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## **MAYA CENTER, BELIZE**

**Travel Dates: April 24 May 7, 2024**

note that travel occurs over convocation weekend

**ISL Leader: tba**

**Fee: \$3800 \*(funding available)**

*Belize (formerly British Honduras) is bordered to the south and west by Guatemala, to the north by Mexico, and to the east by the Caribbean Sea. Now a diverse society composed of many cultures, Belize was once part of the Mayan empire. Colonized by both the English and Spanish, Belize gained independence in 1981.*

*Savanna, scrubland, wetland, and subtropical rainforest constitute extensive parts of the land resulting in rich biodiversity, both marine and terrestrial, with a host of flora and fauna. The Maya Mountains and the Cockscomb Range form the backbone of the southern half of the country.*

*The climate is subtropical, tempered by trade winds and generally very hot and humid with the rainy season lasting from June through November.*

Immersion students will be hosted by the village of Maya Center, a Mayan village of approximately 300 people, located in southern Belize. Activities will focus on Mayan culture and the experiences of local people following the expropriation of their land. A visit to a nearby beach, play time with village children, and a visit to the local herbalist will provide further opportunities to interact with the people of Maya Center. In addition, there will be hiking in a local nature reserve, discussion sessions with community leaders, a visit to caves, and cultural evening. Several days will be spent at the Belize Zoo and Tropical Education Center whose focus is on the preservation of Belize's natural resources

### **Transportation**

Participants fly from Halifax to Belize City where they are met by our hosts. Travel in country is by bus or shuttle. Travel may include forced overnights (hotels are provided)

### **Housing and Meals**

The group stays in modest, one room or dormitory style accommodations, with 2-6 participants per room. Accommodations are adequate but simple and participants may be required to share a double bed. All meals will be provided by hosts and focus on local foods as part of the immersion experience. Rice, beans, tortillas, and chicken are the main food items. Menu is preset; students will NOT have a choice of foods.

### **Service Placements and Group Sessions**

Through service projects in the village of Maya Center and its school, students will deepen their awareness of community development and gain an understanding of the hopes, efforts, and obstacles faced by this small Mayan community. Service learning experience will also take place at the Tropical Education Center and Belize Zoo, where students may be involved in trail management or other maintenance activities.

***English is spoken widely in Belize. Knowledge of a second language is not needed.***

- Apr 24-25** Flight to Belize City (may include forced overnight enroute) The group will be met at the Belize City airport by staff from the Tropical Education Center. Transport to Tropical Education Center and Belize Zoo, settle in to accommodations, night tour of the zoo.
- Apr 26-27** Days spent providing service at the Tropical Education Center and Zoo, evening speaker and group reflection, and (**Day 4**) preparation for morning departure to Maya Center.
- Apr 28** Travel to Belmopan, St. Herman's Caves, and a swim in the Blue Hole. Continue on to explore Xunantunich Maya ruins. Arrival at Maya Center, welcome talk by Gregorio Chun. A short walk around the village.
- Apr 29** Community introductions. Visit school.
- Apr 30** Full day spent at Cockscomb Wildlife Reserve hiking, learning about local flora and fauna. Visit Ben's Bluff viewpoint for waterfall swim, followed by an afternoon inner tube float down the river. Evening reflection.
- Ma 1** National Holiday in Belize (May 1<sup>st</sup> is Labour Day ) Community Project.
- May 2** Arts and crafts day at community school
- May 3** Visit and talks with Local medicinal herbalist visit and Butterfly Farm. Afternoon at Hopkins Beach
- May 4** Walk to cocoa farm. Morning plantation tour and chocolate processing. Afternoon talk with local women's group business initiative.
- May 5** Finish Project. Cultural celebration-evening farewell.
- May 6** Morning shuttle transfer to Belize City for return flight
- May 7** Arrive home

\* GSO funding, ISL bursaries, and ISL endowment funds are available.

[Bursary Application here >>](#)



Please note this schedule is **subject to change** based on a number of factors. Flight delays, available space and staff at facilities, to name a few factors, all play a role in the scheduling process. The order of events in Maya Center may change based on community need and the May 1<sup>st</sup> holiday. Students should be prepared to be flexible.