You can pick up Marie Sharp products at any supermarket and most gift shops; I recommend you stick to the supermarkets, though, to avoid price gouging. In addition to Marie Sharp's, Lizette's brand of hot sauces is also a good bet.

Please do not buy any kind of sea-turtle products(including jewelry); wild birds; lizard, snake, or cat skins; corals; or orchids(except those grown commercially). No matter how unique, beautiful, insignificant, or inexpensive it may seem, your purchase will directly contribute to the further hunting of endangered species.

The Shopping Scene

Most shops in the downtown district are open Monday through Saturday from about 8am to 6pm. Some shops close for lunch, while others remain open(it's just the luck of the draw for shoppers). Since the cruise ships are such a big market for local merchants, many adjust their hours to specifically coincide with cruise-ship traffic and their particular shore times.

Handicrafts& Souvenirs

By far the largest selection of gift shops and souvenir stands can be found at the Belize Tourism Village(8 Fort St.; tel. 223-2767).

In addition to housing the best collections of fine art for sale in the city, Fine Arts and The Image Factory Shop also feature some of the best handicrafts and handmade jewelry. The quality and selection are a definite step above what you'll find at most other gift shops and tourist traps in town, and around the country.

Jewelry

Coral is a very delicate, rapidly disappearing living organism that grows very slowly; please avoid buying coral jewelry, as it just feeds demand and inevitably leads to the destruction of the spectacular Belizean reefs.

Liquor

Your best bet for liquor shopping is at local supermarkets, or the duty-free shop at the airport. There are several brands of Belizean rum available; the most popular is One Barrel, which has a hint of coconut and vanilla. Other brands produce some more heavily flavored coconut rums. The Prestige brand aged rum is pretty good, if you're looking for a straight, dry rum. Belize doesn't produce any wines or other spirits of note, although you may want to pick up a



on the Belize River. The cost is around

Belize City Snapshot continued

bottle of locally produced wine, or cashew wine, for the sake of novelty.

Markets

The only real market of note is the Commercial Center located just over the Swing Bridge, on the southern side of the city. This two-story modern concrete structure houses a mix of stalls and enclosed storefronts. The first floor is predominantly devoted to fresh produce. fish stalls, and butcher shops, but you'll also find stands selling flowers, fresh herbs, and some souvenir shops. There are more souvenir shops and some restaurants, including Big Daddy's, on the second floor. The Commercial Center is open daily from 7:30am to 5pm.

Music

Punta Rock is the most Belizean of music styles. A close cousin to soca and calypso, Punta is upbeat dance music. Popular proponents include Andy Palacios, Chico Ramos, Pen Cayetano, the Garífuna Kids, Travesia Band, and Peter Flores(aka Titiman). For a taste of traditional Creole folk music, try to track down a copy ofMr. Peters' Boom& Chime. You also might be able to find some traditional Garífuna music, which tends to be ceremonial dance music, very similar to traditional West African music.

The best place to find Belizean music is a gift shop. Still, these are very hit or miss. Check at the Belize Tourism Village. You might also try online music stores; two good sources are www.stonetreerecords.com and www.calabashmusic.com. I'd avoid the various vendors selling bootleg cassettes and CDs on the side of the road, since the quality can be sketchy, and the artists don't receive a dime. © 2000-2010 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Travel Tips

Planning a Trip **Visitor Information**

The Belize Tourist Board(tel. 800/624-0686 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada, or 227-2430 in Belize; www.travelbelize.org) has its main office at 64 Regent Street, in the heart of the business district of Belize City. If you missed their desk at the airport, they have another information desk here with regional brochures, basic maps, and a score of hotel and tour fliers; the office is open Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm. Local travel agencies are another good source of information. Two in Belize City to try are **Discovery Expeditions**, 5916 Manatee Dr., Buttonwood Bay(tel. 223-0748; www.discoverybelize.com) and S&L Travel and Tours, 91 N. Front St.(tel. 227-7593; www.sltravelbelize.com).

City Layout

Belize City is surrounded on three sides by water, with Haulover Creek dividing the city in two. The Swing Bridge, near the mouth of Haulover Creek, is the main route between the two halves of the city, as well as the city's principal landmark. At the south end of the bridge is Market Square and the start of Regent Street and Albert Street. This is where you'll find most of Belize City's shops and offices. To the west and east of these two major roads is a grid of smaller roads lined with dilapidated wooden houses. On the north side of the bridge and to the right is the Fort George area. From the southern side of the city, Cemetery Road heads out of town to the west and becomes the Western Highway, while from the northern side of the city, Freetown Road becomes Haulover Road and then the Northern Highway.

Getting There

By Plane

All international flights into Belize land at the Philip S. W. Goldson International Airport(tel. 225-2045; www.pgiabelize.com; airport code BZE), which is located 16km(10 miles) northwest of the city on the Northern Highway.

In the baggage claim area, there's an information booth maintained by the Belize Tourist Board. This booth supplies maps and brochures, and will often make a call for you if you need a hotel or carrental reservation. Inside the international departure terminal is a branch of Belize Bank(tel. 225-2107), open daily from 8:30am to 4pm. Across the parking lot, you'll find car-rental and tour-agency desks, open daily from 8am to 9:30pm. A taxi into town will cost BZ\$50 to BZ\$60(US\$25-US \$30/£13-£16).

If you fly in from somewhere else in Belize, you'll probably land at the Municipal Airport(airport code TZA), which is on the edge of town. A taxi from here costs just BZ\$10(US\$5/£2.65). There's no bank or any other services at the Municipal Airport, although most car-rental agencies can arrange to have a car there for you.

There is no direct bus service to either airport.

By Car

There are only two highways into Belize City: the Northern Highway, which leads to the Mexican border(166km/103 miles away), and the Western Highway, which leads to the Guatemalan border(132km/82 miles away). Both are well marked and in good driving condition. If you arrive by car from the north, stay on the road into town, paying close attention to one-way streets, and you'll end up at the Swing Bridge. If you're arriving on the Western Highway, stay on it after it becomes Cemetery Road. and you'll end up at the intersection with Albert Street, a block away from the Swing Bridge.

Bv Bus

If you arrive in town by bus, you'll probably end up at the main bus terminal on West Collet Canal Street. This is an easy walk to downtown, but it is not recommended after dark. A taxi from the bus station to any hotel in town will cost around BZ\$8(US\$4/

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San Ignacio Snapshot

Local Info

Introduction

116km(72 miles) W of Belize City; 32km(20 miles) W of Belmopan; 13km(9 miles) E of the Guatemalan border

In the foothills of the mountains close to the Guatemalan border lie the sister towns of Santa Elena and San Ignacio, which are set on either side of the beautiful Macal River. For all intents and purposes, San Ignacio is the more important town, both in general terms and particularly for travelers. Just north of town, the Macal and Mopan rivers converge to form the Belize River. San Ignacio is the business and administrative center for the Cayo District, a region of cattle ranches and dense forests, of clear rivers and Mayan ruins. It is also the second largest metropolitan center in the country. Still, you won't find any urban blight here. If you've come from Guatemala, you'll sense immediately that you are now in a Caribbean country. If you've come up from the coast, you might be surprised by how cool it can get up here in the mountains. Despite the similarity in the sound of their names, the Cayo District and the cayes are worlds apart. While the caves cater to those looking for fun in the sun, Cayo caters to those interested in nature, outdoor adventures, and Mayan ruins. This area makes a great first stop in Belize; you can get in a lot of activity before heading to the beach to relax.

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Hotel Insights

Hotels

Moderate-- The Rolson Hotel(tel. 824-2730; www.rolsons.com) offers clean, business-class-style rooms, with televisions, air-conditioning, and free Wi-Fi.

Inexpensive-- San Ignacio is a very popular budget travel destination, and there are plenty of good options in town. During the high season, reservations are recommended for the more popular places. At other times, backpackers might prefer to arrive in town early enough to

visit a few places, and see which place gives the best bang for the buck. Of the backpacker-geared options, I like the Hi-Et, 12 West St.(tel. 824-2828), with its hostellike vibe and playful name. Those looking for accommodations with the trappings of a business-class hotel but at budget prices could also check out the New Balmoral Hotel, 17 Burns Ave.(tel. 804-3502), or the Plaza Hotel, 4A Burns Ave.(tel. 824-3332).

Cosmos Camping(tel.

824-2116; cosmoscamping@btl.net) is a campground on the road leading out toward Branch Mouth and Las Casitas, where you can pitch your tent for BZ\$10(US\$5/£2.65) per day. There are showers and communal bathrooms that are kept clean, and the river is just across a field. This place is about a 15-minute hike from downtown San Ignacio, doable for a backpacker. They also have some simple cabins here as well. Still, I prefer the camping options farther outside of town, including Clarissa Falls Cottages and the Trek Stop, or Midas Tropical Resort, which is on the same road before Cosmos.

On the Road to Bengue Viejo& the **Guatemalan Border**

While San Ignacio is the regional hub and does make a good base for side trips, the real attractions in western Belize are up the rivers and in the forests. Within a few miles of San Ignacio are several lodges set somewhat off the beaten path, where you can canoe down clear rivers past 1.2m(4ft.) iguanas sunning themselves on the rocks; ride horses to Mayan ruins; hike jungle trails, and spot scores of beautiful birds and, occasionally, other wild animals. Out on the road to Caracol and Mountain Pine Ridge, there are more of these lodges. Except for the true budget traveler, I highly recommend that you stay at one of the lodges listed below while you're in the area. A few of the lodges can be reached by public bus from San Ignacio, though you may have up to a 20-minute walk after getting off the bus, so consider taking a taxi or arranging pickup in town. All the lodges offer a wide range of active adventures and tours to all the principal sites in the area.

Very Expensive-- Ka'ana(tel. 824-3350:

www.kaanabelize.com) is a new, high-end resort hotel, with a series of rooms and private cottages with modern perks like flatscreen televisions and iPod docking stations. While Ek' Tun(tel. 820-3002; www.ektunbelize.com) is a unique, isolated, and gorgeous retreat with just two individual cottages set on the banks of the Macal River, it can only be reached by boat.

On the Road to Bullet Tree Falls El Pilar(tel. 824-3612:

www.marc.ucsb.edu/elpilar) was discovered in the 1970s, but real excavation and exploration didn't begin for another 20 years, and in fact it's still in its nascent stages. The site sits on a high hill some 274m(900 ft.) above the Mopan River and is one of the largest Mayan settlements in Belize. Some say it even rivals Caracol. This ancient ceremonial city featured over 25 known plazas and covered some 40 hectares(100 acres), straddling the Belize and Guatemala border. The site is quite large, but most visitors concentrate on Xaman Pilar(North Pilar) and Nohol Pilar(South Pilar). Pilar Poniente(West Pilar) is in Guatemala, a little less than a mile away. There are several well-marked and well-maintained trails through the site. While you can explore El Pilar by yourself-you can even download a very informative trail map from the above website-- I still recommend hiring a local guide. Plan on spending at least 3 hours here, though you could easily spend a full day or two exploring this site. The sunsets from Plaza Ixim looking west to Pilar Poniente and the forested hills of Guatemala are spectacular.

El Pilar is located about 19km(12 miles) north of San Ignacio, past the village of Bullet Tree Falls. In addition to driving your own vehicle, several tour agencies in San Ignacio offer horseback or mountain-bike tours out to El Pilar.

A Place to Stay in Bullet Tree Falls-- Folks love Cohune Palms River Cabanas(tel. 824-0166;

www.cohunepalms.com), which has a collection of thatch-roofed cabins on the banks of the Mopan River. Casa del



Caballo Blanco(tel. 707/974-4942 in the U.S.; www.casacaballoblanco.com) is the new kid in town, with neat, cozy rooms, just on the outskirts of downtown. © 2000-2010 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Restaurants Insights

Restaurants

Inexpensive-- Maxim's Chinese Restaurant, 23 Far West St.(tel. 824-2283), is the place to go for Chinese food. You might also want to take the adventure of finding Sanny's Grill, 23rd Street(tel. 824-2988), which is tucked away in a residential neighborhood, but serves up excellent seafood and grilled meats. For inexpensive eats in a large outdoor setting, you can try Hode's Place Bar& Grill(tel. 804-2522), located out on the northern end

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Nightlife Insights

Nightlife

San Ignacio is a pretty sleepy town. Many travelers end up at Eva's Restaurant& Bar, trading tales and planning adventures with new friends. Several bars are around the downtown area, though. Most nights, but especially on weekends, the most happening spot in town can be found up the hill at The Stork Club(tel. 824-2034), which is located in the San Ignacio Resort Hotel. This place has karaoke on Thursday nights, and live bands often on the weekends. Another raucous place for late-night revelry and dancing is the Rhumba Room(no phone), which is on the outskirts of town, on the road heading to Benque. On the north end of town, Hode's Place Bar& Grill(tel. 804-2522) is a massive spot that is very popular with locals. They have a tiny casino, as well as a large video arcade, and a pool and foosball tables. Alternatively, you can find out if there's live music at Caesar's Place(tel. 824-2341), which is the home turf of the Mango Jam band, a local jazz outfit. Caesar's is located out on the Western Highway, about 11km(7 miles) east of San Ignacio.

If you're the gambling type, you'll want to head to the Princess Casino(tel. 824-4099), which is also located at the San Ignacio Resort Hotel, I'd definitely choose this one over the very little casino at Hode's Place(tel. 804-2522).

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Things to Do Insights

Attractions

The Cavo District is Belize's prime inland tourist destination. There's a lot to see and do in this area, from visiting Mayan ruins and caves to engaging in a broad range of adventure activities. In addition to the tours, activities, and attractions listed below, all of the listings in the Mountain Pine Ridge section, and in the Belmopan section are easily accessible from San Ignacio.

Some of the tours, activities, and attractions listed below can be done on your own, but others will require a guide or adventure tour operator. Most hotels in the area either have their own tour operations or can arrange to hook you up with a reputable local operator. In addition, there are several long-standing tour agencies based in San Ignacio. Some of the best of these include Belize Eco Tours(tel. 824-4290; www.belizeecotours.com), Cayo Adventure Tours(tel. 824-3246; www.cayoadventure.com), Pacz Tours(tel. 824-2477; www.pacztours.net), and Yute Expeditions(tel. 824-2076; www.inlandbelize.com). All of these companies offer virtually all of the options and more, including multiday tours, treks, and adventures.

In addition, serious bird-watchers might want to give a call to Birds Without Borders(tel. 824-4416), or sign up for a tour with Birding in Belize(tel. 610-5593; www.birdinginbelize.com).

Mayan Ruins

The Cayo District is in the heart of the Mayan highlands, with several major ruins and cave systems used by the ancient residents of this region. The most impressive are Xunantunich(on Benque Viejo Rd.), El Pilar(near Bullet Tree Falls Village), and Caracol(deep in the Mountain Pine Ridge area), but true Maya-philes can keep busy visiting a host of sites in this area. Close by, in Guatemala, lies Tikal, perhaps one of the best excavated and most impressive Mayan cities in Mesoamerica.

Cahal Pech-- High on a hill to the southwest of downtown San Ignacio are the Mayan ruins of Cahal Pech. Although compact, there are actually seven plazas here, as well as numerous residences. temples, and a couple of ball courts. Formerly the home of Mayan royals, this site has received some meticulous restoration. The restoration created a bit of controversy in town because parts of the ruins were restored to an approximation of the way they were supposed to have looked when they were first built, which is a bit more polished and modern-looking than most people like their ruins. However, the setting is beautiful, with tall old trees shading the site's main plaza and pyramid. Tip: Be sure to climb the small B4 pyramid, on your left near the entrance to the site. Though diminutive, it offers excellent views of the Macal River.

The name Cahal Pech means the "Place of the Family of Pech" (Pech means "tick" in Mayan). The name was given to the site in the 1950s when there were quite a few ticks in the area. The ruins date back to between 650 and 900, though many think that the site was used prior to this time as well.

At the entrance, you'll find a small museum that displays a collection of artifacts recovered from the site and provides insight into the Cahal Pech social structure. It also has a small model of the old city, as well as a skeleton recovered from one of the graves here.

Admission to the museum and ruins is BZ \$10(US\$5/£2.65), and the site is open daily from 8am to 5pm. Be sure to ask for a copy of the informative guide to the site. To reach Cahal Pech, walk or drive up toward the San Ignacio Resort Hotel, continuing on around the curve for a few hundred yards until you pass the soccer field. Turn left here and climb the hill towards the ruins. The entrance to the ruins is beyond a large



thatched building that houses the Cahal Pech disco. It's about a 20-minute walk.

Xunantunich-- Although you may have trouble pronouncing it(say"Zoo-nahntoo-neetch"), Xunantunich is an impressive, well excavated, and easily accessible Mayan site. The name translates as "Maiden of the Rocks." The main pyramid here, El Castillo, rises to 39m(127 ft.) and is clearly visible from the Western Highway as you approach. It's a steep climb, but the view from the top is amazing-- don't miss it. You'll be able to make out the twin border towns of Bengue Viejo, Belize, and Melchor de Menchos, Guatemala. On the east side of the pyramid, near the top, is a remarkably well-preserved stucco frieze.

Down below in the temple forecourt. archaeologists found three magnificent stelae portraying rulers of the region. These have been moved to the protection of the small, on-site museum, yet the years and ravages of weather have made most of the carvings difficult to decipher. Xunantunich was a thriving Mayan city about the same time as Altun Ha, in the Classic Period, about 600 to 900.

The visitor center at the entrance contains a beautiful scale model of the old city. as well as a replica of the original frieze. Open daily from 8am to 4pm, the site charges an admission of BZ\$10(US\$5/ £2.65). Xunantunich is located 10km(6 1/2 miles) past San Ignacio on the road to Benque Viejo. To reach the ruins, you must cross the Mopan River aboard a tiny hand-cranked car-ferry in the village of San José Succotz. You may be able to watch colorfully dressed women washing clothes in the river as you are cranked across by the ferryman. After crossing the river, it is a short, but dusty and vigorous, uphill walk to the ruins. If you've got your own vehicle, you can take it across on the ferry and drive right to the ruins. To get here by bus, take any bus bound for Benque Viejo and get off in San José Succotz.

Chechem Ha-- This ancient Mayan burial cave was discovered by accident when a local hunter, Antonio Morales, went chasing after his errant dog. When the cave was explored, a cache of Mayan artifacts,

including many large, fully preserved pots, was discovered. Archaeologists estimate the relics could have been placed here over 2,000 years ago. This cave is one of only two in the area with an elaborate altar used for ceremonial purposes by the religious and ruling classes.

The cave is located 16km(10 miles) south of Bengue Viejo, on a dirt road that is recommended only for four-wheel-drive vehicles. Chechem Ha. which means "Cave of Poisonwood Water," is privately owned by the Morales family, and admission is only allowed with a prearranged guided tour. Ideally, you should make a reservation in advance, although it's often hard to contact and confirm with the Morales family; their phone number is tel. 820-4063. If you receive no response, you can usually drive out to the entrance any morning and arrange the tour directly with the Morales family beforehand. The cost of a 45-minute tour is BZ\$60(US\$30/£16) for up to three people, if you book directly. Local hotels and tour companies also offer this trip, but charge a little bit more. You can also visit Chechem Ha on an organized tour with one of the local agencies working with the Morales family. Almost every hotel and tour agency in the area can arrange this for you, although they tend to charge a little bit more for their efforts.

A short hike from the entrance, the Chechem Ha Falls make a refreshing spot to wash and cool off after clambering around inside the caves. Also close to Chechem Ha is Vaca Falls, a beautiful and remote waterfall that's often combined with a visit to the cave, though it's a destination in its own right.

River Tours

For much of Belize's history, the rivers were the main highways. The Maya used them for trading, and British loggers used them to move mahogany and logwood. If you're interested, you can explore the Cayo District's two rivers-- the Macal and Mopan-- by canoe, kayak, and inner tube. Throughout most of the year, the waters in these rivers are easily navigable both upand downstream. However, during the rainy season, things can change drastically-- and

fast. I've heard of a few flash floods, and even one story of water nearly reaching the road on the Hawksworth Bridge.

Still, for the most part, trips are leisurely, with plenty of places to stop for a quick swim or land excursion. During the rainy season(July-Sept), white-water kayaking is available, although it's not very consistent. Inflatable kayaks are a much more common and dependable option, not requiring nearly as much technical proficiency or water.

Most tours put in upstream on the Macal River somewhere around Chaa Creek or duPlooy's and then float leisurely downstream. The trip can take anywhere from 1 to 3 hours, depending on how much time you spend paddling, floating, or stopping to hike or swim. Both of these hotels offer this service, as well as a host of operators in San Ignacio. For its part, the Mopan River is more easily accessible in many ways, since Benque Viejo Road borders it in many places. The Mopan is well suited for inflatable kayaks and inner tubes.

In addition to most of the tour operators listed above, you can contact Toni's River Adventures(tel. 824-3292) or David's Adventure Tours(tel. 824-3674). If you want to go inner tubing, contact the folks at the Trek Stop(tel. 823-2265; www.thetrekstop.com).

Both of Cayo's principal rivers are great for swimming. On the Macal River you can join the locals right in town where the river is treated as a free laundry, car wash, horse and dog wash, and swimming hole. However, you'll do better to head upstream. The farther upstream you head, the more isolated and clear the swimming holes become.

Another alternative is to head downriver about 2.4km(1 1/2 miles) to a spot called Branch Mouth, where the different-colored waters of the Macal and Mopan rivers converge. Branch Mouth is a favorite picnic spot, with shady old trees clinging to the riverbanks. There's even a rope swing from one of the trees. The road is dusty, so you'll be especially happy to go for a swim here. Farther upstream, on both the Macal and



Mopan rivers, are numerous swimming holes.

River Race-- While it's still possible to navigate the Belize River all the way to Belize City-- the Macal and Mopan rivers join and become the Belize River -- this is not generally something tourists get to do. Still, each year in early March, scores of three-person canoe teams undertake the long 290km(180-mile) paddle from San Ignacio to Belize City in the Ruta Maya Belize River Challenge. Teams gather in San Ignacio below the Hawksworth Bridge on March 5, and thousands of people line the banks of the river for the start. The finish line, fittingly enough, is the Swing Bridge in Belize City. It takes between 3 and 4 days to complete the course, with the teams scheduled to arrive in Belize City on or around Baron Bliss Day, on March 9.

Belize Botanic Gardens

Located next to duPloov's and run by the same family, the Belize Botanic Gardens(tel. 824-3101; www.belizebotanic.org) is a sprawling collection of local and imported tropical fauna. They have an excellent mix of fruit trees, palms, bromeliads, and bamboos, all well laid out whether you are taking a self-guided or guided tour. The orchid house is not to be missed, with its beautiful collection of orchids and sculpted waterfall wall. The gardens are open daily from 7am to 5pm. Admission is BZ\$10(US\$5/£2.65). Guided tours cost BZ\$20(US\$10/£5.30) per person, including the entrance fee. You can also buy a helpful self-guided tour booklet for BZ\$15(US\$7.50/£4), and even take a leisurely horse and buggy ride through the lovely gardens for BZ\$20(US\$10/£5.30) per person.

Barton Creek Cave

This is one of the area's easier and more relaxing caves to explore. The trip is conducted entirely by canoe, and while there are a few tight squeezes and areas with low ceilings, in general you won't get as wet(you'll stay dry, in fact) or claustrophobic here as you will at many of the other caves in Belize. Located beside a small Mennonite community, Barton Creek is navigable for nearly a mile inside

the cave. Along the way, by the light of headlamps and strong flashlights, you'll see wonderful natural formations, a large gallery, and numerous Mayan artifacts, including several skeletons, believed to be the remains of ritual sacrifices. One skull sits so prominently atop a natural bridge that it's likely that a local tour operator moved it there to heighten the dramatic effect. You can climb along the dry edges of the cave in certain parts.

There's a BZ\$10(US\$5/£2.65) fee to visit the site, but that doesn't include the canoe trip or transportation. If you drive there yourself, you can hire a canoe that holds two passengers, plus the guide, for around BZ\$30 to BZ\$40(US\$15-US\$20/£7.95-£11). Tours out of San Ignacio average around BZ\$60 to BZ\$120(US\$30-US\$60/£16-£32) per person, not including the entrance fee. Barton Creek Cave is located just off the Pine Ridge Road, about 6.4km(4 miles) from the Western Highway. Visits to Barton Creek Cave are often combined with a stop at the Green Hills Butterfly Ranch.

The Rainforest Medicine Trail

Located directly between the Chaa Creek and the Macal River Jungle Camp, this is the former Ix Chel Farm, which was set up by Drs. Rosita Arvigo and Greg Shropshire. Rosita studied traditional herbal medicine with Don Elijio Panti, a local Mayan medicine man and a folk hero in Belize. Panti died in February 1996 at the estimated age of 104. Here on the farm, they built a trail through the forest to share with visitors the fascinating medicinal values of many of the tropical forest's plants.

The farm boasts a small gift shop that features local crafts, T-shirts, and several relevant books, including a couple by Arvigo. You'll also find Ix Chel's line of herbal concentrates, salves, and teas called Rainforest Remedies.

Self-guided visits to the Medicine Trail, along with a tour of Chaa Creek's Natural History Museum, and a visit to their Blue Morpho Butterfly Breeding project cost BZ\$18(US\$9/£4.75). You can easily spend 3 hours visiting all three attractions. Guided tours of the Medicine trail are

also available. Call tel. 824-2037 for reservations.

Tropical Wings Nature Center

Located just off the main road, at Mile Marker 71 1/2 near the village of San José Succotz, is this small attraction. You'll find an enclosed butterfly garden with scores of brightly colored and varied species flitting about. There's also a butterfly breeding center, as well as an open-air medicinal plant nature trail. Hummingbird feeders ensure that you'll be buzzed by these frenetic, flighty creatures. This place is open daily from 9am to 5pm; admission is BZ\$6(US\$3/£1.60). Call tel. 823-2265 for more information.

Shopping

Orange Gift Shop& Gallery is probably the best-stocked gift shop in this region, if not the whole country, and can be found at Caesar's Place(tel. 824-2341; www.orangegifts.com) about 11km(7 miles) east of San Ignacio. However, I find the prices a bit high, and similar goods can be found less expensively at other shops. A good alternative in town is Arts& Crafts of Central America, 24 Burns Ave.(tel. 824-2253).

Throughout Belize, and especially in Cayo, you will see slate carvings of Mayan hieroglyphs. If you're in the area, it's worth a visit to one of the sources, the García Sisters. This family of artisans runs an interesting little museum-cum-craft shop. It's located outside of San Antonio village on the road to Mountain Pine Ridge. © 2000-2010 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Travel Tips

Planning a Trip **Getting There& Departing**

By Plane-- While there is an airstrip in San Ignacio(SQS), none of the local commuter airlines has regular service here.

By Car-- Take the Western Highway from Belize City. It's a straight shot all the way to San Ignacio. You'll come to the small town of Santa Elena first. Across the Macal River lies San Ignacio. If you're heading to San Ignacio and points west, a well-



marked detour will lead you through the town of Santa Elena to a Balley bridge that enters San Ignacio towards the north end of town. The more prominent and impressive Hawksworth Bridge is solely for traffic heading east out of San Ignacio towards Santa Elena, Belmopan, and Belize City.

By Bus-- San Ignacio has very frequent bus service from Belize City. Buses to San Ignacio leave roughly every half-hour from the main bus station on West Collet Canal Street between 5am and 8pm. Return buses to Belize City leave the main bus station in San Ignacio roughly every half-hour between 4am and 6pm. The fare is BZ\$10(US\$5/£2.65). The trip takes 2 1/2 hours. Most of the western-bound buses continue on beyond San Ignacio to Benque Viejo and the Guatemalan border.

Getting Around

The downtown center of San Ignacio is quite compact and easily navigated by foot. If you want to visit any of the major attractions listed below, you'll probably have to find transportation. Frequent buses will take you to the entrances to most of the hotels listed below on Benque Viejo Road, as well as within walking distance of the Xunantunich ruins. Infrequent buses(ask around town or at the bus station; tel. 824-3360) do service the Mountain Pine Ridge area. However, if you don't have your own vehicle, you will probably need to take some taxis or go on organized tours.

As in the rest of Belize, roads are minimal, and almost everything can be found on or just off the Western Highway, or the road through Mountain Pine Ridge. Numerous

buses ply the main road between Belmopan and San Ignacio, continuing on to the border town of Benque Viejo del Carmen. If you want to drive yourself, particularly anywhere off the main highway, a fourwheel-drive vehicle is recommended.

You can rent a car from Cayo Rentals(tel. 824-2222; www.cayoautorentals.com) or Matus Car Rental(tel. 824-2005; www.matuscarrental.com). A small four-wheel-drive vehicle here should run you around BZ\$150-BZ\$200(US\$75-US\$100/£40-£53) per day.

If you need a cab, call the Cayo Taxi Association(tel. 824-2196) or San Ignacio Taxi Stand(tel. 824-2155). Taxi fares around the Cayo District should run you as follows: BZ\$6(US\$3/£1.60) around town, BZ\$18(US\$9/£4.75) between San Ignacio and Bullet Tree Falls, and BZ\$55(US\$23/£12) between San Ignacio and Chaa Creek or duPlooy's. Collective taxis run regularly between downtown San Ignacio and the border at Benque Viejo; the fare is BZ\$6(US\$3.20) per person.

Orientation

San Ignacio is on the banks of the Macal River, on the western side of an old metal bridge across from its sister city of Santa Elena. Across the single-lane Hawksworth Bridge is a traffic circle and a Shell gas station. Downtown San Ignacio is to the north on Burns Avenue, and the San Ignacio Hotel is located south up a steep hill on Buena Vista Road. Most of the hotels and restaurants in town are on or within a block of Burns Avenue. The road to Benque Viejo del Carmen, Xunantunich ruins, and the Guatemalan border branches off Buena

Vista Road. This is actually a continuation of the Western Highway.

Fast Facts-- There are several banks located right in the heart of downtown San Ignacio: Atlantic Bank, at Burns Avenue and Columbus Park(tel. 824-2347); Scotiabank, at Burns Avenue and Riverside Street(tel. 824-4190); and Belize Bank, 16 Burns Ave.(tel. 824-2031).

To reach the police, dial tel. 911 or 824-2022; for the fire department, dial tel. 824-2095. The San Ignacio Hospital is located on Simpson Street, on the western side of town(tel. 824-2066). The post office(tel. 824-2049) is located on Hudson Street, near the corner of Waight's Avenue.

For film or developing, head to Belicolor Photo Service on Hudson Street(tel. 824-3549). If you need eyeglass repair or help, head to the Hoy Eye Center, 4 Far West St.(tel. 824-4101). The succinctly named The Pharmacy(tel. 824-2510) is located on West Street. If you need laundry done and your hotel doesn't offer the service or charges too much, you can drop off your dirty clothes at Martha's Guesthouse, 10 West St.(tel. 804-3647), for same-day service at about BZ\$12(US \$6/£3.20) per load.

If you need to log on, head to Eva's Restaurant, 22 Burns Ave.(tel. 804-2267); or the Café Sol, Far West St.(tel. 824-2166). Both offer a few computers with high-speed Internet connections. Eva's is one of the most popular restaurants and meeting places in town, while the Café Sol also offers free Wi-Fi. © 2000-2010 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

