



TOUCAN talk

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2018 AN OUTSTANDING AND RECORD BREAKING YEAR FOR TOURISM ARRIVALS

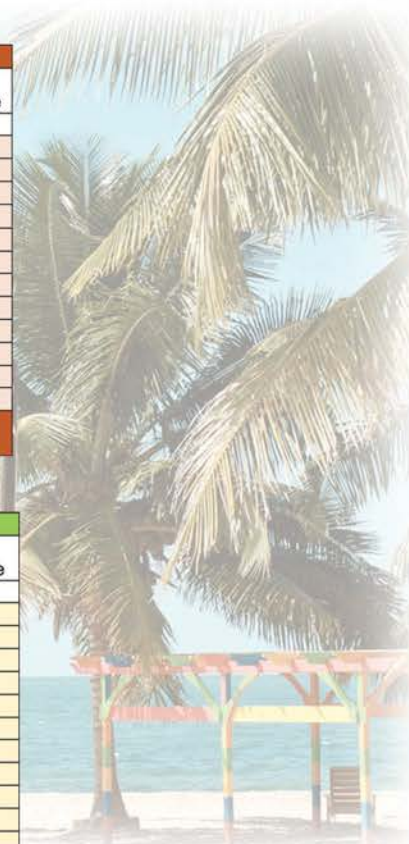
2018 not only registered a 14.6% growth in overnight tourist arrivals, but it was one of the largest increases in the last decade. In addition, cruise arrivals again surpassed the 1 million mark for the third consecutive year, representing a 19.1% increase over 2017.

OVERNIGHT TOURIST ARRIVALS

	2016		2017		2018	
		% change		% change		% change
		Vs '15		Vs '16		Vs '17
Jan	38,274	24.0	38,531	0.7	48,662	26.3
Feb	37,624	18.5	39,221	4.2	45,896	17.0
Mar	43,063	10.0	44,475	3.3	54,340	22.2
Apr	30,656	11.2	38,090	24.2	40,340	5.9
May	29,709	20.2	32,146	8.2	35,724	11.1
Jun	34,268	17.4	37,690	10.0	43,392	15.1
Jul	36,212	16.9	38,628	6.7	46,283	19.8
Aug	25,865	8.3	30,799	19.1	34,835	13.1
Sep	18,115	26.9	19,508	7.7	21,482	10.1
Oct	21,726	14.7	22,656	4.3	24,931	10.0
Nov	29,510	-1.3	36,203	22.7	38,823	7.2
Dec	40,561	1.5	49,131	21.1	54,551	11.0
	385,583	13.0	427,076	10.8	489,261	14.6

CRUISE ARRIVALS

	2016		2017		2018	
		% change		% change		% change
		vs. '15		vs. '16		vs. '17
Jan	102,337	-19.7	127,061	24.2	131,509	3.5
Feb	98,623	3.7	120,996	22.7	118,799	-1.8
Mar	135,283	1.3	117,578	-13.1	132,122	12.4
Apr	90,657	-0.7	97,422	7.5	91,253	-6.3
May	61,977	41.3	61,152	-1.3	82,084	34.2
Jun	65,399	28.8	47,007	-28.1	73,917	57.2
Jul	51,968	-4.6	44,392	-14.6	82,282	85.4
Aug	39,189	-22.6	52,534	34.1	91,313	73.8
Sep	54,569	20.6	57,718	5.8	66,889	15.9
Oct	56,697	38.3	76,403	34.8	75,465	-1.2
Nov	106,144	30.9	100,797	-5.0	112,283	11.4
Dec	142,551	-0.7	111,171	-22.0	150,221	35.1
	1,005,394	4.9	1,014,231	0.9	1,208,137	19.1



e-Newsletter



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BELIZEAN ACCOMMODATIONS INCLUDED IN TRIPADVISOR'S TOP 2019 AWARDS LIST

TripAdvisor announced that several Belizean hotels have once again been recognized in this year's TripAdvisor's 2019 Travelers' Choice awards list in the World, Central American and Local categories.

This year Coco Plum Island Resort and Hamanasi Adventure and Dive Resort ranked 10th and 13th respectively in the top 25 Small Hotels at the World level category. Both resorts also scored high in the Top 25 Small Hotels in the Central American category. Coco Plum Island Resort also ranked 2nd in the World and 1st in the Central America category for the 25 Top Hotels for Romance. Also scoring high in the Top 25 Hotels at the Central American category were Naia Resort and Spa, Victoria House Resort and Spa and Las Terrazas Resort.

The BTB congratulates all the awardees and reiterates its commitment to work very closely with stakeholders as strategic partners in marketing Belize as a Curious Destination. For further information on the Trip Advisor's 2019 Awards, please visit:

<https://www.tripadvisor.com/TravelersChoice-Hotels-cBestServices>



MEXICAN MEDIA GETS FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE OF BELIZE'S TOURISM

Representatives of the major and most influential media companies in Mexico conducted a familiarization tour to Belize from March 16-24, 2019 to get a first-hand experience of Belize's tourism product.

The first group arrived on Saturday, March 16 for a four-day visit and comprised 8 journalists from Reforma newspaper, Radio Formula, Milenio, El Universal, Periódico Excelsior, Financiero e Imagen, Souvenir and Cultura Colectiva.

The team visited Hopkins village and enjoyed the cultural experience of making Hudut and took part in a Garifuna drumming session. They observed the cassava bread baking process and participated in a Food Tour in San Pedro Town. They also toured Caye Caulker where they visited popular spots like the "Split". The highlight of their visit was a snorkeling trip to Shark Ray Alley.

The second group was from TELEvisa, Mexico's leading television network, which visited the country from Thursday, 21 – 24 March.

The two-man team was interested in birding so their first stop was the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. They then travelled west for a birding tour at Black Rock Lodge before travelling to San Pedro to experience the island. The climax of their visit was a tour of the Great Blue Hole and Half Moon Caye.



COPA INFLUENCERS EXPERIENCE BELIZE

The Belize Tourism Board, in partnership with Copa Airlines, hosted two pairs of influencers in the month of March. The influencers, both from South America, got to experience the Jewel's beach-bumming Southeast coast, lively North Islands, and a little bit of our wild Western Belize. The first blogger was Chilean blogger Isidora Ureta, who has her own travel channel, and more than 188,000 followers on Instagram. She, along with her videographer, produced a video on YouTube to showcase the beauty of Belize, while posting many images and videos on her social media.

Our second blogger was Fernanda Paterlini from Brazil, an influencer who is a GoPro ambassador, among many other brands. Her videos and content are more focused on underwater adventures and her audience enjoyed watching her explore Silk Cayes and Mexico Rocks while touring Belize. With thousands of likes and views online, these influencer posts provided those who were unaware of Belize strong travel intent. From jotting Belize down in their own bucket lists to booking flights, many South Americans are now enthralled with our jewel.



FAMILY TRAVEL FORUM

The Family Travel Advisor Forum took place at the Moon Palace Jamaica on January 7 – 10, 2019. The event gave over 65 exhibitors an opportunity to meet with 130 top-selling family travel specialists. Buyers were from the US and Canada, and a mix of consortia and non-consortia affiliates.

LAS VEGAS HOME-BASED TRAVEL AGENT FORUM

The Travel Agent Forum provides participating travel suppliers a "360-degree approach" to connect with hundreds of travel sellers representing a cross-section of experience levels, sales and niche focus, client interests and business opportunities. This show allows for face-to-face connections on the tradeshow floor, small group roundtable product presentations, dedicated one-to-one meetings and an array of marketing and networking opportunities.

INTERNATIONAL PRESS TRIPS

ICF NEXT

On February 4th – 8th, 4 international media from USA came to enjoy a relaxing and invigorating Wellness Press Trip. They experienced the Western and Southeast regions of Belize and engaged in fun activities such as Big Rock Falls at the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve, Maya Blessing and Medicinal tour in the San Antonio Village, Lagoon Kayaking & Wildlife Watch, Laughing Bird Caye Snorkeling and Jungle Adventure Horseback Riding. No wellness trip could end without some yoga time and well needed spa treatments which the media enjoyed very much, as well as the delicious Belizean food.



BRIGHTER GROUP

Birding is a growing market attracting many visitors to Belize on a yearly basis and Belize was visited by a UK birding expert on February 17th – 21st. Mr. David Lindo will provide coverage in Bird Watching Magazine promoting Belize as a premier bird watching destination to the UK audience. He visited places such as the Crooked Tree Lagoon, the Mountain Pine Ridge area, Belize City and San Ignacio, which will contribute to an 'Urban Birding' column for the magazine.

On March 23rd – 28th the BTB organized a press trip focusing on the Southern region of Belize for a UK journalist and a photographer representing Food & Travel Magazine. Their trip would guarantee a 10 - 12 page coverage in the magazine to promote Belize as a food & culture destination to the UK market. The trip began with a market tour in Punta Gorda followed by a visit to an organic farm in San Isidro Village in the Toledo District. Some drumming and Hudut cooking was experienced with the Warasa Drum School and other activities included Eladio's Chocolate Farm and the Spice Farm & Botanical Gardens.

ADVENTURE TRAVEL SHOW 19-20 JANUARY 2019

The Belize Tourism Board attended the Adventure Travel Show, proving very successful with more than 300 people visiting BTB's booth. In addition, there was a Belize talk which took place with 100 people in attendance.

DIVING FAM TRIP 17-23 MARCH 2019

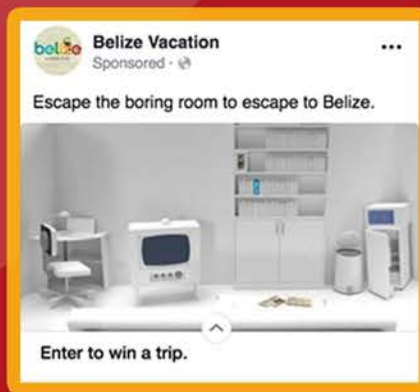
Four UK operators, Scuba Travel, Ultimate Diving, Diverse Travel and Great Escapes Diving specialising in diving holidays, joined the international diving FAM trip that took place in Belize from the 17-23 March. This was a great experience for these operators to promote Belize further and be more confident in selling the destination to their clients.



BELIZE CREATES THE WORLD'S EASIEST ESCAPE ROOM

In March, the Belize Tourism Board created a pop-up escape room in Los Angeles to show how a thrilling adventure or relaxing getaway in Belize is easier than ever before. This escape room came with a twist: solving it was ridiculously easy. Hundreds of people entered (and solved) the escape room within a matter of minutes for the chance to win a trip to Belize. The event, held in a high foot traffic area, was designed to raise awareness for nonstop flights from LAX to BZE.

To maximize the reach of the easy escape message in other nonstop flight markets and beyond, we created a video and interactive full-screen experience on social media, sparking more people to engage with the brand and driving them to TravelBelize.org.



BTB HOSTS TOP-TIER MEDIA IN BELIZE

In Q4, we continued to bring high profile travel media to Belize. Through a combination of one group press trip and three individual trips, we gave seven reporters unforgettable experiences and tons of story inspiration. From adventure to wellness, food, culture and beyond, we showcased a wide variety of destinations and activities. So far this year, our press trips have resulted in coverage in outlets like Thrillist, Forbes, CNN, FOX News, Brit+Co, Robb Report and Travel Channel, with more on the way!

NFL PLAYER DISCOVERS HIS INNER JAGUAR

Belize and top NFL cornerback Jalen Ramsey have at least one thing in common—jaguars. As the home to the world's first jaguar preserve, we thought it was only natural that Jalen, a fierce member of the Jacksonville Jaguars team, visited Belize for a relaxing vacation to kick off the offseason. Through a visit to the Jaguar Preserve and an up-close encounter with a big cat at the Belize Zoo, Jalen got in touch with his inner jaguar and shared the experience on his social channels to promote tourism, especially to his fans in Florida, a key market for BTB.

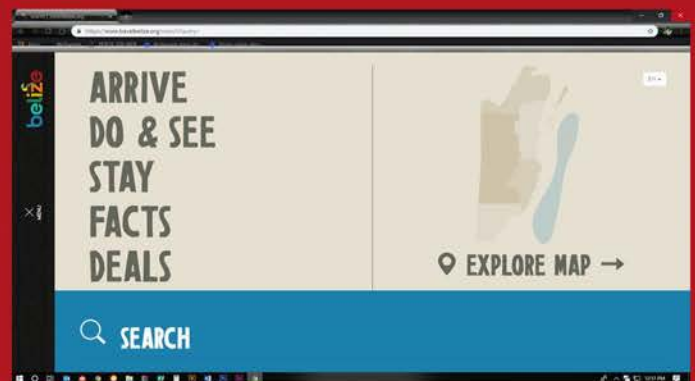
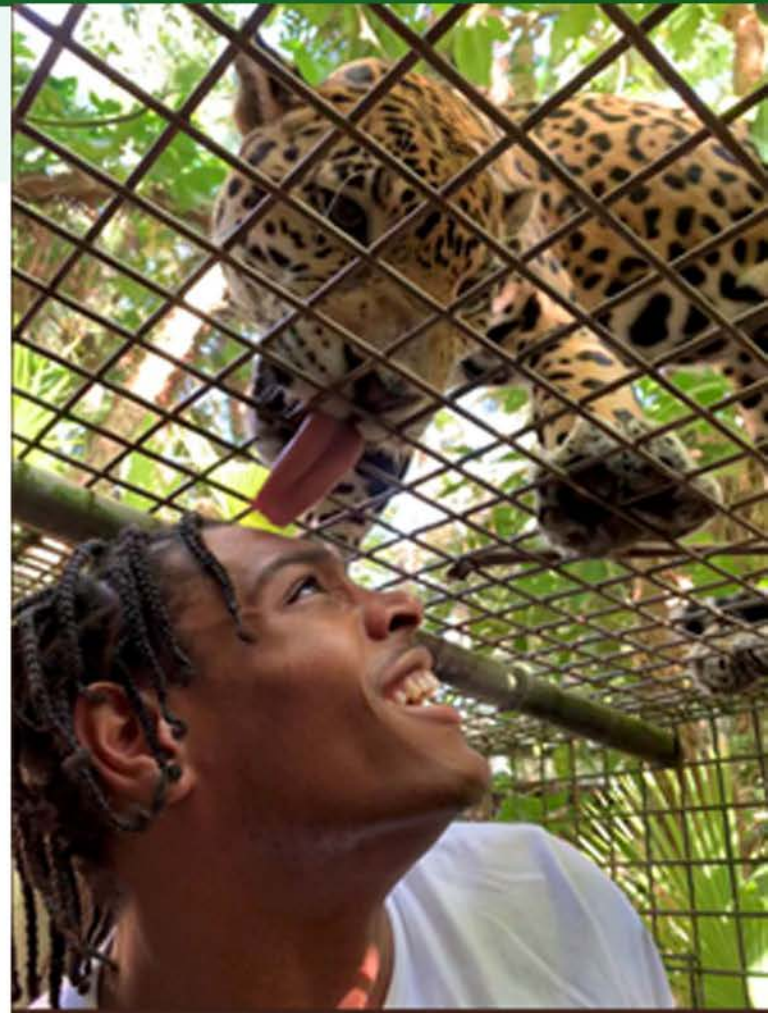
PAID MEDIA UPDATE

This past quarter, the Belize Tourism Board continued the "A Curious Place" online video campaign. Along with online video, the uniqueness of Belize continued to shine through Facebook and Instagram ads. The ads focused on Belizean food, experiences, and must visit locations. Collectively, these ads reached over 5 million individuals within the U.S. Facebook and Instagram were also used to support two larger efforts this past quarter. The first being when the coldest temperature in the U.S. reached a point that was 100 degrees Fahrenheit below temperatures in Belize. This ad reached nearly 1 million people encouraging them to pack their bags and head to Belize for a warm getaway. The second was in March, where paid social ads also helped support awareness of the Escape Room activation by giving people an interactive ad experience inviting them to escape and win a trip for two to Belize. Finally, search engine ads on Google continued to efficiently drive traffic to partner pages on the newly redesigned TravelBelize.org website.

TRAVELBELIZE.ORG ENHANCEMENT

The Belize Tourism Board has made exciting design and content updates to the TravelBelize.org website. The homepage shows off the new look and feel of the website, moving the brand and navigation icons to an expandable strip on the left. This allows users to explore dynamic images and videos of the amazing things to do and see in Belize. The site now features a new interactive map, helping users to find and connect with BTB partners based on region, activity, services and more. Partner listings within the map are powered by each partners' profile information. Please help us make the map helpful to users and connect with trip planners by filling in your profile with up to date information, images and assets. You can update your profile by logging into your account. If you don't have a partner profile and want to be a part of the accommodations or Tour Operator listings, add your business here.

<https://www.travelbelize.org/adding-your-business>



BTB IMPLEMENTS JOINT PROJECT WITH BAS TO ENHANCE ST. HERMAN'S BLUE HOLE NATIONAL PARK

In its continuous efforts to enhance the tourism attractions, BTB invested in the development of the nature based tourism product development, a component of Belize's National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan 2030. The objective of the project aims to improve birding guests' experience and satisfaction as this market segment has bloomed over the years.

In collaboration with Belize Audubon Society (BAS) BTB constructed an octagonal shaped picnic shed to host a capacity of 50 persons and seven picnic benches at the St Herman's Blue Hole National Park, which will make the environment more pleasant for visitors to that historic site.



St Herman's Blue Hole National Park



Picnic shed and Benches



APPLYING INSPECTIONS

The number of new applications significantly increased in the accommodation sector during the first quarter of 2019.

Since the beginning of 2019, the Compliance Team has carried out a total 56 applying inspections of properties across the country. Applying inspections are conducted on properties that have applied to the Registrar of Hotels for a Hotels and Tourist Accommodation license to legally operate in Belize. These inspections are part of the licensing processes.

The 56 newly-established accommodations are located in Caye Caulker, San Pedro – Ambergris Caye, Placencia, Belize City, Belize Rural, Stann Creek, Hopkins, Corozal, Toledo and Offshore South of Belize.



NATIONAL TOUR GUIDE PROGRAM

A four (4) day 'Train the Trainer' workshop was carried out in conjunction with the Belize National Tour Guide Training Course Professional Core Module that was integrated in the new fiscal year training program.

Twenty-two (22) Tourism Trainers participated and completed the workshop, which focussed on training the Tourism Trainers on how to further train students using the new methodology delivered and new teaching techniques. The workshop was held in Belize City March 16th – 17th and 23rd – 24th, 2019 at the Princess Room of the Ramada Princess Hotel.



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FREE CONTINGENCY PLANNING WORKSHOP

In an effort to support equipping hotel and accommodation stakeholders with ideas and strategies to successfully implement contingency plans for their respective accommodations, a Contingency Planning workshop was hosted by the BTB in San Ignacio, Cayo from January 16th – 17th, 2019 at Cayo CET.

The Contingency Planning workshop was free of cost and was open for tourism stakeholders in the Cayo District. Attendees benefitted from tips and strategies to address Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change adaptation.



IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF WATER SPORTING ACTIVITIES IN BELIZE AS THE BTB CONTINUES DRAFTING STANDARDS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE BELIZE BUREAU OF STANDARDS

With a growing number of tourist arrivals to our country, Belize is being recognized as one of the premiere tourist destinations. Also on the increase are the activities offered countrywide. Water Sports like snorkelling, paddle boarding, jet-skiing, snuba diving and parasailing, among others, are just some of these activities for which minimum standards are being developed currently.

One of the objectives behind developing these standards is to ensure that these activities being delivered are recreationally safe and operators uphold and confirm to minimum requirements that enhance overall quality.



HERO'S WELCOME FOR OUR PROTECTORS

Belize Protectors returned home triumphantly on Tuesday afternoon, March 26, to a wave of admirers and well-wishers after winning the 120-mile Baker 2 Vegas Relay Competition in the United States. The BTB, Proud Gold Sponsor of the team, was there to welcome them during a short ceremony held at the Queen Street Police Station compound following a vehicle parade through the principal streets of Belize City.

The Belize Protectors broke the record of Los Angeles Police Department who had won the title for seven consecutive years. At the ceremony, this feat was hailed as a historic and important achievement for the country of Belize. The race took the runners from Baker California and over state lines into Nevada ending at the Westgate Hotel in Las Vegas. The Belize team went against a group of top performers from the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and Canada.

*Congratulations to the Protectors
and thanks for making Belize proud!*



The BTB continues to support community activities, below are some of the many activities sponsored during this period:



Belize Basketball
Federation



Sea to Shore Alliance



Belize Band Fest

BTB Love Belize Sea Challenge 2019

– an innovative sea race which aims to promote Belize's attractions along the Belizean coastline.

Six days of kayaking under the blistering sun covering a distance of 218 miles in open sea from south to north of Belize is a feat which defies all rationality of extreme sportsmanship. Initially thought to be remarkably difficult to organize, this sports event became a reality in May 2018 and now the race promises to be even bigger and better amid strong international competition in 2019.

Dubbed as the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) Love Belize Sea Challenge, the 218-mile kayak race is a joint venture between the BTB and Love FM. Preparations are already well underway for the second ever sea kayak race - a grueling six-day adventurous extreme challenge of sea paddling from Punta Gorda Town to Corozal Town to be held from May 22 to 27, 2019 to coincide with Commonwealth Day holiday weekend in Belize

