DISCLAIMER

The Country Orientation Guides are provided as a service for faculty travelling to international destinations for teaching purposes. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in the Country Orientation Guides, neither the Office of Training nor the Fischler School of Education and Human Services at Nova Southeastern University can accept responsibility for any errors that may appear in information, editorial content, maps, text, representation, or illustrations as printed. The publisher does accept any responsibility for content of editorial. Additional copies of this publication may be obtained in the Office of International Affairs at the Fischler School of Education and Human Services in North Miami Beach.
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Welcome
Dear Colleagues,

Thank you very much for accepting to teach in Colombia!

The Office of International Affairs (OIA) at the Fischler School of Education and Human Services has prepared this country guide to provide you with basic and general information on the country you are about to visit.

This guide is intended to help you prepare for your trip. As you travel in the country, please let us know if you find that there are details that need to be added or changed so that we can keep our guides updated. Although we have tried to make it as comprehensive as possible, all of us know that our world moves very rapidly and changes happen everyday; however, we have tried our best to include all of the details you need to make sure you are comfortable in your new environment.

This information has been compiled with the help of the Office of Strategic Initiatives and Global Enterprises for Academic Development (SIGEAD), and the contribution from the OIA team members and our Field Associates and Regional Liaisons around the world. To all of them, and to you, thank you very much for helping these programs become as successful as they are today, and as a result, for making a difference in our students’ lives, wherever they are located.

Have a wonderful experience and please be sure to meet with us upon your return so we can discuss your experience and solicit your input for future cohorts. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be any assistance to your prior to your departure, or while you are teaching.

Bon voyage!

Anthony DeNapoli, Dean of International Affairs
Alejandra Parra, Associate Dean of International Affairs
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<td><strong>Contact at the Office of International Affairs</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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| Dr. Anthony DeNapoli, Dean | Office-954-262-8733  
Cell-954-661-6241  
denapoli@nova.edu |
| Alejandra Parra, M.A., Associate Dean | Office-954-262-8674  
Cell-954-448-3405  
aleparra@nova.edu |
| Dr. Liezette Abel-Ruffin, Caribbean Liaison | Office-954-262-8639  
Cell-954-629-1698  
abell@nova.edu |

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<td>Office-954-262-8888</td>
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| Travel Office (ONLY after contacting airline or hotel directly)-  
There is a charge of $20 if you contact this number. | 1-800-809-8858 |
Passport Issues

A passport is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies the identity and nationality of the bearer. A valid U.S. passport is required to enter and leave most foreign countries. Only the U.S. Department of State has the authority to grant, issue, or verify United States passports.

The Passport Services Office provides information and services to American citizens about how to obtain, replace or change a passport.

To obtain a passport for the first time, you need to go in person to one of over 9,000 passport acceptance facilities located throughout the United States with two photographs of yourself, proof of U.S. citizenship, and a valid form of photo identification such as a driver’s license.

Acceptance facilities include many Federal, state and probate courts, post offices, some public libraries and a number of county and municipal offices. There are also 13 regional passport agencies, and 1 Gateway City Agency, which serve customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. Appointments are required in such cases.

You will need to apply in person if you are applying for a U.S. passport for the first time:

- If your expired U.S. passport is not in your possession;
- If your previous U.S. passport has expired and was issued more than 15 years ago;
- If your previous U.S. passport was issued when you were under age 16;
- Or if your current valid U.S. passport has been lost or stolen.

*To obtain more information on obtaining a passport please visit http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/first/first_832.html

*To renew an existing passport please visit http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/renew/renew_833.html
Weather Information
For weather information on specific countries please visit:
http://worldweather.wmo.int/

Central Intelligence Agency-The World Factbook

The World Factbook provides valuable geographic and demographic information. For more information on individual countries, please visit:

TSA Travel Tips

Make Your Trip Better Using 3-1-1

3-1-1 for carry-ons =

- 3 ounce bottle or less (by volume);
- 1 quart-sized, clear, plastic, zip-top bag;
- 1 bag per passenger placed in screening bin.

One-quart bag per person limits the total liquid volume each traveler can bring. 3 oz. container size is a security measure.

Consolidate bottles into one bag and X-ray separately to speed screening.

Be prepared. Each time TSA searches a carry-on it slows down the line. Practicing 3-1-1 will ensure a faster and easier checkpoint experience.

3-1-1 is for short trips. If in doubt, put your liquids in checked luggage.

Declare larger liquids. Medications, baby formula and food, breast milk, and juice are allowed in reasonable quantities exceeding three ounces and are not required to be in the zip-top bag. Declare these items for inspection at the checkpoint.

Come early and be patient. Heavy travel volumes and the enhanced security process may mean longer lines at security checkpoints.
**TSA working with our partners.** TSA works with airlines and airports to anticipate peak traffic and be ready for the traveling public.

**Useful Phone Numbers -- Sources of information include:**

U.S. Dept. of State Travel Advisory: tel. 202-647-5225 (manned 24 hr.)

U.S. Passport Agency: tel. 202-647-0518

U.S. Centers for Disease Control International Traveler's Hotline: tel. 404-332-4559

**Lost & Found**

Be sure to tell all of your credit card companies the minute you discover your wallet has been lost or stolen, and file a report at the nearest police precinct. Your credit card company or insurer may require a police report number or record of the loss. Most credit card companies have an emergency toll-free number to call if your card is lost or stolen; they may be able to wire you a cash advance immediately or deliver an emergency credit card in a day or two. To report a lost or stolen

**American Express** - To protect your information, you can only report a lost or stolen card by calling American Express Customer Service at 1-800-992-3404. Outside the United States call, collect 336-393-1111.

**Diners Club** - Call Diners Club Customer Service at 1-800-234-6377. Outside the United States call, collect 702-797-5532.


If you need emergency cash over the weekend when all banks and American Express offices are closed, you can have money wired to you via **Western Union**. Call tel. **1-800-325-6000**


Identity theft and fraud are potential complications of losing your wallet, especially if you have lost your driver's license along with your cash and credit cards. Notify the major credit-reporting bureaus immediately; placing a fraud alert on your records may protect you against
liability for criminal activity. The three major U.S. credit-reporting agencies are **Equifax** (tel. 800-766-0008; www.equifax.com), **Experian** (tel. 888-397-3742; www.experian.com), and **TransUnion** (tel. 800-680-7289; www.transunion.com). Finally, if you have lost all forms of photo ID, call your airline and explain the situation; they might allow you to board the plane if you have a copy of your passport or birth certificate and a copy of the police report you have filed.

**US Department of State - Tips for Traveling Abroad**

Here are some quick tips to make your travel easier and safer:

- **Register so the State Department can better assist you in an emergency:** Register your travel plans with the State Department through a free online service at https://travelregistration.state.gov. This will help us contact you if there is a family emergency in the U.S., or if there is a crisis where you are traveling. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare and whereabouts will not be released to others without your express authorization.

- **Sign passport, and fill in the emergency information:** Make sure you have a signed, valid passport, and a visa, if required, and fill in the emergency information page of your passport.

- **Leave copies of itinerary and passport data page:** Leave copies of your itinerary, passport data page and visas with family or friends, so you can be contacted in case of an emergency.

- **Check your overseas medical insurance coverage:** Ask your medical insurance company if your policy applies overseas, and if it covers emergency expenses such as medical evacuation. If it does not, consider supplemental insurance.

- **Familiarize yourself with local conditions and laws:** While in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws. The State Department web site at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html has useful safety and other information about the countries you will visit.

- **Take precautions to avoid being a target of crime:** To avoid being a target of crime, do not wear conspicuous clothing or jewelry and do not carry excessive amounts of money. Also, do not leave unattended luggage in public areas and do not accept packages from strangers.

- **Contact us in an emergency:** Consular personnel at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad and in the U.S. are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. Contact information for U.S. Embassies and Consulates appears on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website at http://travel.state.gov. Also, note that the Office of Overseas Citizen Services in the State Department’s Bureau of Consular Affairs
U.S. Customs Restrictions – What You Cannot Bring Back With You

Some items may not be brought into the U.S., or may only be brought in under certain restrictions. For information on U.S. customs regulations and procedures, see the Customs and Border Protection booklet “Know Before You Go,” available at http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg.

Customs and Border Patrol Top 10 Travelers Tips

1. Have all required travel documents for the countries you are visiting, as well as identification for re-entry to the U.S.
2. Declare everything you are bringing in from abroad, even if you bought it in a duty-free shop. This merchandise is also subject to U.S. duty fees and other restrictions.
3. Be cautious when buying something from a street vendor. Keep in mind that the merchandise may be counterfeit and/or unsafe and you might have to surrender it to U.S. Customs and Border Protection when you get home.
4. Know that the things bought abroad for personal use or as gifts are eligible for duty exemptions. If you are bringing them back for resale, they are not.
5. Know the difference between prohibited merchandise (such as ivory, tortoise shell products, absinthe, and counterfeit items) and restricted merchandise.
6. Be aware that many foreign-made medications are not FDA-approved, and you cannot bring them into the U.S. Also, when traveling abroad, bring only the amount of medication you will need during the trip.
7. Do not bring any Cuban-made products into the U.S., not matter where you purchased them.
8. Do not bring any food into the U.S. without first checking to see if it is permitted. Also, any and all live birds and bird products, whether for personal or commercial use, may be restricted and/or quarantined.
9. Understand that CBP officers can inspect you and your belongings without a warrant. This may include your luggage, vehicle, and personal searches, and is meant to enforce our laws as well as protect legitimate travelers.
10. Read our helpful brochure, “Know Before You Go,” before traveling. Print copies may be requested online, or view the web version at www.cbp.gov under the Travel section.
Belize is situated on the Caribbean Sea, south of Mexico and east and north of Guatemala in Central America. In area, it is about the size of New Hampshire. Most of the country is heavily forested with various hardwoods. Mangrove swamps and cays along the coast give way to hills and mountains in the interior. The highest point is Victoria Peak, 3,681 ft (1,122 m).

The Mayan civilization spread into the area of Belize between 1500 B.C. and A.D. 300 and flourished until about 1200. Several major archaeological sites—notably Caracol, Lamanai, Lubaantun, Altun Ha, and Xunantunich—reflect the advanced civilization and much denser population of that period. European contact began in 1502 when Columbus sailed along the coast. The first recorded European settlement was begun by shipwrecked English seamen in 1638. Over the next 150 years, more English settlements were established. This period was also marked by piracy, indiscriminate logging, and sporadic attacks by Indians and neighboring Spanish settlements. Both Spain and Britain lay claim to the land until Britain defeated the Spanish in the battle of St. George's Cay (1798). It became a colony of Great Britain in 1840, known as British Honduras, and a Crown colony in 1862. Full internal self-government was granted in January, 1964. In 1973, the country changed its name to Belize.

Belize became independent on September 21, 1981. But Guatemala, which had made claims on the territory since the 1800s, refused to recognize it. British troops remained in the country to defend it. Although the dispute between Guatemala and Great Britain remained unresolved, Guatemala recognized Belize’s sovereignty in September, 1991. Guatemala, however, still claims more than half of Belize’s territory.

In the 2008 parliamentary elections, the United Democratic Party won 57% of the vote (25 of 31 seats) and the People's United Party 41% (6 seats). Turnout was 74.5%. Dean Barrow was sworn in as prime minister on February 8. On February 11 he announced his cabinet, which included
himself as finance minister, Wilfred Elrington as foreign minister, and Carlos Perdomo as minister of national security.

Banking

Banking hours - There are five commercial banks that serve the country of Belize. Most banks have branches in the six districts. Most banks offer ATM, Credit Cards, Travelers Cheque and Money Order Services. Banks are generally open Monday through Friday from 8am to 4:30pm. However, in many small towns, villages, and tourist destinations, bank hours may be limited. In very few instances, banks have begun opening on Saturday. Belizean businesses tend to be open Monday through Friday from 8am to noon, and from 1 to 5pm. Some businesses do not close for lunch, and some open on Saturday.

Currency - One U.S. dollar equals two Belize dollars. For several decades now the Belize Dollar has been tied to the U.S. dollar at an official rate of two Belize Dollars to one US dollar. However, increased borrowing by government has led to growing pressure on this official exchange peg. A lively parallel market usually gives BZ$1.97 for a US Dollar. US dollars are gladly accepted throughout Belize. Thus visitors with US dollars do not need to worry about changing the money into Belize dollars - it doesn't make much sense.

Belize dollars are generally worthless outside Belize and the few places that might change them, for example a casa de cambio abroad will offer little for it. Belize dollars are readily accepted in the towns immediately across the borders of Belize, at Melchor de Mencos in Guatemala and at the large Mexican city of Chetumal in Mexico. Stangely, the Belize Dolar is not accepted at the Corozal Free inside Belize at the Northen Border. Only Mexican Pesos and the U.S. dollar are negotiable there.

Communication

Language - English is the official language of Belize, although Spanish, Creole, Garifuna and Maya are widely spoken throughout the country.

Internet - Cybercafes can be found at most major tourist destinations around Belize. Wi-Fi is also increasingly more common, and many hotels are offering it for free. Rates at cybercafes run between BZ$2 and BZ$10 (US$1-US$5) per hour. Alternatively, BTL (tel. 0800/112-4636; www.btl.net), the state Internet monopoly, sells prepaid cards in BZ$10 (US$5), BZ$25 (US$13), and BZ$50 (US$25) denominations for connecting your laptop to the Web via a local phone call.

Postal Service – Although Belize businesses operate on erratic hours, postal services are prompt and reliable. In fact, travelers can expect mail to reach its destination with good speed - airmail takes approximately five days to reach the United States.
To send a letter or postcard home you'll need to find a post office and buy postage. Rates are relatively low, $0.30(USD) for a letter to the United States, and $0.40(USD) (BZ$0.75) for a letter to Europe. Post cards cost $0.15(USD) to send to the United States and $0.20(USD) (BZ$0.40) to Europe. When travelers pick up stamps for letters, many also save some for themselves. The stamps often feature artistic depictions of wildlife, which makes them popular with collectors.

**Telephone**- The country code is 501. Belize has a unified seven-digit phone numbering system, with no local area or city codes. Belize Telecommunications Limited provides telecommunication between Belize and the United States and Canada. Service is also available for communication with other countries. The BTL main offices (www.btl.net) are located at the corner of Albert and Church Streets in Belize City at telephone number 227-7085 and the corner of Princess Margaret Drive and St. Thomas Street at telephone number 223-2868. Phone cards are available at numerous locations.

**Documents Needed**
All U.S. citizens must have a U.S. passport valid for the duration of their visit to Belize. U.S. citizens do not need visas for tourist visits of up to thirty days, but they must have onward or return air tickets and proof of sufficient funds to maintain themselves while in Belize. Visitors for purposes other than tourism, or who wish to stay longer than 30 days, must obtain visas from the government of Belize. All tourists and non-Belizean nationalities are required to pay an exit fee of U.S. $35 (payable in U.S. dollars only) when leaving Belize. Additional information on entry and customs requirements may be obtained from the Embassy of Belize at 2535 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, Tel. (202) 332-9636 or at their web site: [http://www.embassyofbelize.org](http://www.embassyofbelize.org).

Information is also available at the Belizean Consular offices in Miami, and Los Angeles, or at the Belizean Mission to the UN in New York. Visit the Embassy of Belize web site at [http://belize.usembassy.gov](http://belize.usembassy.gov) for the most current visa information.

Information about dual nationality or the prevention of international child abduction can be found on our web site. For further information about customs regulations, please read our Customs Information sheet.

**Electricity**
Although most of the electricity is provided by Diesel/Generator Sets, the power is stable at 110 Volts A.C., which is the same voltage as in the United States.
Emergencies

Embassies & Consulates – Americans living or traveling in Belize are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department’s travel registration web site in order to obtain updated information on travel and security within Belize. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in the capital city of Belmopan, approximately 50 miles west of Belize City. The U.S. Embassy is on Floral Park Road, Belmopan, Cayo District, and the telephone number is 822-4011. The American Citizen Services section fax number is 822-4050. In the event of an after hours emergency, the embassy duty officer may be reached at 610-5030. The Embassy is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except for the 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. lunch hour, and on U.S. and Belizean holidays. The Embassy web site is http://belize.usembassy.gov/; the e-mail address is embbelize@state.gov.

Hospitals - Medical care for minor conditions is generally available in urban areas. Trauma or advanced medical care is limited even in Belize City; it is extremely limited or unavailable in rural areas. Serious injuries or illnesses often necessitate evacuation to another country. The Government of Belize reported an outbreak of dengue fever in April, May and June of 2005.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC’s web site at http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization’s (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Police - In case of any emergency, dial tel. 90 from anywhere in Belize. This will connect you to the police.

Holidays
The following are public holidays in Belize

- New Years Day - January 1
- Baron Bliss Day- March 9
- Good Friday
- Holy Saturday
- Easter Monday
- Labor Day-May 1
- Commonwealth Day- May 24
- St. George's Caye Day- September 10
- Independence Day- September 21
- Columbus Day- October 12
- Garifuna Settlement Day- November 19
- Christmas Day- December 25
- Boxing Day- December 26

**Safety**

Visitors should exercise caution and good judgment when visiting Belize. Crime can be a serious problem, particularly in Belize City and remote areas. Road accidents are common and traffic fatalities have included Americans. Public buses and taxis are frequently in poor condition and lack safety equipment. Medical care is limited and emergency response services such as ambulances or paramedics may be either unavailable or limited in capability or equipment.

Boats serving the public, especially water taxis, often do not carry sufficient safety equipment, may carry an excess number of passengers and may sail in inclement weather. Rental diving equipment may not always be properly maintained or inspected, and some local dive masters fail to consider the skill levels of individual tourists when organizing drives to some of Belize’s more challenging sites. Deaths and serious mishaps have occurred as a result of negligent diving tour operators and the lack of strict enforcement of tour regulations. The Embassy strongly recommends that anyone interested in scuba diving and snorkeling while in Belize check the references, licenses and equipment of tour operators before agreeing to or paying for a tour. Both tour guides and boat captains are now required to be licensed by the Government of Belize. Safety precautions and emergency response capabilities may not be up to U.S. standards.

Following a fatal accident at the Cave Branch Archeological Park in September 2008, the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) is implementing new regulations, effective and legally enforced beginning October 15, 2008, to improve safety at cave tubing attractions. Those policies will include an enhanced, mandatory guest-to-guide ratio of eight-to-one for all operating cave tubing tour companies in Belize. Additional signage will be posted in each cave tubing excursion site, informing participants of park rules and current water conditions and/or warnings. Mandatory specialty training for each cave tubing guide will continue and include education on new regulations.
Helmets will also be required for each cave tubing participant starting January 1, 2009. Furthermore, the National Institute of Culture and History (NICH), which manages the Cave Branch Archeological Park, will be installing additional monitoring equipment for cave tubing excursions which measure currents and other factors needing to be taken into considerations to ensure participant safety.

Cave tubing participants are urged to exercise due caution and their own best judgment regarding safety and river conditions at the time of their tour, particularly during the rainy/hurricane season from June 1 through November 30. Rainfall upstream from tour sites, sometimes miles away, can cause rapid changes in current strength and water level conditions without notice.

The border between Belize and Guatemala is in dispute, but the dispute thus far has not affected travel between the two countries. There have not been any terrorist activities in Belize.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs’ web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

The Department of State urges American citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas. For general information about appropriate measures travelers can take to protect themselves in an overseas environment, see the Department of State’s pamphlet A Safe Trip Abroad.

CRIME: The incidence of crime, including violent crimes such as armed robbery, shooting, stabbing, murder, and rape, is on the rise. The Embassy has noted an increase in recent years in reports of crimes against tourists at resorts and on the roadways and river ways. The incidence of crimes such as theft, burglary, purse snatching and pick pocketing rises around the winter holidays and spring break. Several victims who resisted when confronted by criminals have received serious personal injuries, including gunshot wounds. Although the majority of reported incidents are in Belize City, crime occurs in all districts including tourist spots such as San Pedro, Caye Caulker, and Placencia.
Sexual harassment and/or assault of females traveling alone or in small groups have occurred this past year. Several American travelers have been the victims of sexual assaults in recent years. One of these occurred after the victim accepted a lift from an acquaintance, while others have occurred during armed robberies in resort areas. One of these assaults has resulted in the death of the victim.

The Embassy recommends that visitors travel in groups and only in daylight hours, stay off the streets after dark, in urban and rural areas, and avoid wearing jewelry, or carrying valuable or expensive items. As a general rule, valuables should not be left unattended, including in hotel rooms and on the beach. Care should be taken when carrying high value items such as cameras, or when wearing expensive jewelry on the street. Women’s handbags should be zipped and held close to the body. Men should carry wallets in their front pants pocket. Large amounts of cash should always be handled discreetly.

If traveling by taxi, use only vehicles with green license plates, do not get in a taxi that is occupied by more than the driver, and do not let the driver pick up additional fares.

Armed robberies of American tourist groups occurred during the summer of 2006 in the Mountain Pine Ridge and Caracol regions of the western district of Belize. Due to increased police patrols, coordinated tours among resort security managers, and the arrest of two of the "highway bandits," there have not been any additional robberies since June, 2006. In the past, criminals have targeted popular Mayan archeological sites in that region. Visitors should travel in groups and should stick to the main plazas and tourist sites. Although there are armed guards posted at some of the archeological sites, armed criminals have been known to prey on persons walking from one site to another. Victims who resist when confronted by these armed assailants frequently suffer personal injury.

Travel on rural roads, especially at night, increases the risk of encountering criminal activities. Widespread narcotics and alien smuggling activities can make remote areas especially dangerous. Though there is no evidence that Americans in particular are targeted, criminals look for every opportunity to attack, so all travelers should be vigilant.

Rather than traveling alone, use a reputable tour organization. It is best to stay in groups, travel in a caravan consisting of two or more vehicles, and stay on the main roads. Ensure that someone not traveling with you is aware of your itinerary. Travelers should resist the temptation to stay in budget hotels, which are generally more susceptible to crime, and stay in the main tourist destinations. Do not explore back roads or isolated paths near tourist sites. And remember always to pay close attention to your surroundings.
Americans visiting the Belize-Guatemala border area should consider carefully their security situation and should travel only during daylight hours. Vehicles should be in good operating condition, adequately fueled, and carry communications equipment. Persons traveling into Guatemala from Belize should check the Country Specific Information for Guatemala and the U.S. Embassy web site at http://guatemala.usembassy.gov for the latest information about crime and security in Guatemala.

A lack of resources and training impedes the ability of the police to investigate crimes effectively and to apprehend serious offenders. As a result, a number of crimes against Americans in Belize remain unresolved. Nonetheless, victims of crime should report immediately to the police all incidents of assault, robbery, theft or other crimes as well as notifying the U.S. Embassy in Belmopan, telephone 822-4011 (after hours and weekends 610-5030). Tourists may contact the Belizean tourist police unit in addition to the main police office for assistance.

In addition to reporting crimes to local police, American citizens should report all criminal incidents to the U.S. Embassy in Belmopan, telephone 822-4011 (after hours and weekends 610-5030). The embassy staff can assist an American with finding appropriate medical care, contacting family members or friends, and having funds transferred, as well as in determining whether any assistance is available from the victim’s home state. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help explain the local criminal justice process and assist in finding an attorney if needed.

Drug use is common in some tourist areas. American citizens should avoid buying, selling, holding, or taking illegal drugs under any circumstances. Penalties for possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia are generally more severe than in the U.S.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov.

**Time Zone**

Time observed year round is GMT-6, which is the same as United States Central Standard Time. Daylight Savings Time is not observed in Belize.
**Transportation**

**Airport** - Philip Goldson International Airport (BZE) is situated 10 miles from Belize City in Ladyville. An airport bus runs to the city center, taking about half an hour, but the buses tend to be unreliable. Taxis are available at the entrance to the main terminal. They are unmetered and a price should be negotiated before hiring.

**Taxi** - Taxis are available in towns and resort areas, and they are easily recognized by their green license plates. Unless specific arrangements are made prior to your arrival at the Phillip Goldson International Airport (PGIA), taxis are available at the entrance to the main terminal.

Although there are no meters on the taxis, the drivers do charge somewhat standard fares, but it is always important to understand what your fare will be, prior to hiring a taxi.

**Rental Car** - Most international car rental companies are represented at the airport.

**Water**

Potable water is available in most areas of Belize, but it is advisable to ask, and if in doubt, drink boiled or bottled water.

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**Academic System**

**Overview**

The Belizean school system was a loose aggregate of education subsystems. The system was based on British education and was broken into three levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Belizean children began their eight years of primary education with two years of "infant" classes, followed by six "standards." Secondary education was divided into four "forms." Sixth form was a two-year postsecondary course, originally intended to prepare students for the Cambridge Advanced or "A-Level" examinations. Since the early 1970s, sixth-form institutions have also bestowed Associate of Arts degrees sanctioned by the United States Association of Junior Colleges.

**Secondary Education**

The secondary education school system covers six years divided into two cycles, lasting for four and two years. On conclusion of the lower cycle, pupils may take the examinations for the GCE Ordinary 'O' levels of the British Boards, or (since 1979) the Caribbean Examinations Council Certificate. After a further two years, they may take the GCE Advanced 'A' examinations of the British Boards.

**Higher Education**
In Belize, degree courses are offered by the University College of Belize and the American University of the Caribbean. There is also an extra-mural unit of the University of the West Indies. The University College of Belize, founded in 1986, is directly financed by the Ministry of Education. The College shares its teaching facilities with its constituent colleges. Belize is affiliated to the University of the West Indies which is a regional institution with campuses in Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad. The University College of Belize offers its own Bachelor's Degree courses in Secondary Education and Business Studies, under the authority of the Government of Belize. There are also several colleges. Discussions are underway to merge the Belize School of Nursing with the University College of Belize.

**Teacher Education**

**Training of primary/basic school teachers.**

The Three-Year Certificate Program with School Experience, formally introduced in 1992, can be followed as a one-year full-time course at Belize Teachers Training College (level One), followed by one or two years of experience in the field, returning to the College for one additional year of full-time studies (level two) or as a two-and-a-half year course in the extra-mural program (Level One), using distance learning, followed by one year of full-time studies at the College (Level Two). A Certificate in Teaching Level One is conferred at the end of Level One. An opportunity for further training will be possible with the introduction of a Bachelor's degree in Primary Education being developed by the University College of Belize and the Belize Teachers College.

**Training of secondary school teachers.**

Secondary-school teachers for the first two years of secondary education are also trained at Belize Teachers' College, which offers a Diploma in Teacher Education after three years, including one semester of practice and a research paper. Others graduate abroad.

**Etiquette**

**Cultural Orientation**

There are no overarching etiquette or customs concerns for visitors to Belize. This is a hot, humid tropical country, and dress is uniformly light and casual, except in business situations, where a suit or dressy women's clothing is appropriate. For all intents and purposes, Belize is also a very Western country. A simple handshake is the most common form of greeting.

**Business Practices**

Belize has a fairly informal business style, although punctuality and politeness are appreciated. Handshaking, the exchanging of business cards and some small talk is expected before getting
down to business. Dress is usually casual, but neat, with men in short-sleeved, collared shirts without a tie; however government-related business is more formal. Business hours are usually 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

**Tipping**
Most Belizeans don't tip. Many restaurants add a 10% service charge. However, if the service is particularly good, or if the service charge is not included, tipping is appropriate.
References


