



**HARD TO BELIZE:** Above, Francis Ford Coppola's personal refuge at Turtle Inn is now your private escape. Far right, Plum Chile Glazed Prawns at Cayo Espanto.

# The Coral Connection

For years a diver's escape, Belize welcomes high-end resort living.

**JUST SOUTH OF MEXICO** lies one of the most beautiful and culturally vibrant spots in the Caribbean: Belize. With non-stop flights from seven major cities in the US, venturing through the Mayan pyramids and enjoying the exquisite beaches couldn't be easier. With its rustic environment and beautiful rainforests, Belize brings you through an undiscovered world of culture and adventure.

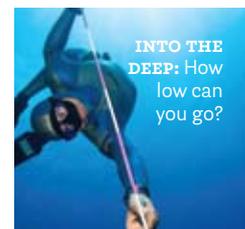
The CEO of Belize's Orchid Bay Resort

(orchidbaybelize.com), Ari Kahn, categorizes the country by "the four Rs" of reefs, rivers, rainforests, and ruins. "Belize was the center of the Mayan population," Kahn explains. "There are 10 major sites that have been excavated and hundreds more that haven't been. The great thing about the Mayan ruins in Belize is that it's like an open park, and you can walk around freely without signs and ropes between you and the pyramids."

Home to the largest living barrier reef in the world, Belize is a diver's paradise. Snorkelers and divers can see through 75 feet of crystal-clear water right down to the ocean floor. For those who shy away from the stingrays and manatees, there's always a boat ride down the Jon Gulf through historical caves. —Terri Ogan

## Trend Watch

**DIVER DOWN** You've seen it in the movies and maybe even in person, but your reaction has always been the same: how do they do that? Learn the basics of freediving from some of the champions of the sport. **Performance Freediving** offers basic courses in the waters of Ft. Lauderdale. Learn the fundamental freediving techniques to depths of 66 feet and practice Static Apnea to develop your breath-holding abilities. Courses are also offered in Key West, Hawaii, San Diego, and Grand Cayman Island. 954-302-2791, [performancefreediving.com](http://performancefreediving.com).



## THE ESSENTIALS BELIZE



**① WHERE TO STAY**  
Relax in style just off the coast of Belize at the private island of **Cayo Espanto**. This spot offers scuba diving, catered meals, and spa amenities. 888-666-4282, [privateisland.com](http://privateisland.com). Oscar-winning director Francis Ford Coppola's **Turtle Inn** merges Balinese-inspired luxury with ancient Mayan history and some of the best

sport fishing around. 800-746-3743, [coppolaresorts.com](http://coppolaresorts.com). The exclusive **Victoria House** offers suites and private villas, along with endless activities. 800-247-5159, [victoria-house.com](http://victoria-house.com).

**② WHERE TO EAT**  
Enjoy a mouth-watering fusion of Belizean and Mexican dishes at the **Habanero Mexican Café**

and **Bar**, located at Robert's Grove in Palencia. 800-565-975, [robertsgrove.com](http://robertsgrove.com).

**③ WHAT TO DO**  
Take a dive into the best spots on the Belizean coast with **Scuba and Dive Belize**. Choose from four different diving packages; all equipment and food included. 888-533-2624, [scuba-belize.com](http://scuba-belize.com).