



# RAMBLES AROUND BELIZE 2009

By LAN SLUDER

Photos by Rose Lambert-Sluder

This summer's Rambles Around Belize took me back to many of my old haunts and to a few places I'd never been before. Here are my perspectives on Belize in 2009.

## THIS DAMNED RECESSION

The USA-led recession seems to have reached to every corner of Belize. It's particularly being felt at those nexus points where America touches Belize most directly – in tourism and real estate.

**TOURISM SUCKS:** It will come as no surprise to anyone that tourism is down significantly in Belize. I'm not sure anyone knows by exactly how much. The Belize Tourism Board produces its reports, but I'm unconvinced that they paint a complete picture, due in part to the fact that not all lodging properties are surveyed, and while air arrivals are a useful yardstick they don't tell you how many room nights each arrival represents. My own estimate is that tourism is down around 15% in Belize since those



*Market in Belmopan*

*PHOTO BY ROSE LAMBERT-SLUDER*

scary days a year ago when Lehman Bros. collapsed and it looked like most of the world was heading for economic hell. But the numbers vary from place to place and also by the kind of place. For example, hardest hit seem to be the upscale resorts and lodges. Some of them are down 20 to 25%, or more, though there are exceptions; on the day I visited **Victoria House** in San Pedro I was told the hotel was full. Many midscale and budget places, however, are holding their own. Several owners told me their modest hotels were having their best year yet. It seems that some guests are trading down. They still want to come to Belize, but instead of paying US\$250 a night they're finding a place that costs US\$100.

The owners of **Corozal Bay Resort** in Corozal Town, for example, say occupancy percentages for their 10 cabañas ranged from the high 40s to low 90s for the months from December 2008 to April 2009. **Banana Beach** in San Pedro said that reducing rates starting last fall has helped them keep occupancies up near their traditional high levels. When I spoke to **Barnacle Bill** in June, he said his cottages in Maya Beach are up for the year.

Hotel profits are probably down more than occupancy, because some owners have had to discount rates or forego price increases in the face of stiff price resistance by guests. Operating costs, however, are up. So owners are squeezed between higher costs and lower occupancies.

More hotels than ever are actively for sale in Belize now. A number of properties are closing not just for a few weeks of maintenance in September and October but for much of the summer and fall. A few condotels and co-ops reportedly have decided to stop accepting outside guests, taking only owners and their friends and family.

**REAL ESTATE SALES ARE PUNK:** Real estate sales in Belize are slow, and that's the truth. Particularly hard hit are condos sales. A few quality properties, such as **The Phoenix** and **Grand Caribe**, both on Ambergris Caye, seem to be doing okay, but in general condo sales are just plain bad. Some developments are postponing or canceling planned additional construction. Several look like they're ready to shut down. Lot sales at real estate developments all over the country also are suffering. Those that are offering their own financing seem to be doing better. People continue to buy small acreage plots in Cayo and elsewhere, but there's still a lot more inventory than demand. On the other hand, prices don't seem to have fallen that much in Belize. Sellers are accepting offers that are 10 to 15% below what they would like, but Belize hasn't seen the collapse in prices that took place in parts of the USA, such as Las Vegas, Phoenix, most of Florida, in Spain and in parts of Eastern Europe.

**THE GOOD NEWS:** The good news is that the recession has bottomed out in the USA and in many other countries. We're starting to see a modest rebound, and this should show up in Belize soon.

## NEW AND NOTABLE

Here are a few new and notable developments and changes that have taken place in the past year or so:

**NEW SWIMMING POOLS:** The new pool at **The Lodge at Chaa Creek** is gorgeous! It's a little more than a year old, but there's also a new pool at **Blancaneaux Lodge**, where the croquet court used to be. The new pool at **Banana Bank** is beside a new building that will house a bar and grill, along with Carolyn Carr's studio and a meeting area. Jeff and Viv have built a second pool at their place on North Ambergris, **Azul Resort**, this one for use of guests dining at **Rojo Lounge & Market**. Also on Ambergris Caye, **Caribbean Villas** and **Portofino** have beautiful new pools. **Pedro's Backpacker Inn** in San Pedro has expanded and also added a pool. **Maya Beach Hotel** in Maya Beach has a new pool, right next to the expanded beachfront restaurant. **Caye Caulker Condos** on Caye Caulker also has added a pool. By my count, there are now five pools at hotels on the island.

**NEW HOTELS:** With the economic downturn, not too many new properties have opened in Belize. One great new choice is **Mystic River** on the Macal River, off the Cristo Rey Road, in Cayo. Caye Caulker is a new hotel construction hotspot, with **Pancho's Villas** and **Cayereef Condos** opening recently. **Siesta Inn** in Belize City offers secure rooms at modest prices on the Northern Highway. **Thatch Caye** is a popular new island resort in the Cocoplum Range. **Crooked Tree Lodge** in Crooked Tree is a rebuilt lodge on the site of the old Paradise Lodge. **Almond Tree** on Gringo Trail in Corozal Town and **Serenity Sands B&B** near Consejo offer much-needed new upscale (but still very affordable) options in Corozal District.

**NEW RESTAURANTS:** I talk about eating in Belize elsewhere in these rambles, but among the interesting new crop of restaurants are **Danube** and **Rumfish y Vino** in





*View of the Barrier Reef from Azul Resort*

*PHOTO BY ROSE LAMBERT-SLUDER*

Placencia, along with the new night spot, **Eclipse**; **Red Ginger**, **Hidden Treasure**, **Pinocchio's**, **Aji Tapa**, **Lazy Croc** and **Sunset Grill** (whose chef won Taste of Belize 2009) on Ambergris Caye; **Femi's** in Caye Caulker; **Mom's Place** in Cayo; **Venky's** and **La Casa** in Corozal Town; **Nahil Mayab** in Orange Walk Town; **Thongs** in Hopkins; and **Earth Runnin's** in Punta Gorda has reopened.

**NEW MUSEUMS AND ATTRACTIONS:** **Cotton Tree Chocolates** has a tiny "factory" with chocolate-making tours in Punta Gorda. **Traveller's Liquors Heritage Center** is a great little rum museum on the Northern Highway in Belize City. While not new, **Noj Kaax Panti National Park**, the 13,000-acre park in Cayo, is finally starting to take shape, with a visitor center currently accessible on horseback or on foot.

**CHANGING:** **White Sands Cove** and **Belize Legacy**, both on North Ambergris, reportedly are no longer taking reservations, except for owners. Belize Legacy is closed until November. **Auxillou Suites** is now a part of **Tina's**, the hostel next door. The **French Bakery** in San Pedro is closing but will be in business in San Ignacio.

## **HEY, WHERE'S THE ELEVATOR?**

As I get older and fatter, and especially when my rheumatoid arthritis flares up, I really notice the fact that Belize is not very friendly to those with mobility issues or other physical challenges. It seems like buildings all over Belize are growing new flights of stairs. Every time I have to tour a hotel it I have to go up and down, up and down, up and

down. My cardiologist would approve, I guess. Handicap-accessible hotels, restaurants and government buildings hardly exist. Elevators are rare as hen's teeth. There are a few in Belize – in the **Radisson Fort George**, for example, and a new one is going in at **Grand Caribe** development on North Ambergris; **Corona del Mar** had the first elevator on the island.

The fact is that while Belize is still a country of the young, with a median age of only around 20 years, much of the rest of the world -- including the U.S., Canada, most of Europe and Japan -- is growing older. The U.S. alone has almost 80 million baby boomers, many of whom are now reaching their 60s and before long will start using ramps, walkers and wheelchairs. A word to the wise for businesses in Belize that market to the U.S. and other aging countries – especially hotels and condo developments: Spend the money to make your buildings accessible to those with physical limitations. It'll pay off in years to come.

## A GOOD CUP OF JOE

It's easier now than it used to be to get a decent cup o' java in Belize, but Belize still has a long way to go in the coffee category. Although a few places offer excellent Guatemalan and other imported coffees, and a few like **Blancaneaux Lodge** and **Hidden Valley Inn** grow and roast their own coffee, or like **Hickatee Cottages** in PG offer local coffee, you often have to make do with instant Nescafe and powered creamer, or canned condensed milk. For some unknown reason a lot of Belizeans like instant coffee. **Gallon Jug** coffee is a lot better than instant, but because it's grown at a low elevation it can't compete with the great coffees grown on the high hillsides of Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Panama. Belize's only specialty coffee roaster, Caye Coffee in San Pedro, has closed.

## THE CALCULUS OF VALUE

There's no point in arguing whether Belize is an expensive or inexpensive place to visit or live. That argument, for all practical purposes, has already been lost. Rightly or wrongly, most people perceive Belize as expensive, at least in comparison with other countries in Central America. It's difficult if not impossible to change their minds. That's a shame, too, because Belize has some terrific values. For travelers, there are many small hotels and inns with big time charm and Motel 6 prices (or lower). I'm missing many, but just to pick out a few that I've stayed at or visited recently: **Hickatee Cottages** in PG; **D'Nest Inn** in Belize City; **Casa Blanca Guesthouse**, **Martha's Guesthouse**, **Aguada Hotel** and **The Trek Stop** in and around San Ignacio; just about any place in Corozal Town and environs, including **Sea Breeze Hotel**, **Corozal Bay Resort**, the new **Serenity Sands B&B**, **Copa Banana**, **Las Palmas**, and others; **Candelie's Seaside Cabañas** in Sarteneja; **Cerros Bay Resort** near Copper Bank; **Hotel de la Fuente** in Orange Walk Town; **Deb & Dave's Last Resort** in Placencia; **Maya Beach Hotel** in Maya Beach; **Hopkins Inn** in Hopkins ... and many more.

In terms of living costs, Belize still has some of the least expensive land in North or Central America (though there also is overpriced land). A house doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg, either, especially if you build instead of buy. On much of the mainland, you can still build a nice concrete house for US\$50 a square foot. Fruits and vegetables in markets also are a great buy. Ditto for dining out. There are many places around the



*Closed office at Five Blues National Park*

*PHOTO BY ROSE LAMBERT-SLUDER*

country where you can get a nice, simple meal of stew chicken or fry chicken for US\$5 or 6. Bus travel in Belize is an excellent value, and water taxis generally are inexpensive, too.

But there's a lot in Belize that simply isn't a good value. In some cases this has to do with government taxes or import duties, but in other cases it's because businesses deal with low volume not by becoming more competitive but by raising prices over and over again. A few examples that stand out like sore thumbs, and contribute to the perception of Belize being expensive:

**Beer:** Import restrictions and protections for the Bowen monopoly -- despite the recent relaxation on imports of Jamaica's Red Stripe, St. Kitt's Heineken and other CARICOM beer -- mean that you pay US\$2.50-\$4 for a Belikin in a bar and as much as US\$10 for a "six-pack" (if there were such a thing in Belize) in a grocery.

**Car Rentals:** I know all the arguments about bad roads and high import duties, but the fact is that car rental prices in Belize are outrageous. You can rent a jalopy with 100,000 miles in Belize for US\$95 a day, or go down the road to Santa Elena/Flores in Guatemala and rent a nearly new vehicle for US\$25 to \$65 a day.

**Gasoline:** Due to high government taxes, gas and diesel in Belize are roughly twice as costly as in neighboring countries.



**Overpriced Resorts:** While as noted there are plenty of great values in the budget and mid-priced categories, there are resorts and lodges that have gone way too far in raising room prices. It's not at all unusual now to see rooms for US\$400, US\$500 or more at beach resorts and jungle lodges. Add 9% hotel tax and 10% service, and you're looking at New York, London, Paris or Tokyo price levels. Some doubtless are worth it, but others aren't. To charge many hundreds of U.S. dollars for a room you've got to have a heck of a product – stunning location, first-class service, an experience that can't be duplicated anywhere else. I constantly hear from would-be travelers to Belize who are shocked at hotel prices they've seen on the internet.

**Shuttles:** Tourists view transportation from Belize City to lodges and hotels, especially in the San Ignacio area, as a rip-off. Often lodges charge US\$125 to \$200 or more for one-way transfers. True, it's usually the same price for up to four persons, but quite often there is only a couple going.

**Children Aren't Free:** In the U.S. and Canada, the source of about three-fourths of Belize's overnight tourism, most hotels and motels have a "children under 18 stay free" policy. Often, younger children enjoy discounts on tours, admissions and even meals. In Belize, with rare exceptions, this is not the case. Policies vary, but usually children over 11 or 12 pay full freight for meals and tours and are counted as extra persons in hotel rooms. For a family of four, this can really add up, and I have no doubt this decreases the number of families traveling to Belize.

**Expensive Meals at Lodges and Remote Resorts:** When you include 10% tax and 10% to 15% service, dinners at some lodges and remote dive resorts are US\$40 to \$50 per person or more, not including drinks. While New Yorkers may not find this a bad deal, many travelers – especially families – do. I'd like to see more properties offer alternative menus for children and those with lighter appetites and wallets. Keep the BZ\$80 three-course dinner but add some lighter and less expensive items.

## EATING MY WAY AROUND BELIZE

I ate my way around Belize this summer and rarely had a bad or even a mediocre meal. Here are some highlights:

### SAN PEDRO

A lot of new places have opened on Ambergris Caye, including these:

**Pinocchio's** is attracting a local crowd and, I suspect, will soon get a bunch of hungry visitors, too. It serves authentic Italian food (the owners are from Rome), including antipasto with salami and cheeses imported from Italy (BZ\$30). I loved the fettuccine with Italian sausage (BZ\$28) -- *complimenti al cuoca!* Good pizza, too, from a wood oven. (Note: It's closed until October for vacation.)

**Aji**, on North Ambergris near Grand Caribe about 2 1/2 miles from the center of town, has delicious tapas, along with other dishes, not to mention a lovely al fresco setting on the water.

The **Lazy Croc**, also in the same area, serves real slow-cooked barbecue. It's open only on weekends.



*Rum barrels at new Traveller's Heritage Center*

*PHOTO BY ROSE LAMBERT-SLUDER*

With its minimalist decor and cold air-conditioning, **Red Ginger** could be in Los Angeles instead of San Pedro, but I enjoyed dinner. Just wish the chef would leave well enough alone. My beautiful, tender, and huge grilled lobster tails with mashed potatoes and broccoli (nicely priced at BZ\$55) would have been wonderful if served as nature intended rather than overloaded with herbs.

**Hidden Treasure**, which has been open for a year or so, has amazing ribs and a lot of other good dishes. The setting at night, with kerosene lamps on tables and lit sconces, is delightful.

I also revisited some old favorites, including **Rojo Lounge and Market** (always hip and fabulous), **El Divino** (always comfortable and friendly, with good steaks) and **Blue Water Grill** (best coconut shrimp in the world, BZ\$22). Our appetizers at **Wild Mango's** also were pretty good.

### **CAYE CAULKER**

**Rose's** is small but special. You can't go wrong there. **Habaneros** is still good, and it now has a less pricey outpost down the street. For tasty food and a sea view, **Femi's** and **Rainbow Grill & Bar** are good choices. **Wish-Willy's** has the best prices in town, both for meals and drinks.



## ORANGE WALK TOWN

**Nahil Mayab** in Orange Walk Town -- what a great new place! Lovely and not overdone Maya-themed decor, good service and the best ceviche I've had in years, only BZ\$6 for an appetizer serving of shrimp ceviche, beautifully presented and really big enough for two.

## COROZAL TOWN

**Y Not** at Tony's Inn in Corozal Town (Tony's spelled backwards, get it?) Always the best fajitas in Belize, in a pleasant, breezy bayside setting.

**Patti's Bistro** in Corozal Town -- where you can eat your fill of fried chicken, pork chops, stew chicken and other local dishes for literally almost nothing. What a bargain! Other favorites in Corozal include **Vamps**, **Venky's**, **Miss June's** and **Purple Toucan**.

## HOPKINS

**Barracuda Bar & Restaurant** at Beaches and Dreams, Hopkins -- the restaurant was closed the night we were there, but Tony invited us for appetizers, which were delicious. Local spots like **Innies** and **Iris's** are a bargain, and if you want Indian food you won't be disappointed in **Taste of India**. **Thongs** is a new spot.

## PLACENCIA

**Bistro at Maya Beach Hotel**, Maya Beach -- still one of the best restaurants in Belize, with lots of interesting new things on the menu. The Bistro has been expanded, with more seats with a view of the beach and the new hotel pool.

**French Connection**, Placencia Village -- their new location next to the police station is going to be terrific. We loved the snapper and grouper. Tha-ank you!

Chef Frank DaSilva at the **Inn at Robert's Grove** in Seine Bight turns out consistency at a high standard. Everything is perfectly prepared, and that's something you rarely can say about a restaurant in Belize. And the Saturday night barbecue, with heaps of lobster tails, shrimps, fish, chicken and all the fixings, is unsurpassed.

We only had drinks at **Rumfish y Vino**, Placencia Village, but the food looked enticing, and the setting was appealing. Another new spot, **Danube**, has delicious Austrian food.

**Wendy's**, in its new location, is still pretty good but a lot more expensive than it used to be. **Omar's**, an old favorite in the budget category formerly on the sidewalk has a new spot on the main road. A new bakery in Placencia is **Sweet Dreams**, on the sidewalk.

**Tutti Frutti**, Placencia Village -- it's worth a trip to Placencia just to try the gelati here, the best between at least New York City and Buenos Aires, maybe the best anywhere outside Italy.

## CAYO

**Mystic River Lodge**, Cristo Rey Road near San Ignacio -- one of the best jungle lodge dinners I've ever had in Belize.

Another delicious jungle meal I enjoyed was at **Pook's Hill** near Belmopan. Here it's serve buffet style, but it's healthful, well-prepared and in bountiful quantities.



*Kate and Ian Morton and friend at Hickatee Cottages* PHOTO BY ROSE LAMBERT-SLUDER

In San Ignacio, Hannah's is now called **Ko-Ox Han-Nah** and remains one of my favorites in town, along with **Hode's**. **Mom's Place** is also good.

### **PUNTA GORDA**

**Hickatee Cottages** -- we had the best breakfast on the entire trip. Kate is a wonderful cook, and Hickatee is a wonderful place to stay, at very reasonable rates. **Earth Runnin's** has reopened and has a nice Rasta vibe. **Gomier's** is great if you can find it open. **Mangrove Inn** has a homey atmosphere (you enter the restaurant literally through the owner's home), and **Marian's Bayview** has good food but a very limited menu, with only a couple of dishes on a given night. I still like **Grace's**, especially for breakfast. The new chef at **Machaca Hill**, who came from Africa, is doing interesting things, and the setting, especially the tables on the verandah with views of the jungle and the Gulf of Honduras in the distance, can't be beat.

### **BELIZE CITY**

I can't overlook the cheeseburger and fries at **Riverside Tavern** in Belize City. In my book, and I know my beefburgers, this is the best in Belize. Even the 6 oz. version is a mouthful (BZ\$16 with fries). And of course the beer is fresh and cold.

**Coldest beer in Belize:** Pedro's Inn in San Pedro (Full disclosure: Owner Peter Lawrence bought me a Belikin.) Cheapest beer this trip: A 12 oz. Bravo at a little cafe in Flores, Guatemala -- 6 quetzales or about 78 U.S. cents. Cheapest local rum drink -- BZ\$2 at **Wish-Willy's** on Caye Caulker.

Speakin' of drinkin', don't miss the new **Traveller's Rum Museum or Heritage Center** on the Northern Highway in Belize City. It's small, and free, but it's full of history and interesting displays, and you can get free samples of all kinds of Traveller's offerings.

**Best French fries:** At **Pelican Beach** in Dangriga. Crispy on the outside, soft and with a real potato taste inside. And the ketchup was thick, not the watered stuff you get at some restaurants.



## HIGHLIGHTS OF MY RAMBLES

This is not a travelogue, but here are a few highlights of this summer's rambles around Belize, along with miscellaneous news. Where hotel room rates are shown, they are for a double in high season and include room tax and service, if any. For a change, let's start with Punta Gorda, down in the Deep South.

### PUNTA GORDA

**Hickatee Cottages.** It's always a great pleasure to be back at Hickatee. A charming young British couple, Ian and Kate Morton, opened this delightful lodge at the edge of PG in 2005. The cottages -- a total of three rooms and one suite -- have zinc roofs and private verandas and are nestled in lush foliage. They're beautifully outfitted with locally made furniture and hardwood floors, and with bedspreads and curtains handmade by Kate. Dinner is around BZ\$35; a continental breakfast including fresh home-made rolls and breads is included, and a full cooked breakfast is BZ\$13. Morning tea or coffee (grown and roasted in Toledo) is delivered to your room. There's a small pool and a new





*High rise construction defines the “new” Placencia* PHOTO BY ROSE LAMBERT-SLUDER

botanical garden and nature area. Rates: US\$75-\$120. *Ex-Servicemen Rd., Punta Gorda.* Tel. 501-662/4475; [www.hickatee.com](http://www.hickatee.com)

**Machaca Hill Canopy Lodge.** New owners have upscaled this former fishing lodge on 12,000 acres. They renovated the main lodge, added a gorgeous spa, and are redoing the cottages. The new manager, Brian Gardiner, formerly ran safaris in Africa. Still, you have to wonder if Toledo is ready for this. All-inclusive packages including meals, drinks, taxes, and tours are an astounding US\$1,450 double per night, but lower, non-AI rates also are available. Tel. 501-722-0050; [www.machacahill.com](http://www.machacahill.com)

**Tranquility Lodge.** Sheila and Rusty Nale, who for many years managed the **Mayan Princess** in San Pedro, bought this small lodge and are upgrading it. All four rooms now have air-conditioning, flat-screen TVs, Wi-Fi, and even iPod docks. Rates start at US\$136. *San Felipe Rd., Jacintoville.* Tel. 800-819-9088; [www.tranquility-lodge.com](http://www.tranquility-lodge.com)

## **PLACENCIA**

As you drive down the Placencia Road, which is really and truly being paved (currently the surfacing is complete from Placencia village to around Maya Beach), passing what was formerly Calico Jack's, towering six-story buildings of the Copal Beach condominium development rise up out of the flat peninsula land, redefining, in a way that is almost unimaginable for those of us who knew it just a few years ago, the entire

peninsula. "For Sale" signs dot the roadside, supersized beach- and lagoon-side mansions are under construction, and several new condominium communities and resorts are open or are being planned. Placencia is changing, my friends.

**Maya Beach Hotel.** I wish Belize had more of this kind of small, unpretentious seafront hotel, with affordable rates. Most of the rooms are only steps from the water, and several have views of False Caye and the sea. A new addition is a swimming pool, on the beach. The Bistro restaurant is one of Belize's best. The restaurant recently was expanded, to provide more beachside seating. The Bistro has added a selection of small plates and appetizers including a shrimp corn dog and honey-coconut ribs, from BZ\$10 to BZ\$25. Hotel rates: US\$90 to \$155. *Maya Beach. Tel. 501-520-8040; 800-/503-5124 in U.S.; [www.mayabeachhotel.com](http://www.mayabeachhotel.com)*

**Inn at Robert's Grove.** I picked up a bug in Guatemala and was ill for a few days in Placencia. If you have to be sick in Belize, there's no better place than Robert's Grove. Owners Bob and Risa Frackman have been helpful and hospitable to me over the years, and I love staying here. I love to sit on the restaurant verandah, linger over my coffee at breakfast, and enjoy looking at the sea just steps away. Rates start around US\$225. *Seine Bight. Tel. 501-523-3565 or 800-565-9757 in U.S.; [www.robertsgrove.com](http://www.robertsgrove.com)*

## **BELIZE CITY**

**D'Nest Inn.** This is my favorite place to stay in Belize City. Located in Belama Phase 2, a safe, middle-class area between the international airport and downtown, D'Nest Inn is run by a friendly and helpful couple, Gaby and Oty Ake. The four guest rooms, all with air-conditioning, cable TV, and free Wi-Fi, are furnished with antiques. Gardens around the house are filled with hibiscus, frangipani, roses, and other blossoming plants. Rates of US\$65-\$75 include a delicious full breakfast. *475 Cedar St. Tel. 501-223-5416; [www.dnestinn.com](http://www.dnestinn.com)*

## **NORTHERN BELIZE**

**Crooked Tree Lodge.** Newly rebuilt and reopened on the site of the old Paradise Lodge, this lodge has five cabañas in a perfect location on the shores of the lagoon. A new main lodge building houses a restaurant. Rates: US\$75-\$109. *Crooked Tree. Tel. 501-626-3820; [www.crookedtreelodgebelize.com](http://www.crookedtreelodgebelize.com)*

**Serenity Sands B&B.** Hidden away off the Consejo Road north of Corozal Town, this is one of the most attractive B&Bs in Belize. On the second floor of a large new house, there are four tastefully decorated rooms with private balconies, Belizean art, and locally made hardwood furniture. Although not directly on the water, Serenity has a private beach on the bay a few hundred feet away. Delicious full breakfasts, mostly organic, are included. Rates: US\$83--\$98. *Mile 3, Consejo Rd. Tel. 501-669-2394; [www.serenitysands.com](http://www.serenitysands.com)*

**Candelie's Seaside Cabañas.** This is one of our favorite hideaways in Belize. We'd love to just come here for a few weeks and catch up on our reading. There are two seaside cottages at Candelie's: Wood Stork and Brown Pelican. The high-ceilinged cabins each have double beds, cable TV, and plenty of space. One has air-conditioning. Both are bargains, at US\$55 including tax. The two cottages, plus Krisami's next door,



*Boats on Corozal Bay*

*PHOTO BY ROSE LAMBERT-SLUDER*

share a private restaurant, where meals must be ordered in advance. *North Front St., Sarteneja Village, on the seafront at the west end of the village* Tel. 501-423-2005; [candeliescabanas@yahoo.com](mailto:candeliescabanas@yahoo.com)

**Mystic River Resort.** Built and operated by a couple who formerly lived on Ambergris Caye, this jungle resort a new upscale choice on the Macal. Mystic River's five cottages all have views of the river from covered porches, with fireplaces and stylish furnishings. At the lodge's restaurant, La Rinita (Little Frog), in a thatch palapa set above the river, you can enjoy Belizean, Thai and other dishes. Rates: US\$298. *Mile 6, Cristo Rey Rd., San Antonio Village*; tel. 501-678-6800; [www.mysticriverbelize.com](http://www.mysticriverbelize.com)

**Table Rock Lodge.** This ecolodge is located on a small working farm beside the Macal River. Landscaping began even before the lodge opened, and it shows. You can explore winding pathways and cut trails down to the river, or visit with the resident donkeys, Napoleon and Josephine. Table Rock has its own chef, and meals here are said to be excellent, though we missed a chance to sample them. Riverside camping also is available for around US\$30, including tent, set up and break down, and firewood. Lodge rates: US\$137--\$160 including tax. *Cristo Rey Rd., San Antonio Village*; tel. 501-670-4910; [www.tablerockbelize.com](http://www.tablerockbelize.com)



## THE CAYES

**Ak'bol Yoga Retreat & Eco-Resort.** I'm not much good at the downward dog position, but I like this new small beach resort. It has seven thatch cabañas with outdoor showers, set around a natural stone swimming pool. On the lagoon side is a three-story building with 30 single rooms (shared baths) for those attending yoga retreats. The beachside restaurant serves local items such as salbutes, panades, and pupusas at low prices. Resort rates: US\$35 per person for the yoga rooms on the lagoon side, US\$173 double for cabañas. *North Ambergris, 1.75 miles north of the center of town. Tel. 501-226-2073; [www.akbol.com](http://www.akbol.com)*

**Cocotal Inn & Cabanas.** If you're looking for a homey spot on the beach, Cocotal could be it. There are only five units – three cottages (one opening this fall) and two suites in the main house. My favorite is called the casita – it's closest to the beach and also overlooks the pool. All units have kitchens, so you can cook your own meals, or hop on one of the free bikes and ride to a nearby restaurant. The helpful owners are on-site. Rates: US\$137–\$218. *North Ambergris, 2.5 miles north of the center of town, 501-226-2097; [www.cocotalbelize.com](http://www.cocotalbelize.com)*

**Grand Caribe Suites and Residences.** This is one of Belize's high-quality condo developments. On a 5-acre beachfront site, Grand Caribe's 74 luxury condos, in eight four-story clusters, face the sea and a 500-foot stretch of beach, with an unusual curved pier. The one, two- and three-bedroom suites (rentals around US\$400-\$750 double including hotel tax) have Brazilian floor tiles, kitchens with granite countertops and mahogany countertops, and high-quality furnishings. One building will have an elevator. *Tres Cocos area of North Ambergris, 1.25 miles north of bridge. Tel. 501-226-4726; [www.grandcaribe.com](http://www.grandcaribe.com)*

**Pelican Reef Villas.** The sea views are fabulous here, especially from the top-floor condos. Alabaster buildings with butter-yellow trim house two-bedroom (US\$433 including tax for up to four people) and three-bedroom units (US\$683 for up to six people), a total of 24 units altogether located at the southernmost area of development on the island. All the condo suites are tastefully decorated, with fully equipped kitchens, mahogany cabinets, granite countertops, and plush sleigh-beds. The staff is exceptionally friendly. The same owners operate **Athens Gate**, a new 12-unit condotel nearby that can be booked through Pelican Reef. *Coconut Dr., 2.5 miles south of town. Tel. 501-226-2352; 281-394–3739 in the U.S.; [www.pelicanreefvillas.com](http://www.pelicanreefvillas.com)*

**Thatch Caye.** This "hand-built" island – over a period of years the owners put up thousands of yards of bamboo seawalls and raised boardwalks around the island and built 11 guest cottages – since its opening has quickly become a popular destination for honeymooners and folks who just want to get away. Some of the cabañas are built partly over water, while the casitas have third-level "widow walks" with great views of the sea. As Thatch Caye isn't on the reef, shore snorkeling isn't very good. Although Thatch Caye prides itself on sustainability, with solar and wind power, wild coatimundis, rabbits, and other mainland animals brought to the island could become an ecological problem. Rates: Around US\$400–\$500 double, including transportation from Dangriga, taxes, service and meals. Air-conditioning is available in some units for an additional US\$50 a day. *Thatch Caye, part of the Cocoplum Range, 9 miles from Dangriga; tel. 501-60-/2414 or 800-435–3145; [www.thatchcayebelize.com](http://www.thatchcayebelize.com)*

## HOTELS, LODGES AND INNS FOR SALE IN BELIZE

By our count, more than 60 hotels, lodges, inns and B&Bs are currently for sale in Belize. Aside from these properties that are actively on the market via media advertising or listings with real estate companies, a number of other hotels are for sale but currently are not being promoted. The largest concentration of hotel properties for sale is in Cayo District, followed by Caye Caulker and Placencia. Despite its ranking as the number one tourism destination in Belize, with the largest number of hotels in the country, Ambergris Caye has relatively few hotels for sale.

Below are hotels and related businesses currently offered or advertised for sale in Belize. Several restaurants are also included, although this is not a complete list. All asking prices are in U.S. dollars. Prices are those set by the owner and in some cases may bear little relationship to actual market value. Most properties, if they sell at all, do not sell at full asking price.

We attempt to provide current and accurate information, but such information is subject to change, and owners *do* change their minds. To correct any listing or to add a listing, contact Belize First ([www.BelizeFirst.com](http://www.BelizeFirst.com)) or email [lansluder@gmail.com](mailto:lansluder@gmail.com).



*Cobblestone streets and red roofs, Flores, Guatemala PHOTO BY ROSE LAMBERT-SLUDER*

### CAYO DISTRICT

**Pook's Hill Lodge**, Belmopan, 11 cabañas on 100 acres, asking US\$2,300,000

**Gumbo Limbo Village Resort**, Mountain Pine Ridge Road, San Ignacio, 4 cottages, restaurant, pool on 40 acres, US\$660,000

**Falconview Backpackers Adventure Hostel**, Santa Elena, asking US\$328,000  
**Roaring River Golf Course**, 9-hole golf course on 20 acres with restaurant and five tourist rental cottages, asking US\$1,800,000  
**Aguada Hotel**, Santa Elena, 22 rooms, owner's apartment, restaurant and bar, pool, asking US\$850,000  
**Royal Mayan Resort and Spa**, Benque Viejo, 25 rooms on 8 acres with pool and spa, asking US\$1,750,000  
**Ek'Tun Lodge**, Macal River, San Ignacio, 2 cabañas on 61.5 acres, asking price not determined  
**Belmopan Hotel and Convention Center**, Belmopan, on 2 acres, asking US\$1,200,000  
**Macaw Bank**, Cristo Rey, 5 cabañas/cottages with owner's house on 50 acres on Macal River, asking US\$550,000  
**Five Sisters Lodge**, Mountain Pine Ridge, 18 units with restaurant on about 15 acres, asking US\$2,200,000  
**Windy Hill Resort**, San Ignacio, 16 cottages and 9 rooms on 97 acres, pool, tour operation, asking US\$1,800,000  
**Belize Jungle Dome**, Belmopan, 7 rooms, pool, on 2.88 acres on Belize River, asking US\$850,000 (owner's villa not included but is available at an additional US\$275,000)  
**Belmopan Bed and Breakfast**, Belmopan, 3 units plus owner's residence, pool, asking US\$330,000  
**Casa Maya Eco-Lodge**, San Ignacio, 7 cabañas on 30 acres, restaurant and bar, swimming pool, asking US\$1,400,000  
**Mopan River Resort**, Benque Viejo, asking US\$2,850,000  
**Eva's**, San Ignacio, restaurant, leased, asking US\$150,000  
**Amore Mio** Italian restaurant, San Ignacio, leased, asking US\$35,000  
**Iguana Junction**, Bullet Tree, 4 rooms and main house on 1 acre, asking US\$315,000  
**B&B**, Succotz, residence and three guest houses, café (leased) in San Ignacio also included, asking US\$190,000  
**Cedar Cabins Resort**, Frank's Eddy Village near Belmopan, camping, restaurant, gift shop, botanical garden and butterfly farm, asking US\$1,600,000  
**Cha Chalaga Inn**, Bullet Tree  
**Maya Mountain Lodge**, San Ignacio, offering price not yet established  
**Tract** near Maya Mountain Lodge, San Ignacio, approx. 46 acres, asking US\$915,620

#### **CAYE CAULKER**

**Seaside Cabanas**, 16 rooms on seafront, asking US\$2,299,000  
**Belize Odyssey Hotel**, 22 rooms, asking US\$4,000,000  
**Tropical Paradise Resort**, 25 rooms, restaurant and bar, asking US\$2,500,000  
**Popeyes Beach Resort**, 20 rooms, restaurant and bar, seafront, asking US\$1,800,000  
**Iguana Reef Inn**, 13 rooms plus owner's suite, pool, asking US\$3,000,000  
**Tropics Hotel**, 17 rooms, asking US\$1,400,000  
**Jaguar Morning Star Guest House**, 3 units plus owner's apartment, asking US\$499,000  
**Barefoot Caribe**, 14 rooms plus seafront restaurant/bar, asking US\$1,900,000  
**Sunset View Hotel**, 25 budget rooms plus bar, lagoon side, asking US\$560,000  
**Tom's Hotel**, seafront, asking US\$3,200,000  
**Casa Rosado B&B**, 3 rooms, asking US\$250,000  
**Don Corleone Caribbean Trattoria**, leased, asking US\$125,000



**Alamina Beach House**, 3 apartments with sports bar, ice cream parlour, café and gift shop, asking US\$750,000

#### **AMBERGRIS CAYE**

**The Pink Motel & Hideaway Bar**, 13 cabañas, pool, asking US\$400,000 **Ecologic Divers**, dive shop with 3-bedroom tourist rental (included), asking US\$699,000

**Seven Seas Resort**, 1-bedroom units on seafront, pool, RCI timeshare affiliation, asking US\$1,950,000

**Banana Beach**, 66-unit hotel with restaurant on seafront, asking US\$8,500,000

**Lagniappe Provisioning**, asking US\$50,000

**Casa Picasso Restaurant**, asking US\$150,000

**Winnie Estelle** charter boat, asking US\$185,500

**Conch Shell**, 10 rooms, seafront, asking US\$950,000

**Jungle Jack's** restaurant and bar, leased, asking US\$35,000

**Mr. Joe's Grocery and Grill**, includes owner's living quarters, asking US\$500,000

**Palapa Bar**, leased, with owner's house, asking US\$700,000

#### **REMOTE CAYES & ATOLLS**

**Slick Rock Adventure Lodge**, Long Caye, Glovers Atoll, seafront, asking US\$995,000 for leased dive resort only or US\$2,195,000 for 5.2 acre island with resort facilities

**Blackbird Caye Resort**, Turneffe Atoll, 18 cabañas on 44 acres, seafront, asking US\$4,000,000

**Manta Reef Resort**, Glovers Reef Atoll, 15 cabañas plus house and restaurant on 12 acres, seafront, asking US\$5,500,000

**Unopened fishing/dive resort on Long Caye**, Lighthouse Atoll, 27 units, asking US\$1,950,000

**Gaviota's Resort**, Tobacco Caye, 7 rooms, seafront, asking US\$495,000

#### **HOPKINS**

**Kanantik**, all-inclusive seafront resort with 25 cabañas on 300 acres, asking US\$8,400,000

**River House Lodge**, Sittee, 6 units on 2 acres, asking US\$890,000

**Sir Thomas' at Toucan Sittee**, Sittee, 6 cottages plus owner's house, restaurant on 1 acre, asking US\$950,000

**Caribbean Shores Bed & Breakfast**, Hopkins, 6 rooms, asking US\$445,000

**Parrot Cove Lodge**, 6 rooms, 2 houses, pool, restaurant and bar, asking US\$1,750,000

#### **DANGRIGA**

**Mama Noots Jungle Resort**, Mayflower, 48 acres, asking price US\$1,600,000

#### **PLACENCIA**

**Pickled Parrot**, 2 cabañas, restaurant, owner's apartment, asking US\$395,000

**Miller's Landing**, 7 rooms on 1.94 acres, pool, seafront, asking US\$1,200,000

**Manatee Inn**, asking US\$375,000

**Ranguana Lodge**, 5 cabañas, seafront, asking US\$1,250,000

**Seaspray Hotel**, 21 rooms, seafront, asking US\$1,500,000

**La Chapelle Suites**, 6 units plus 3-bedroom unit, asking US\$1,700,000

**South Waters Resort**, 4 cabañas, restaurant and bar on 2 acres, asking US\$3,000,000

**Green Parrot Beach Houses & Resort**, 8 units, seafront, asking US\$1,495,000

### **COROZAL TOWN**

**TJ's Guesthouse**, 10 rooms with manager's apartment, restaurant and pool, asking US\$275,000

**Las Palmas**, 29 rooms, space for restaurant, asking US\$2,900,000

**Hok'ol K'in Guesthouse**, asking US\$598,000

**Oasis Bed & Breakfast**, 21 rooms, asking US\$475,000

### **PUNTA GORDA**

**Sea Front Inn**, Punta Gorda, 14 rooms and 6 apartments, restaurant, asking US\$1,100,000

### **BELIZE CITY AND BELIZE DISTRICT**

**Belize River Lodge**, 8 rooms on 47 acres, with fishing gear, boats and a live-aboard motor yacht, asking US\$2,000,000

**El Chiclero Inn**, asking US\$1,000,000

**Maruba Lodge & Spa**, Old Northern Highway, 18 units, two villas, 2 pools, spa, 700 acres, asking US\$8,000,000

**Bakadeer Inn**, Belize City, asking US\$375,000

**Bacab Eco Park**, Belize City, asking US\$2,600,000

**Tiger Point**, Southern Lagoon, eco-lodge on 359 acres, asking \$1,700,000

**Cheers**, near Belize Zoo, 3 cabañas and restaurant and owner's house, asking US\$1,083,000

**Altun-Ha Ecotourism Resort and Maskall Golf Course**, (formerly Pretty See) Old Northern Highway, lodge building with apartment, 14 cabañas, 9-hole golf course on 1,320 acres, asking US\$5,500,000



*Brooks and Rose Lambert-Sluder in Placencia*

*PHOTO BY LAN SLUDER*