

BELIZE BRUCE'S INTRODUCTION TO BELIZE 101: *PLUS* BUSH JUNGLE SKILLS, HERBS & LAY OF THE LAND

This course will be unlike anything you have experienced as it will be in “real time” and no set classrooms. And yes, the unexpected usually (OK, ALWAYS happens here in Belize!), so you will need to remain flexible as things change due to weather or because of the environment. Don't get hung up if a planned event doesn't happen, we will make it work Belize style. And please trust me, you WILL LEARN BELIZE!

Please empty your cup before coming on this journey. You can read all of the travel guides (and yes, I recommend that!) and get a good feel for the “touristy” sites. But that's not what this course is all about. This is all about getting to start to understand the real Belize. Not thru some tourists “eyes” that are only here for 1 week at a time at a tropical or a seaside resort and see it all through rose colored glasses. This is the real deal. I can give you a ten year “insight” of what Belize is all about in a week that no regular tourist will ever get.

This one week course will help you to start to translate your skill set from what you have learned in the Tracker School in the Pine Barrens or any other Wilderness/Naturalist School. How those skills correlate to the neo-tropics and how you can start to “see” and operate with a different mindset that is necessary to be able to survive in Belize. It is a jungle down here, and the key is your mindset. It will also cover various methods on traveling to Belize that are much less expensive than directly flying into Belize City, how to get around the Mexican Border “Exit Fee” scam, travel, blending in plus living and eating like a local. And that's only the beginning!

This course has been designed for those with some basic to advanced primitive skills and for those who wish to know and **NEED** to start understanding the lay of the land in the wonderful country of Belize. And more importantly, how to blend in, prosper and stay safe. This is my same Belize Intro 101 course with more emphasis on the natural side of things with more jungle bush craft and Belizean herbals added on top, so you will get a little bit of everything. All of these topics are covered in much more depth in my more advance courses and treks.

I make this course as safe as possible utilizing my 23 years of living, doing business and trekking all over Belize, Guatemala and Mexico. There is a non-disclosure for you all to sign that you are taking this course at your own risk, and it is recommended for you to have insurance (health and travel) and I don't have either! I still have no worries about bringing my own daughter here if that makes you feel any better.

No vaccine shots are required at all to visit Belize and are definitely NOT RECCOMENDED! Oh, and a valid passport is required! (You will get a 30 day Visa upon entering Belize).

COURSE OUTLINE:

Our main focus for this journey (and yes it will be a journey!) is first to help you get a general feel for the lay of the land of Belize, its different areas and it's many different cultures while learning the flora and fauna.

You will be jungle camping some to most of the time (weather and season dependent) while practicing your basic primitive skills (which you already should know most of them), such as bow drill/hand drill/cordage using native Belize fauna. And yes, since I've been thru most of TB's courses and ran my own wilderness school for over a decade in New Hampshire, there will be "surprise" learning opportunities, like "go make a fire now!" before you get the local woods and other jungle knowledge.

PLEASE REMEMBER: MOST of what TB teaches in his standard, works here. And what doesn't, that's his Coyote lesson. But he does (usually ☺) gives you MOST OF THE CLUES to MAKE IT WORK and HOW TO ADAPT! Myself and my Belizean guides will fill in a lot of the gaps when it comes to adapting your skill set to the tropics.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:

You will be learning the Fauna and Belizean Herbals from a traditional Belizean herbalist, who are some of my dear, dear friends. We also have many jungle vines that are useful as cordage, for water, for poisoning fish plus many many more way cool plants, more then you can shake a stick at ☺

You will learn some local remedies for tropical diseases, things you need to avoid and/or watch out for, since a simple scratch can get majorly infected in less than 24 hours. I've had Dengue Fever, major staph infections, Leishmaniasis (flesh eating virus)/Bay Sore Disease, not to mention Montezuma's Revenges (yes plural). And yes, I've been around the block more than once! I still got scars on my arms and legs from some of these. I will show you how to avoid most of these and stay safe like a local plus what to really do when and if you do get infected.

You will be learning proper machete use, how to sharpen and maintain the blade.

You will learn basic jungle bush craft such as putting together a make shift jungle "palapa" or shelter from Cohune Palm or Bay Leaf, vines to use for cordage, vines for finding water, and more.

You will learn some of the more common (and not so common) animal tracks, learn more about their habitats and behaviors.

You will be learning the **Hazards** (which will always be combined with most mentorings when needed) and how to remedy them. I don't mean to scare anyone, but we only have 7 deadly snakes (out of 67 total, so it's not too bad), spiders (which are usually no issue, so, please just get over it), scorpions (red and black, the red sting "hotter" than the black ones), lots of trees and plants with long pointy "stickers", army ants (my personal worst fear, but at least when they come to visit they clean our homes of scorpions and coach roaches ☺,) poisonous fluffy/furry caterpillars & some "itchy" frogs, etc. The street people scammers, hustlers, and petty crimes are usually the worst of the hazards! (It's my birthday! – ask me about this one later!).

You will be learning the lay of the land, how to travel, eat and live like a local, how to blend in while getting around the country, hitch hiking, start to understand the differences of various towns/cities/villages and the cultures, correct border crossing procedures into/from Mexico and Guatemala, becoming a Resident or Citizen of Belize including the Qualified Retirement Plan, various offshore options, opening up a bank account (which is now getting very difficult due to FACTA), other offshore options PLUS how to meet the “best” cab drivers (who can be either a scammer, or a real treasure trove and best friend. You need to learn how to identify the good ones and they will be of great help and resource!

LANGUAGES

The official language is English, tho the main spoken language is Belize Kriol (creole) and it usually takes some time for everyone to understand. It is based on English, but also rooted in African and other native tongues, including from the Slavery days, so some words are chopped, while others are 180 degrees from the original meaning. Spanish isn't necessary in most parts of the country, but for border towns and other Spanish influenced areas, basic Spanish is desirable. I will tell you right now, my Spanish is very poor, but just enough to get me thru all of Mexico, Belize & Guatemala and has served me well enough (barely!) for the last few decades. I still keep improving my language skills and encourage all of you to at least learn basic counting and common words. *See my References Guide below for a good small book to always carry.* I also can arrange for Spanish lessons for some of the down time (like meals) if you would like during this trip. Trying to learn other complex languages, like Kek Chi Mayan (or Garifuna) is way beyond this course, but they are wonderful languages. You would need to live with the Mayan People to even begin to understand; it's not just a language, it's a way of life. I still don't understand most of Kek Chi Mayan (tho I really tried!), but I can catch words and phrases. Same with the Garifuna language. With that all said, even if you only speak, English, you will get along fine! (for now). And for a lot of the time, not knowing Spanish HELPS, especially when driving thru Mexico with fake patrols, drug cartels and bogus border guard stops. But that's for a more advanced course...

What I've seen the most need for those Primitive Skill enthusiasts like you who are thinking of learning about Belize is for you to first start to learn the Hazards (and yes, we got our share as mentioned!), then the Flora (tropical trees and herbs) and then the Fauna (critters).

While taking the Belize Intro 101 crash course in all of these, the 4th most important skill set is learning the lay of the land. I will be covering the various towns/cities/villages, the peoples/cultures (3 types of Mayans, Garifuna, Spanish, Kriol, East Indian, Chinese, Mennonites, Expats, Lebanese, Hindu, etc.) and what to expect from each area and culture. Learning the lay of the land, how to live, blend in and stay safe is very critical.

I can (and usually will!) tell you many stories of traveling parts of Belize. And where I'm not known I am usually able to blend in as not a “newbie. Recently with my brother, who is just starting to learn Belize, I took him to one of the worst parts of Belize City to start showing him how to identify the gangs members, plus give him some info on the turf wars and some of what's behind the scenes. Not to mention how to spot the hustlers and scammers. To make it VERY real for him, I also knew he was carry about \$3000 cash (PLZ, this is NOT recommended! but hey, he is my brother ☺) Call

it brotherly love or payback for me being the younger brother! Anyways, we were on the way to open up a bank account for him so I first took him into a sleazy dive restaurant that was full of gang members, hustlers, etc. Since he just arrived, he ordered some food and we started talking. I kept slipping into Belize Kriol language and its rhythm, and for the entire time he ate, no one approached us. I told him I needed to go to the bathroom, and also told him that as soon as I was about 20 feet away going thru the back door, someone would approach him and try to hustle him. I came out 3 minutes later and there were two hustlers trying to “work him”. As soon as I made eye contact with them, they left, not even trying to talk with me. My brother said I was wrong, they approached him as soon as I turned my back and started for the bathroom. And no, it doesn’t always work this way, and even I get approached by scammers/hustlers/etc., but there are similar patterns to that you need to keep an eye out for.

Please understand when I say that it is not possible to cover all of this in one weeks’ time, but I promise you, I will do my best and all from my 23+ years of hard won personal experience, you will get a life changing journey! And when you are ready for your next step, come back and take one of my more advance treks/courses or a custom Belize mentoring trip.

After you have taken this course, you will know the basics of Belize and how to get around, learn some of its cultures/peoples, basic Jungle 101, Flora and Fauna 101, and more importantly, you will know what you need to learn and know next (your next step)

You also need to understand that the natural elements will dictate our journey, so please, we all need to be flexible! If I see that the weather is going to turn for the worst as we’re about to head to a deep jungle location, I will change the plan.

If we get over run with army ants, or the rivers flood (and they can raise VERY QUICKLY, some have flooded up to 60’!). And when I say “we need to get the #&#^# going now” You need to respect that. Trust me, on this trek, our plans WILL CHANGE, because this is Belize. The change will give all of us what we need, and not what we want...

Belize is still very much a place for synchronicity and “magic” to happen, **if** you keep your mind open. You will get what you need. That I can assure you!

Down here, if you’re an Alpha A-Hole, the jungle will spit you out. PERIOD! This is no place for that kind of BS or mindset.

Please remember, **“the jungle is neutral”**. It’s your mindset that will get you in trouble.

Ok, If I haven’t scared you off, then here’s the real deal and a potential schedule (but again EVERYTHING will change as it needs to. Also know that with all the potential hazards here, I still feel totally safe bringing my own daughter here and have no worries bringing her or anyone else here to this day. And that includes you! Once you understand the hazards, then life can be very easy! Remember, it is really a paradise after all!

Possible Belize Intro 101 Course Outline *(always subject to change due to weather, critters, etc.)*

Day 1: We meet up in Belize City at the Bus Stop and catch a local bus to the best little zoo in the world! The Belize Zoo is just past Hattie Ville and before Belmopan. We spend a few hours here learning the Fauna and getting to know each other. We then catch another local bus to the Cayo District and depending on the times we all arrive and meet up, we intend to make it out the western Belize in San Ignacio or Santa Elena to get to a Belizean Traditional Herbalist's quaint home and land. We will be spending that night on their jungle land and will be camping out in our jungle hammocks and bug nets with a rain fly. *(see below for required equipment)*

Day 2: This day will be spent with a very well-known and respected Belizean herbalist. My dear friend is very widely known and once you spent time with her, you'll see she also has worldly views and her incredible knowledge of the jungle herbs is enough for you to fill up volumes! If she is not available, no worries, I have several other high level herbalists that I also work with, so you will not be disappointed! Sometimes an Herbalist may be out with her patients, out in the bush collecting Herbs or unavailable, so I always get at least another top notched Herbalist lined up as backup just in case.

Day 3: Today we have several different options. Possibly more work with the Herbalist (or if it's Market day, we can spend time with her at the Belmopan Market where she is selling her herbs), and/or spending some time with another local Belizean with extensive knowledge of the jungle. Also a trip to a local Mayan Ruin may be possible, depending on the weather and timing. Or we could start traveling "south" on this day.

Day 4: Today we can decide as a group if you all wish to stay here, possibly to work with another local Belizean/Guide doing some jungle training/trekking/hiking/exploring. If not, we can start to travel south to learn more of Belize. From here, the trek is very open ended and can vary as the group decides.

Possible choices:

A) We can stop at the Cockscomb Basin Jaguar Preserve (a beautiful place, but has some disadvantages I'll fill you in on the conference call), or possibly at the Humming Bird Farm (or another remote jungle location) and spend a night or two camping out with a local guide in a very remote area learning more about the various eco systems in Belize, the Flora, Fauna and jungle bush craft.

B) We can visit some villages/towns along the way to so you can better understand more of the lay of the land

C) We travel all the way south to Punta Gorda (PG) and spend one night camped out on one of my properties (basically a garage) on the outskirts of town or at a local hostel. Depending on when we arrive, we could take a trip to some jungle acreage and setup a remote camp site. It all depends on which bus we catch.

D) whatever else happens to fall our way ☺

Day 5: Today, depending where we are, we can spend it out in a jungle, learning how to fish via hand lines on a jungle stream, maybe go iguana (they will be in season in February) and then cooking and eating them!. Possibly could visit a Mayan village. It also could be a day of travel depending on where we ended up yesterday.

Day 6: Again, depending on when we arrive in PG (Punta Gorda) either today or yesterday, we can spend time at Market. Here is one of the cheapest places to buy gifts and hammocks to take home with you. Today could be also be a chilling out day, since by now, you will all be pretty wiped out. Another possible is I take you out to the resort I built along the Moho River (Cotton Tree Lodge) that TB did run a few classes there. Possibly some other good stuff will turn up, like maybe learning how to “stomp the wee wees”. That’s always good fun (and a photo op!) and learning about the Ant People that you won’t see in any other travel guide. Also we could be listening to some local music in the evening, depending on what’s happening in town. Lots of possibilities depending on the group’s energy level.

Another possibility that I’m not sure of yet, is that I have been given by the Belize Government 25 acres on a beautiful jungle stream with direct ocean access. I am hoping I will get this land and all the paperwork sewed up before this trip and if that does happen, that’s where I will be setting up my next remote jungle camp and farm You all might be the first ones to camp out there! IF this does happen (and it’s a big IF, since the government can move very slowly, and it’s already been 1.5 years in the process), we will spend most of our time ‘south’ on my land, with no road access, and can practice making our primitive camp there.

Day 7: For those that need to get back to the airport, this is a day of travel. If you wish to bus back to Belize City, that is part of your paid trek and I will make sure you meet your proper bus. If you wish or need to fly back from PG, then you will have to pay for that yourself.

SIDE NOTE

For those that wish to stay later, or arrive earlier, I will be happy to either give you ideas and places to go, or we can arrange some personal trekking time like taking a water taxi out to San Pedro on Ambergris Caye.

WHAT'S INCLUDED (AND NOT INCLUDED):

Included:

All bus travel as a group

Entrance Fees for Foreigners to Belize Zoo, one (1) Nature Preserve/Farm (if we decide to go there) and one (1) Mayan Pyramid or Cave trip.

All overnights in Jungles (with your camping gear) with drinking water

All local style meals while camping in jungle (Belizean rice & beans style meals) and some local meals from Market if we are traveling and can't cook (Belize Tacos, Burritos, Tamales, Ducunu, etc.). If you need something special, you will need to bring that with you. I will supply drinking water at our main camps, but when we travel, you will need to be buying your own (about \$1 litre)

One or two nights at a low end Belizean Hostel/Hotel if needed (i.e. due to weather)

Any additional Hotels (or higher end) will be at your expense.

Not Included:

Travel to and from Belize City and the States

You may need to get your own hotel in Belize City (or Caye Caulker or San Pedro, my faves!) if you arrive early and you will need to wait until our group meets (I will supply you with ALL the info you need to do this easily!). Usually everyone gets in at different times, so I will do my best to coordinate our group meet up.

Tips to local Herbalists, Guides, Cook, Boat Captains.

From the Belize City Airport to the Belize City Bus Stop (There is an expensive \$25 tourist way and a cheap \$1.50 local way to get there! Again I am very happy to show you the Belize way!)

Extra Mayan Home Stays

Extra cabs to airport, bus, etc.

Extra Spanish Lessons

Mayan or Tropic Air from PG to Belize City

Any additional Hotel stays

Any additional ocean boat excursions (fishing, snorkeling, deserted cayes, etc.). I will try to get one of my local friends to take us out, but this is not normally part of the course. If I get a good price on the boat, I will!

Machete, file, cheap crocs, rubber boots (to be purchased by each person if needed in Belize)

Trinkets, souvenirs, blankets, Mayan Hammocks, Mayan baskets, etc.

Exit Fees when Leaving Belize. It is supposed to be included in your Airline tickets, but they sometimes try to scam you out of it again, That's why I tell you to have a print out of your airline itinerary with it printed on it. Same with Mexico. More info on these and how to avoid them will be included on this journey.

Other:

In general, Belizeans do not tip at restaurants or bars, only at Touristy Resorts. But for tour guides, cooks, boat captains and herbal mentors, please tip from the heart AFTER they have provided their service. You will find that the ones I use ARE THE BEST! And yes I have already paid them way very good for their services (for Belize). But during a bad season, they may make nothing for months on end. Some may only bring in \$600 US a year! For the herbalist(s), also please buy what herbs you need or is recommended from them. Herbalism is a dying art and fewer of the future generations are going into it these days. I truly wish to keep it alive!

What to Bring:

Make it all fit into a small daypack or rucksack that you can easily carry on the airline and carry all over Belize. We will be catching “chicken buses”, possibly hitch hiking and jumping into the back of pickups and schlepping all over the country, so keep it small and easy on your back since you’ll be humping it a lot. See my [Belize Bruce’s Footsteps to Belize eBook](#) (also listed below in resources) for more info on what and how to trek with a very lightweight pack.

I have a Lowe Alpine Walkabout Air 50 that I have used for well over a decade. It’s just enough to be my only carry on, it fits in the overhead compartment and under an airplane seat. (A 35L is also a nice size) I can get over 2 weeks of clothing, my hammock, my small sleeping bag and rain fly with other assorted gear, and even have room to expand if I pick up a few things, like buying an extra blanket from Guatemala or Mexico. Most anything you might need can be bought at Markets or local shops (first aid, clothing, blankets, hammocks, etc.)

Best foot wares are either Crocs, Tevas or sneakers/lightweight hiking boots. You can pick up cheap Guatemalan made Crocs for about \$5 at most markets (what I am wearing right now!). For deep jungle, the best boot is the cheap local Guatemalan rubber boots, also that you can pick up in Market for cheap (\$15?). They are like rubber barn boots for mucking. If the jungle is muddy, they suck the Tevas right off your feet, but Tevas are still good for traveling. And NO! this is not the place to go barefoot! (Tho I have and do still, but only at certain times and places)

SUGGESTED ITEMS: SEE MY EBOOK [“FOOTSTEPS”](#) FOR MORE DETAILS. LESS IS MORE!

CAMPING:

Jungle hammock, bug bar (mosquito netting), rain fly, small compressible sleeping bag, mosquito head net,

There are a lot of good light weight jungle hammock. Get the best one you can afford, that packs the smallest. Mosquito netting and a rain fly are essential. I’m still using an old simple one, and used to make my own. You can buy beautiful Mayan style hammock in PG or Cayo for pretty cheap, but they don’t pack as small as a “modern” one. I recommend on this trip you buy your Mayan stuff in PG near the end, so you are not lugging it all over the country.

CLOTHING:

Zip off pants (I usually travel with 2 pairs), 5 t-shirts, 5-6 pairs, 1 long sleeve lightweight shirt, ball cap, 1 goretex type waterproof hat, 1 wind breaker/lightweight rain jacket, 1 small emergency poncho,

Misc:

Notebook, pens, camera, bowl, spoon, eating utensils, toiletry& personal items, (always carry some toilet paper on ya... Ya never know when you might need it!)

flashlight (bring at least 2 with one being a headlamp) I also keep a 3rd one a small LED light on a paracord necklace with some other goodies, so I always have one with me,

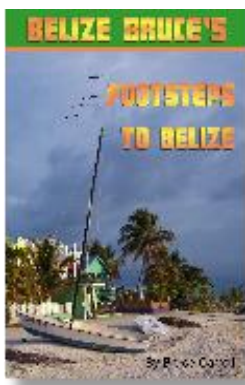
YOU DO NOT NEED TO BRING A KNIFE, as we will be getting some machetes at some point in our travels. If you do check in your bag, then yes, a knife is ok to bring. But down here, we all just use machetes. I even have a machete sheath on my bicycle! (and if you limit your pack to just a carry on size, it'll be cheaper for you to fly PLUS be easier for you to move about the country). What some people do is carry on their daypack, and then check it in on the flight home to bring home their machete ☺ I used to bring back duffle bags full of them, which always makes for an interesting TSA up close and personal experience at the airport.

Vit B1 (start taking 500mg 2 weeks priors to the trip, and continue taking during the trip for additional protection from mosquitos), finger nail clippers, bathing suit, towel, bio-degradable soap (remember you cannot carry on more than 3 ounces of liquid or toothpaste), small first aid kit, triple antibiotic crème, garbage bags, anti-diarrhea pills (Imodium, pepto, etc) Again, see my eBook!

Print out of your flight itinerary (especially if you fly into Cancun with the Mexican Tourism Tax PAID stated) also will tell you how to get a free exit card if they do take it when flying out of Cancun.

Resources:

First, spend the \$2.99 and READ my ebook! This fills in a lot of “holes” from the other travel guides.



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Also check out my Resources Page:

<http://www.belizebruce.com/belizeresources.html>

<Http://www.BelizeBruce.com>

BelizeBruce@gmail.com

Other good books:

[The Rough Guide to Belize \(Rough Guides\)](#)

[The Rough Guide to Mexican Spanish](#)

[Rosita Arvigo Sastun: My Apprenticeship with a Maya Healer She also has several excellent herbal books including Rainforest Home Remedies](#)

[Martin Prechtel's Secrets of The Talking Jaguar](#)

[Tales of a Shaman's Apprentice: An Ethnobotanist Searches for New Medicines in the Amazon Rain Forest by Mark Plotkin ISBN-13: 978-0140129915](#)

CHEAP FLIGHTS: (flying into Cancun is ALWAYS MUCH CHEAPER!)

And for those that do want to fly into Cancun, I can give you all the details, and YES, it is a very safe part of Mexico. You can fly into Cancun, spend a day there (very cheap!) and then catch the ADO overnight bus to Belize City at 10:15pm for about \$42 USD. You will be woken up around 4am for the border crossing, and then fall back asleep till 6-7am and walla! You are in Belize!

For an extra fee (basically my travel expenses back up from Belize, I can meet you in Cancun and show you a bit of old Cancun, enjoy the Plaza de la Palapas and some good, inexpensive Mexican food and then travel home back to Belize with ya).

If you fly into Belize City, I will go over the details on how and what to do and where we'll meet. I can't meet every one at different times, but will give you specific info on where we can meet and good safe hotels or options like heading out to Caye Caulker or San Pedro on Ambergris Caye for you to do if you arrive early. BELIZE CITY CAN BE VERY DANGEROUS until you understand it! (and then it still can be dangerous) With that said, it still is easy to get around safely in the City, but for now, if you must, please use a cab! The rest of Belize is relatively safe.

MY FAVE AIRLINE TICKET PLACES:

I use Spirit Air a lot. They don't fly everywhere, but when you start to watch their process, (and I've been a member of their \$9 club for a loooong time), they usually do have the best deals. The other two listed below do a price search across every major airline and will help you to locate other deals as well.

<http://www.spirit.com/Default.aspx>

<http://www.momondo.com/>

<http://www.kayak.com/>

We should setup a conference call soon for those who are interested. **Email is the best way to get me.** My phones only work in their respected countries, but I do my best to check email every other day or so.

Cost for this week long course is \$1495 USD

When you do get to Belize, cell phones and Pay As You Go are relatively cheap. You really don't need one, but if you do arrive early, I recommend the phone company called SMART(CDMA) over DIGICEL (GSM). If you have an unlocked Android, you can bring it and as long as it's CDMA, SMART will get you a Belize cell # for around \$25US and program it for you. They also have relatively cheap TXT and calls to States, usually cheaper than using your US service on international roaming charges. If you have an unlocked GSM phone, then DIGICELL will also program, it for you, tho I don't know what their costs are these days (as I use SMART). Pay As You Go cards are available all over the country.

My Email: BelizeBruce@gmail.com

<http://www.BelizeBruce.com>

My US Cell # is 603-966-0062

My Belize Cell # is 011.501.667.4835 (When in Belize, just dial 667.4835)