



TRIP OVERVIEW

Crystal clear seas, shallow reefs and a variety of wildlife both below and above the water make this an idyllic swimmer's playground. If you enjoy swimming over grass beds and coral reefs, you're in the right place. Belize is home to the second largest coral reef in the world with over 500 species of fish and 100 species of coral. We are based at Turneffe Atoll, which at 50km long and 10km wide is the largest in Belize. It's also regarded as the most biologically diverse coral atoll in the hemisphere.

The land and seascape consist of a network of more than 150 islands and cayes that is made up of savanna and littoral forest. Here is home to many types of species of fish, lobster, conch and other invertebrates. In addition, at least three known important fish spawning aggregation sites have been identified around the atoll, which is surrounded by open sea. From swimming along the exterior of the atoll adjacent to pristine reefs to crossing lagoons in the interior at the atoll, this trip offers an incredibly rich swimming experience. You can expect to see tropical reef fishes, rays, sea turtles, lobsters, dolphins and possibly manatees.

Our accommodation for the week is at the Turneffe Flats Resort, which is located towards the north of the atoll and has long been recognized as Belize's premier marine eco-tourism destination. When we're not swimming, there's time to relax at the resort which includes an oceanfront swimming pool, sea kayaks, beach and bar.

WHO IS THIS TRIP FOR?

This trip is for swimmers who want to explore both extended reefs and lagoons in a protected environment, where you can see the sea bottom most of the time. This remote location is ideally situated to discover both exciting swims and unusual wildlife and offers the chance for swimmers to disconnect and enjoy an uninterrupted swimming holiday.

Swimmers should also have a basic understanding of open water swimming and be capable of completing the average swim distance of around 2.5 km prior to the start of the trip. The average daily swim distance is around 5km (split over a minimum of two swims).

We have given this trip a 'Moderate' grading. Most swimmers comfortable in the open water will be able to take part and enjoy one of these trips.

LOCATION SUMMARIES

With one foot in the Central American jungles and the other in the Caribbean Sea, Belize is full of atolls, islands, adventure and culture. It borders Mexico to the north, Guatemala to the southwest and the Caribbean Sea lies off its east coast. Due to the nature of the location we have the luxury here of returning to base after every swim to shower off, lunch, nap and re-energise before getting back to the



water and continuing our swims in the afternoon.

Turneffe Atoll

Turneffe Atoll is one of three atolls in the Belize Barrier Reef and is the largest coral atoll in the country. The atoll is home to many threatened marine species and was recognised as a marine reserve in 2012.

Belize City

The largest city in Belize and home to the international airport, you will undoubtedly spend some time here either at the start or finish of your trip. From its history as a pirate town and logging port, Belize City maintains much of its past architecture and narrow streets.

Caribbean Sea

One of the world's largest seas, it is home to the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System which runs along the coasts of Mexico, Belize, Guatemala and Honduras. Part of this Reef System is the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

TRIP SCHEDULE

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Start Point | Belize International Airport (BZE) |
| Start Time | 14:30 on Day 1 |
| Finish Point | Belize International Airport (BZE) |
| Finish Time | 10:00 on Day 8 (or approx. 09:00 Radisson Fort George Hotel, Belize City) |

Please note that the below daily itineraries are an example of the swims that may take place during the course of your trip, however, actual swim locations and distances will vary according to local weather and sea conditions. Your SwimTrek guides and local boat pilot will determine the most suitable swim locations each day and will communicate the plan with all guests as soon as possible.

Day 1

Our representative will meet you outside of the terminal building after you have collected your luggage and exited airport customs, where you will then be transported to the boat dock along Belize City's waterfront area. Here, you will wait at the Radisson Hotel for the rest of your fellow guests before joining our transfer boat for a ninety minute journey through offshore cayes, the Barrier Reef, across open ocean and then through the interior lagoon of Turneffe Atoll to Turneffe Flats, our home for the next seven nights.

Upon arrival at Turneffe Flats, porters will carry luggage to rooms, and we hold our welcome meeting to discuss the plans for the week, along with our safety briefing, before a tour of the resort. It's time to relax before we reconvene for a group dinner, which is a delicious combination of Belizean and international dishes.



Day 2

This morning we'll jump straight off the Jetty for a short acclimatisation swim before a hearty breakfast to start our first full day. We'll stay close to home and take in the archipelago of islands around Grassy Caye. It is an exceptional area for swimming, well protected inside Turneffe Atoll's fringing reef where the gin-clear waters are around two metres deep and feature white sandy bottomed floors. Teeming corals and abundant sea life are visible here in this ideal spot for a first day swim. We take lunch between our two swims today back at the resort, before heading back out to Grassy Caye.

Day 3

Today's swims take us to the west side of Turneffe Atoll, which is protected from the prevailing easterly trade winds. This leeward side offers miles of clear Caribbean water, averaging between 3-5 metres in depth. We'll arrive at our swim site by boat from the resort before journeying across the atoll's central lagoon and then taking an exciting traverse through the narrow passage of Crickozeen Creek. On our swims today keep a lookout for sea turtles and manatees who call these waters home. For the rest of the afternoon's swims, we make our way north.

Day 4

This morning we head south towards the centre of the inland lagoon starting our first swim from the archipelago of Crayfish Cayes. Here we'll swim from Caye to Caye dot to dotting this group of islands. A pelican nesting sight, there is as much to see in the sky as there is below the water.

In the afternoon we'll head to Three Corner Caye where we begin swimming above a sandy bottom which is a great place to spot rays on the seafloor below.

Day 5

Today features a half day of swimming as we head towards the fringing reef located just off Blackbird Caye on the archipelago's eastern wall. We begin our swim from Turneffe Flats' itself and may also spend the morning swimming across a deeper channel called Long Bogue and into protected waters. The seabed here features gleaming white sand, vibrant patches of coral, and sea star gardens.

The afternoon is given over to have some free time in the resort, where you could choose to try some snorkeling over the nearby reef or relaxing by the swimming pool.

Day 6

This morning we travel our furthest distance from our base as we journey to the southern section of Turneffe Atoll and the picturesque coconut palm-lined islets of Pelican Caye, Soldier Caye and Calabash Caye. Along these so-called "backreef flats" are many miles of flat waters, perfect for swimming in. The swims run parallel with Turneffe's fringing reef and its proximity to this area creates abundant opportunities for viewing marine life both below and above the water.



Day 7

Today we start our first swim of the day a little earlier to make the most of our final day in the Atoll. We'll return for lunch and head back out for a final swim along a fringing reef to bid a farewell to the environment that's been our home for the week. We'll arrive back onsite during the afternoon, in time to bid a farewell to the local pilots and naturalist guides that have looked after us throughout the week.

Day 8

Following an optional sunrise dip in the resort pool, we take a relaxed breakfast before checking out and meet our transfer boat. The boat will drop you back at Belize City where you will be met by a bus transfer back to Belize (S. W. Goldson) International Airport.

TRIP GRADING

We have given this trip a 'Moderate' grading. Most swimmers comfortable in the open water will be able to take part and enjoy one of these trips.

Swimming Distances

| Swim* | Distance | Swim* | Distance |
|---------------------------|----------|------------------------|----------|
| Grassy Caye 1 | 2km | Grassy Caye 2 | 2km |
| Crickozeen Creek | 3km | Three Corner Caye | 2km |
| Crayfish – Balloon Cayes | 3km | Shag - Cross Cayes | 1½km |
| Long Bogue | 4km | Pelican - Soldier Caye | 2½km |
| Calabash – Ropewalk Cayes | 2km | Snorkelling Swim | 2km |

*Please note that these swims are an example of what may take place during the course of your trip and should be used as a guide only. Actual swim locations and distances will vary according to local weather and sea conditions.

Swimming Conditions

Swimming in the sea is a fantastic experience but you need to be aware that marine life is abundant in Belize. Stonefish, scorpionfish, lionfish, jellyfish, sea urchins and coral could be present during the swims. In all cases we will work on reducing your contact with these creatures, however if you suffer from anaphylaxis please consult the office prior to booking.

Walking Distances

There are optional walks on this trip, for which we recommend that you wear comfortable walking shoes. It is important to remember that outside of the property is a natural habitat for wild animals – snakes, tarantulas, scorpions, crocodiles are present around the property and our local guides will walk and talk you through their home.

Belize is also renowned for its birdlife, a stunning array of birdlife is visible from the deck of the hotel,



but there is the option for getting up early and seeing a variety of species during the morning hours around the property, from herons, to woodpeckers and hummingbirds, Belize truly is bird paradise.

Walking Conditions

The walks are short and flat we'll pass many types of flora and fauna as we go. As soon as you step off the property, mosquitos are in their element, so cover up as much as you can, and wear closed toe shoes.

Temperatures

| Month | Water Temperature* | Air Temperature* |
|-------|--------------------|-------------------|
| March | 25-28°C / 79-81°F | 27-30°C / 80-86°F |

*Please note that these temperatures are indicative and should be used as a guide only.

Weather Caveat

For safety reasons, we rely on decent weather conditions when carrying out our swims. As a consequence, open water swimming holidays require a certain degree of on-trip flexibility which can result in changes to the planned itinerary. These changes often add a touch of uniqueness to your trip and will be communicated to you by your SwimTrek guides as quickly as possible.

TRIP INFORMATION

Group Size

This trip has a maximum group size of 14 swimmers and will be accompanied by two SwimTrek guides and a local boat crew.

Boat Support

The group will be split into a maximum of two groups based on speed, each of which is accompanied by their own safety vessel/escort.

Extra Activities

Due to our group size, Turneffe Flats are unable to operate diving sessions during the course of our trip. However, snorkelling is a wonderful way to further explore our beautiful surroundings and there will be great opportunities to snorkel throughout your trip.

Essential Equipment Checklist

For your basic, essential packing list, please visit our [Packing List](#) page on the website. For **additional, location specific** items, please see the table below.



| ✓ | Item | ✓ | Item |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Waterproof Sun Cream and SPF lip balm (Factor 50 or higher or zinc) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Flip Flops |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Rash Vest and Leggings / Jammers for Swimming | | Sarong |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Aqua Shoes (to wade between boats and islands) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Insect Repellent |

Towels will be provided, however, please do feel free to bring your own along if preferred. There are fresh towels on the boat every day and towels in every room for on the resort.

SwimTrek will also provide water and electrolytes at every location, to refill your bottles.

GETTING THERE

Flights to Belize are widely available from most international destinations, however, due to its isolated location in Central America, multi-leg journeys are usually required.

While we have outlined various travel options below, they are subject to change and should be used as a guide only.

NB: Please note that if travelling via the US, non-US residents are likely to need a visa. For further information, please visit: <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/>.

Travel to Belize International Airport (BZE)

The only international airport in Belize, Philip S. W. Goldson International Airport is located close to Belize City. Direct flights operate between Belize and a number of US cities including Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles & Newark. In addition to the US, there are also direct non-stop flights operating from Canada, between Belize and Toronto. If flying over from Europe, there are an abundance of indirect flights to Belize, often via US cities including Charlotte, Dallas & Miami.

As SwimTrekkers come from all over the world, and join our swimming holidays in numerous destinations, we don't currently offer flights as part of our SwimTrek packages. We do however want to do as much as we can to ensure that our guests get the best deals when travelling to one of our trips so check out our [SwimTrek flight tips](#) page on the website.

If you opt to travel overland into Belize, please allow for extra time as this border crossing will often take longer than expected.

Travel from Belize International Airport to Turneffe Flats

It is important that your flights must arrive no later than 14:30 on Day 1 to ensure we can get you to the boat on time. Upon arrival at Belize International Airport, you will pick up your luggage, clear customs and exit the airport. Staff will be waiting outside arrivals to collect you. In case you need assistance with your luggage, airport porters are available, though this is a very short distance.



After exiting customs, you will need to **exit the terminal building** where a representative from Turneffe Flats will be waiting to meet and transport you to our boat dock along Belize City's waterfront area. There you will be notified of the boat's scheduled departure time, which varies according to guest arrivals. The onwards boat journey takes approximately 90 minutes and your baggage will be handled and loaded by staff. Drinks are also available on board. Once you have booked your flights and any pre-trip accommodation in Belize, please ensure that you forward this information to info@swimtrek.com **as soon as possible**.

If you are not meeting us at Philip S. W. Goldson International Airport, you should inform us at the time of booking and then meet at the Radisson Fort George Hotel & Marina, **no later than 14:30** on Day 1, for our boat transfer to Turneffe Flats. The Radisson is a great base to wait as other guests arrive, with the likes of a poolside bar/restaurant, wifi & air conditioning.

Delayed Arrival

If your inbound flight is delayed and you miss our transfer boat, please get in contact with us as soon as possible. You will need to stay in Belize City on Saturday overnight and we will arrange a transfer boat to take you across the following morning or charter a boat (at your own expense). You would need to cover the cost of meals and lodging, and/or the private charter in Belize City. For this reason, we recommend that you arrange to arrive in Belize earlier than the recommended arrival time.

Departure from Turneffe Flats

After a light breakfast on Saturday, your luggage will be taken care of and we depart Turneffe Flats at around 07:30. We expect the boat to arrive at the Radisson Fort George Hotel in Belize City at approx. 09:00. Upon arrival in Belize City, you will be transferred to the airport for around 10:00, so you should not book a flight departing Belize prior to 11:00. If you are staying on in Belize, you can opt to depart from the Radisson.

ACCOMMODATION

Our home for the week is the Turneffe Flats Resort, a renowned local property in a prime area for diving, fishing, and now, swimming! The resorts main lodge is centrally air-conditioned and includes a spacious sitting area, dining room and bar. A pre-dinner gathering for hors d'oeuvres, drinks and conversation is customary here. The large breezy veranda is a wonderful place to relax and enjoy the evening and the gift shop is also located in this building. Our accommodation at Turneffe Flats consists of a number of villas and cabanas spread across the property, of which guests will be allocated upon arrival.

Pre/Post Trip Accommodation and Trip Extension Options

If you require any additional nights' accommodation in Belize City before or after the trip, we would recommend staying at the [Radisson Fort George Hotel & Marina](#), which can be arranged directly through the hotel.

For guests looking to extend their stay in Belize, a number of tours can be arranged locally at Turneffe Flats. The most popular tours being the Belize Zoo, various Mayan sites such as Altun Ha, cave tubing



and zip lining. For guests with a mid-late afternoon flight departure on Day 8, it is possible to arrange a half-day tour of a Mayan Ruin or Belize Zoo.

Food and Drink

Breakfast, lunch, dinner and afternoon snacks are included with fresh fruits, fresh seafood and fresh baked pastries. Meals are served 'family-style' in the main lodge and are a tasty combination of Belizean and American dishes.

A breakfast of fresh fruit, cereal, eggs, pancakes, bacon, sausage and fresh baked goods is served prior to swims. A sit-down lunch is taken back at the lodge. Hors d'oeuvres and cocktails are served prior to a three-course dinner, with main courses varying from seafood, chicken, pork and beef.

Our chefs will do their best to accommodate special dietary requirements, however, if you have any strict dietary restrictions/requirements, please contact the SwimTrek office prior to booking.

The bar is stocked with scotch, bourbon, gin, rum, vodka, tequila, vermouth and several liqueurs. In addition, red and white wine as well as local Belikin beer is available. Liquor, beer and drink setups are not included in your package price. Individual tabs are kept, and you can check on your tab at any time during your stay and settle prior to departure.

As you are living on a remote coral atoll, water is primarily supplied by rainwater collection and desalination. The freshwater supply is limited, and guests are asked to conserve water when possible.

For more information, please visit our [food and drink](#) page on the website.

TRAVEL ADVICE

For more information on any of the following sections please visit the [Travel Advice](#) page of our website.

Money, Extra Expenses and Tipping

Due to the unique nature of this trip, our payment terms vary slightly from other SwimTrek adventures.

The payment terms and conditions for our Belize Islands trips are as follows:

| Payment Type | Due Date | Amount Due |
|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Trip Deposit | At time of booking | 25% of trip price |
| Final Balance | 120 days prior to departure | Outstanding balance |

The Belize Dollar (BZD) is the official currency of Belize. US Dollars are easily exchanged within Belize at a rate of \$2 BZD to \$1 USD and it is not necessary to exchange money before travel. Large U.S. bills (\$50's and \$100's) may not be readily accepted so we suggest that you bring smaller bills. Other currencies should be exchanged for Belizean or US Dollars prior to traveling to Belize. Major credit cards are accepted in Belize.

Guests are required to pay any additional Marine Park Fees locally for any privately organised activities.

At the end of your stay, you may settle your tab with cash or credit card – Turneffe Flats accepts VISA,



AMEX, MasterCard & Discover. If you wish to use your credit card, a 3% charge is levied on that portion of your tab. Please also note that there may be a limited amount of change available at the resort.

In some countries, tipping (gratuities) is not part of the culture - in others it has become an expected norm. We believe that tipping is done entirely at your own discretion. If you have been provided with excellent service it may be something you wish to do. Your SwimTrek Guides can advise on local norms for service providers like boat crew, waiters or taxis. Nothing is expected for your SwimTrek Guides but many groups like to present something to the Guides at the end of the trip.

Tips for the lodge staff should be paid in cash, and \$100-\$200 per guest per week is suggested. This covers the kitchen, waitresses, housekeeping staff and baggage handlers.

Your airline **may** collect a departure tax at check-in of up to \$40 U.S. per person depending on how your ticket was purchased.

Responsible Travel

SwimTrek is conscious of the importance of protecting the world's natural wonders. We are acutely aware of our responsibility to not only take care of the natural environments which we are lucky enough to explore, but also to educate our guests about the importance of conservation efforts and responsible tourism. It's for this reason that we have worked so closely with our partners to ensure that our trips are conducted in the most responsible and sustainable way possible, working tirelessly to minimise the impact of our presence on local marine life and the natural habitat.

For more information, please visit our [Responsible Travel](#) page on the website.

Passports and Visas

A valid passport is required to enter Belize. Upon arrival into Belize, you will need to fill out an immigration form. Make sure to keep the bottom portion of your form, as this will be required when you depart Belize. For further information about passport and visa requirements, please visit the website of your local Belizean embassy or the website of the [Belize High Commission](#).

Travel Insurance

We consider comprehensive travel insurance to be essential, and we strongly recommend that you purchase insurance which includes, but is not limited to, cover for illness, accident, emergency repatriation, ambulance, air ambulance, helicopter rescue services, cancellation, lost luggage and delays. Your travel insurance should also cover you for open water swimming and any other activity listed in your trip itinerary (including races and competitions, where applicable). Please read your policy details carefully and remember to take them with you on your trip for your own reference. For further information, please visit our [Travel Insurance](#) page on the website.

Health Information and Recommended Vaccinations

Here at SwimTrek we pride ourselves on our focus on safety and the well-being of all our guests. As we



operate in some beautiful and remote locations medical facilities are not always easily accessible. SwimTrek Guides, and many staff working for our local partners, are first aid trained. However we ask that you read our [Travel Health](#) page to ensure that you are informed about general Travel and Swim Health precautions.

Internet Access, Electricity and Travel Plugs

There is wireless internet access in the main lodge and in some of the nearer cabins. This service provides email and internet usage; however, the satellite-based bandwidth is limited and so NOT able to support Skype or other VOIP protocols, instant messenger services, YouTube, video downloads, webcam, or other applications that require large amounts of bandwidth.

Turneffe Flats is operated with diesel generators, which supply 110V/220V AC. Generators run around the clock and are not within hearing distance of guest rooms.

For a useful source of information on the different electrical outlets, electrical plugs, and electric sockets, please visit worldstandards.eu