

2019 BELIZE CYCLING CAMP, March 9-17



ABOUT

A chance to get away from the harsh winter weather, this endurance based cycling camp will start building your solid foundation for the season ahead. Because we'll also be in a beautiful tropical setting, we'll take some time to experience some of the natural treasures that Belize has to offer with several adventure outings.

Your ride leader, Bill Elliston (ellistoncoaching.com), is a seasoned traveler and cyclist in Belize, having traveled there 11 times. He's competed in their premier bike race eight times (2005 winner), stage race twice and also had the opportunity to work with the Belize cycling federation as part of a US State Department program. Your ride support staff are local cyclists and personal friends.

THE SETTING

Belize is known as the crown jewel of Central America. It's a tropical paradise rich in contemporary and ancient cultural history and home to the second largest barrier reef in the world. It's also a destination easy to navigate with English as the primary language and the acceptance of the USD everywhere. Rounding out its breathtaking beauty and intriguing history, is the warm and welcoming people of Belize who make this destination feel like a second home to those who visit.

This hidden gem is located just to the south of Mexico, is bordered to the west and south by Guatemala and to the east by the Caribbean Sea. With 22,800 square feet of land, and measuring approximately 180 miles long and 68 miles wide, Belize is nearly identical in size to the state of New Jersey.

By contrast, Belize is far less populous. At just 379,000 residents, it the size of a small major US city, (think Anaheim or Honolulu). Though its growth rate is the second highest in the Western Hemisphere, it still has the lowest population density in Central America.

Inhabitants are made up of a variety of cultures, including Mayan, Creole, Garifuna, Mestizo and Mennonites, along with a large contingent of American expatriates seeking a comfortable retirement destination. Cycling is their most popular sport, and they have a thriving community of recreational riders and racers, all with a huge passion for it. While it's definitely not a cyclist's total paradise, not a ton of roads and many are flat, its guaranteed warm weather with tons of sunshine, respectful drivers and an amazing tropical adventure.

SCHEDULE

Saturday March 9: Arrivals to Belize

*Depending on arrival times--most arrivals range from early afternoon on up to about 4:30 pm--there is the option for an easy 1 hr. ride to shake the travel out of the legs. As staff will be busy dealing with all incoming campers, this will be an unsupported ride.

We'll be staying the first night at the Radisson Fort George in Belize City. That evening, we'll have the first of our group dinners outside on the patio of their wonderful Baymen's Tavern and toast the upcoming week ahead to the sweet sounds of the Caribbean.

Sunday March 10: 73 miles; 1948 ft. elevation. Belize City – San Ignacio

<http://www.mapmyride.com/routes/view/1961701358>

Our ride starts from the Radisson and we'll head nearly straight west, past the capital city of Belmopan, and onwards to the town of San Ignacio.

*For anyone feeling especially spry when we pull into San Ignacio, there's an unsupported ride option for an additional 20~ miles and 1245 ft elevation round trip to Benque Viejo de Carmen, and the Guatemala border. <http://www.mapmyride.com/routes/view/1961707457>

Monday March 11: 88 miles; 3748 ft. elevation. San Ignacio – Hopkins

<http://www.mapmyride.com/routes/view/1957554149>

Leaving San Ignacio, we'll head back east towards Belmopan, then head more inland, skirting the city proper, and south/south-east towards Hopkins. As we exit Belmopan, we'll use the Hummingbird Highway, by far the most scenic road in Belize; it cuts a beautiful swath through the lower slopes of the Mayan Mountain range and offers stunning views for the bulk of the ride.

Once we get into the Pomona Valley, it's primarily a flat run down to our Hopkins destination, where we finally get to feel the sand in our feet as we stare out over the Caribbean.

Tuesday March 12: Off Day

Rest Day! Enjoy our first adventure excursion, zip-lining through the jungles of Mayflower Bocawina National Park and then back to the beach! The National Park is host to Belize's longest zip-line adventure and Hopkins beach is one of the most renowned beach areas in Belize, so what better place than to enjoy our first rest day with this double header of fun, drink in hand and toes in the sand, enjoying the views.

Wednesday March 13: 66 miles; 2959 ft. elevation. Hopkins to Belmopan

<http://www.mapmyride.com/routes/view/1961728913>

After a leisurely breakfast by the beach, we'll make our way back up the Hummingbird Highway to our destination of the nation's capital, Belmopan.

*Once again, an unsupported ride option for anyone looking for more saddle time is perhaps a ride out and back to the Mennonite farming community of Spanish Lookout. That would net as much as an additional 39 miles and 1712 feet of elevation.

<https://www.mapmyride.com/routes/view/2190485506>

Thursday March 14: 89 miles; 1065 ft elevation. Belmopan – Orange Walk

<https://www.mapmyride.com/routes/view/1961743979>

The longest day of camp will see us head east from Belmopan towards Hattieville. There, we'll arc north on the Boom Rd. and towards the Northern Highway, and on into Orange Walk.

Friday March 15: Off Day

After two good days of piling on the miles, today will be a day to recover, relax and take in some of Belize's history. We will be taking part in the Lamanai Mayan City Tour, which includes a boat tour up the historic New River. Lamanai, which means "submerged crocodile", was settled sometime in 1500 BC its occupation spanning three millennia. The Crocodile City has been an active archeological site since the 1970s and is considered one of the best excursions in Belize.

*For those looking to pile on more miles, there is an unsupported ride option from Orange Walk to Yo Creek, south through San Felipe to La Union, and back. This ride is 65 miles and just under 1000 ft. of elevation. It's a quiet country route that offers views of Mexico at the turnaround.

<https://www.mapmyride.com/routes/view/2263074712>

Saturday March 16: 71 miles; 702 ft elevation. Orange Walk – Belize City

<https://www.mapmyride.com/routes/view/1962042461>

Our final ride of camp, we'll depart Sugar City and make our way back down the Northern Highway, out through the village of Burrell Boom, into Hattieville, and then the final run in to the city.

We'll spend Saturday eve back at the Radisson Fort George Belize City where we'll have our final camp dinner, this time toasting to a great week of riding and fun in the tropics.

Sunday March 17: Departures

As we're just 20 minutes or so from the airport, we'll have an easy morning grabbing a last coffee by the ocean as we load up and head off.

RIDE NOTES

We'll ideally look to start most rides by 8:30 am; 9:00 latest. With the expected heat and humidity, it'll be nice to be rolling while it's still a bit cooler to start. It will also give us some extra time in the later afternoons for exploring our surroundings and relaxing more!

Related to that point, as most of the rides are long, we want to leave ample time. Many of the rides are flatter, which will allow for a steadier solid pace, but we'll still be anticipating 4-6 hrs. ride time per ride.

Additionally, and relative to the heat, we want to have time for frequent stops. As you can imagine, hydration is very critical, so we'll stay on top of that for everyone to ensure optimal performances. Generally speaking in these conditions, 1.5 to 2 bottles per hour is pretty normal and should be the expected intake.

We'll have our follow vehicle daily which will be stocked with a cooler full of extra water (for drinking and dumping over the head), drink mix, and Cokes. We'll pick suitable spots to have the vehicle jump ahead and set-up shop for us to take a breather and refuel.

For drink mix, we'll have NBS Hydration and Pre-Load mixes. NBS is quite similar-but better than other top-shelf products out there such as Scratch and OSMO, so should be fine for anyone accustomed to those mixes. That said, if you do have a very personal favorite, be sure to bring plenty!

Ride food, everyone is on their own to bring their personal items. My suggestion is more items such as Cliff Shot-Blocks rather than bars. A bar here or there isn't bad, but they can become tougher to eat in the heat. Items like Shot-Blocks go down, and digest, much easier. Additionally, the Shot-Block versions with the extra sodium are a bonus to keep replenished on minerals.

All that said, keep in mind that many specialty mixes and items can be hard to find in Belize, so be sure to pack extra of anything you think you'll need.

Helmets are mandatory on all rides.

*Optional unsupported rides have no ride leader or follow vehicle. Ride leader can be arranged for these rides at a nominal charge.

ACCOMODATIONS

Because the camp is designed to take in many of the regions of Belize, our rides will be point-to-point destinations. Our follow vehicle will be transporting our bags to each evening destination. (bike cases will be stored at the Radisson so we don't have that extra bulk).

SATURDAY

Our initial arrival will see us at one of Belize City's finest hotels, the Radisson Fort George. Situated right along the waterfront in the historic district of town, the Radisson has every amenity you could hope for.



SUNDAY

Our first ride route takes us to the western region of Belize, into San Ignacio town. A dry and dusty town with some Wild West appeal, San Ignacio has gone through a major makeover in the last few years. Behind Corozal, it's the next most popular place for ex-pats to settle in. It's also the region from which most of the outdoor adventure excursions base from.

Here we'll stay at a small family owned hotel--and my personal favorite--Hode's place. Nestled in a quiet corner of town, Hode's has long been a hotspot for folks looking to enjoy cold drinks in a relaxing setting.



MONDAY & TUESDAY

The beach! Monday's ride has us ending at one of Belize's most notable beach hot-spots of Hopkins. A tiny village steeped with Garifuna culture, Hopkins offers some of the most sought after beaches

in the country. We'll take full advantage of that, spending two nights at the Cosmopolitan Guest House which is situated right by the beach.

With Tuesday being one of our rest days we'll have our first adventure excursion and head to the Mayflower Bocawina National Park which is in close proximity and enjoy their zipline adventure tour through this lush beautiful rainforest. After the zipline, we will make our way back to Hopkins. Hopkins offers easy access to many attractions and adventures, as well as the opportunity to simply put your toes in the sand and gaze out over the Caribbean. With a tropical adult beverage, of course!



WEDNESDAY

Wednesday will have us spending the night in the nation's capital of Belmopan. Not originally the capital--that was Belize City--it was relocated here in 1962, after 1961's Hurricane Hattie destroyed nearly 75% of the low lying areas of Belize City. Also known as the "Garden City", many nations have their embassies located here.

A comfortable nights rest awaits you at the Bull Frog Inn, situated along the east side of the Ring Rd. in the center of the city.



THURSDAY AND FRIDAY

Thursday and Friday eve we'll be based in Orange Walk, and the Hotel de La Fuente. Orange Walk is known as "Sugar City", as the industry plays a defining role on the economy in the region.

As for our hotel, the Hotel de La Fuente is a small family owned hotel situated right in the heart of the downtown area. The hotel also offers easy access to a number of great

adventures/attractions, including Lamanai Mayan City along the banks of the New River, or simply walking about town. As Friday is our second rest day, we will partake in the Lamanai Mayan City Tour and explore this ancient wonder.



SATURDAY

Saturday's final ride of camp will point us back to Belize City, and once again the Radisson. A fitting place to end a great week of camp.

ACCOMODATION NOTES

All of our accommodations have been carefully selected based on personal experiences and/or recommendation. While some may not offer the luxury many folks may be used to from big US hotel chains, they will all offer a comfortable and relaxing stay for us.

All accommodations are based on double occupancy, with 2 campers per room. At Hode's in San Ignacio, as they are a very small establishment, we will have two rooms set with 3 campers per room.

For those preferring privacy, single occupancy is available at an additional cost. Please let me know at time of deposit and reserving your spot.

All accommodations offer A/C or big ceiling fans to stay cool and optimize a comfortable recovery from our day's ride.

We also know many folks will still need to be connected to reality a bit, so all also offer free WiFi.

Some of the accommodations offer on-site restaurant options, while for the others, good eats are just a few steps away.

On the note of meals, most Belizean cuisine is pretty simple: chicken, and beans and rice abound, as well as amazingly fresh fruits such as guava, mango, papaya, dragon fruit and more. By and large the options available in Belize are very similar to that of the US. If you do have dietary restrictions, please advise the staff beforehand and we'll do what we can to ensure your needs are satisfied. You may also want to travel with some of your staple items just to be safe.

COSTS, TERMS & WHAT'S INCLUDED

COSTS:

Early bird Discount – Book your trip by 12/31/2018 and receive \$100 off!

\$1999 Per Person

Non-Refundable Deposit of \$500 due at time of commitment

Installment of \$749.50 due 2 months out, Jan 10, 2019

Final payment of \$749.50 due March 1, 2019

Standard Rate – Trip booked on or after 1/1/2019

\$2099 Per Person

Non-Refundable Deposit of \$500 due at time of commitment

Installment of \$799.50 due 2 months out, Jan 10, 2019

Final payment of \$799.50 due March 1, 2019

Above rates are based upon double occupancy, for single occupancy please request rate.

INCLUDES

-airport pick-up and drop off

-bike build and tear-down

-all accommodations

-2 group dinners

-2 breakfasts at the Radisson

-1 Group Lunch (Lamanai Mayan City Tour)

-2 rest day activities

-all ride hydration needs

-5 fully supported rides

-any necessary bike maintenance originating from camp

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- airfare to/from Belize
- all meals/drinks outside of the 2 group dinners, 2 breakfasts and 1 group lunch
- specialty ride drink mix and ride nutrition
- specialty tools to maintain your bike
- any bike parts, and consumables, including spare tubes, tires, CO2 cartridges etc.
- optional ride leader for unsupported rides

Deposit and Cancellation Policy

- This camp is contingent on 8 people attending. In event 8 attendees is not attained, organizers reserve right to cancel. Cancellation will be made by February 1, 2019, and any registered attendees will be notified directly.
- In event of Feb 1, 2019 cancellation, all funds received, including deposits, will be refunded in full.
- Deposits are non-refundable in the event camper should choose to cancel him/her self.

Flight Arrangements

- If attendees choose to book flights asap, consider booking with flight insurance or ability to make changes. Or, wait until Feb 1, 2019, go/no-go date to book.
- Organizers will notify all attendees asap prior to Feb 1, 2019, once camp is fully booked.

PACKING TIPS:

(Keeping in mind we will have use of laundry services at several of our hotels)

Casual wear:

- shorts
- t-shirts
- flip flops
- sneakers (for tours/hikes)
- 1 pr. lightweight long pants (for tours/hikes; or the occasional chilly evening)
- 1 lightweight long sleeve shirt

Riding gear:

- helmet
- bib shorts (3-4)
- ss jerseys(3-4)
- socks (3-4 pr.)
- cycling shoes
- sunglasses (a must with the sun!)
- gloves
- sunscreen. SPF50 recommended; SPF30 at a minimum!
- (4) water bottles
- Any specialty drink mix and ride food you may want*

*You can get some of those items in Belize, but you'll pay a (big) premium for it. I'd suggest bringing plenty. More than you think you need.

- Small backpack
- Normal toiletry supplies
- Insect spray

BIKE/EQUIPMENT

-Make sure your equipment is in very good working order; a full tune-up a few weeks before departure is highly advised.

-We advise bringing a spare replaceable derailleur hanger specific to your bike.

-We'll have some minor assembly tools but nothing more, so if you need any specialty tools to maintain your bike, please pack them accordingly.

-Some of the roads are a bit rough, so super lightweight carbon wheels may not be the best choice. Slightly heavier duty, or aluminum, wheels are advised.

**If you are riding disc wheels, highly advised to bring your own extra set.

-Likewise, heavier duty tires are advised. Lightweight or race tires will not last long on some of the areas of rough road

-A cassette with a 27 or 28 cog. There are only two days with any "real" climbing, but there are several climbs where it will be useful.

-Several spare tubes, spare tire and inflation device. Keep in mind that CO2 cartridges will likely not be readily available in Belize. We'll have a few full-size frame pumps. Additionally, we'll have a floor pump and spare set of wheels in the follow vehicle.

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT BELIZE

-Originally known as British Honduras, the country gained their independence in 1981 where they officially became known as Belize.

-Given their location, Belize is the only country recognized as both Central American and Caribbean and is strongly influenced by both cultures.

-Belize has a two party political system (UDP and PUP), and their government is based on the British Parliamentary system. Laws are modeled under the common law of England.

CAMP FAQS

What level of cyclist do I need to be for this camp?

You will need to be able to ride around 3+ hrs. at a clip, at least 2-3 times/week, and at a 15+ mph pace. More or less a solid "B group" ride type pace.

What language is spoken in Belize?

-English is the official language of Belize, along with Creole, which is widely spoken throughout the country.

Is Belize safe to travel?

-While Belize is tropical and inviting, it is still a third world country, and suffers some issues that reflect that. So despite the natural beauty and inviting culture it offers, it lacks in some of the comforts normal to a first world country.

Will I need a passport?

-As with any international destination, a passport is required to obtain entrance.

Will I need to exchange my US currency to purchase things?

-US dollars are widely accepted, and there is generally no need to exchange currency. If you'd like to exchange, the rate is generally BZ\$2 to \$1 USD. There are several large banking institutions with branches accessible in every region.

What healthcare will be available?

-Health care is on par with other Central American countries, but below the standards of the US and Europe. There are a few larger hospitals in the city, and nearly every region has very basic medical services available. Costs are generally quite low; often, payment is expected at time of services; and insurance acceptance varies according to your provider's guidelines.

Will I be able to use my cellphone? How about the Internet?

-Phone service is some of the best in Central America, with good cell service in most regions. Some cell phones may work, if they are unlocked and have a new SIM card installed. Additionally, pre-paid phone cards are available, and quite inexpensive. That said, be sure to check with your cell service provider for details on international rates.

-Internet service is also available in most regions, and at all of our destinations.

What will the climate be like during camp?

-The average temperature for March ranges between lows of 65 in the mornings and highs up to 89 in the afternoons, while humidity generally averages around 70-75%. March is the middle of the dry season, the day and nights are clear and uninterrupted by rain, typically less than 4 inches for the month.

-As it's a sub-tropical climate, sunscreen is a must! SPF 50 sport (sweat resistant) is highly recommended.

-Insect spray is another suggested item to bring.

Can I drink the water?

-As with most Central American countries, the tap water is hit and miss. Some places in Belize do have good drinking water from the tap, but the best bet is sticking with bottled water for drinking, brushing teeth, etc. Bottled water is cheap and easy to get, so that is always the best bet to be safe.

What if I have food allergies or am Gluten Free/Vegan/Vegetarian

-Overall vegetarian will be easy. If you have any food allergies or preferences please communicate about them well in advance and we will make every effort to accommodate you.

For any additional questions, or to book your spot, please email me at: bill@ellistoncoaching.com.

Cheers,

Bill