

Belize Trip Overview

A program to
learn about
Coral Reef
Restoration

Belize, C. A.

Jonas Johnson



Who

Our group consisted of 12 students from across the country, and 2 leaders. We were also guided by several local guides along our travels.



Here are all 12 of us, pictured in front of Luna, a nesting loggerhead sea turtle. Red light is used in order to not disturb the turtle. She layed 171 eggs.

When

I attended for 15 days during June and July
between my sophomore and junior year.

Belizima Eco Resort in Sarteneja - 4 days

Placencia - 1 day

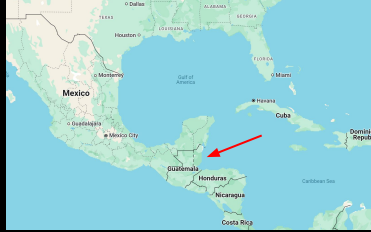
Tom Owen's Caye - 5 days

Placencia - 3 days

Travel to and from Belize - 1 day on
Each side



Where

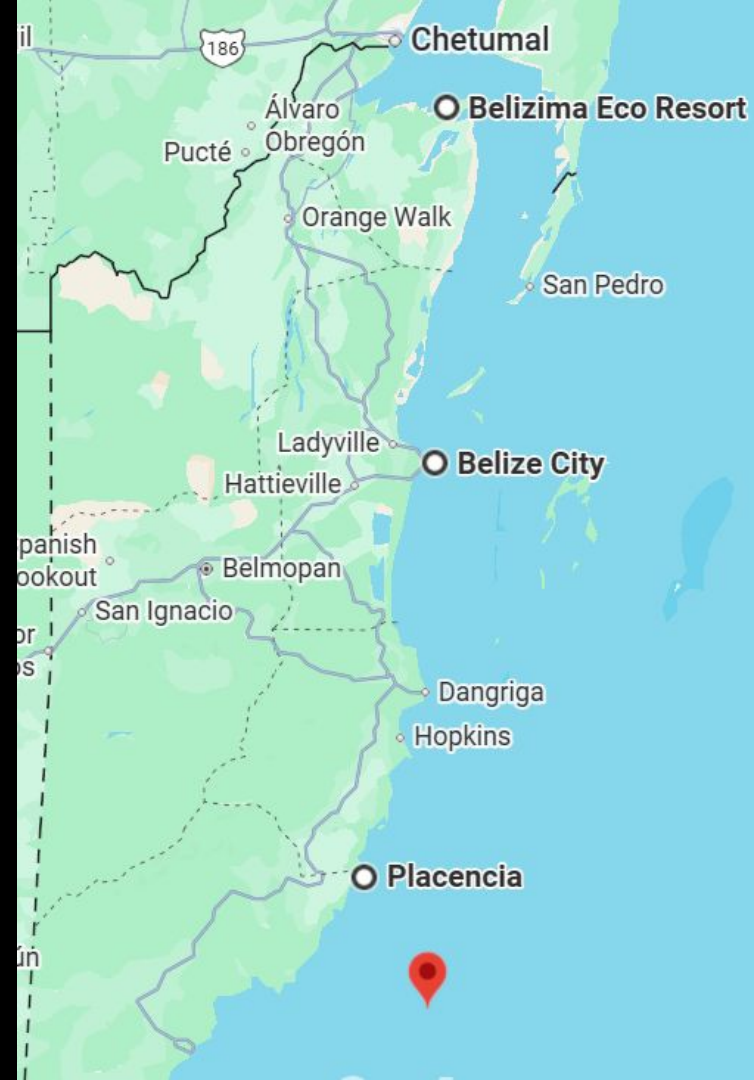


We all met as a group in Miami, FL, before flying down to Belize City the following day.

From there, the first leg of our trip was spent in Belizima, in the town of Sarteneja, a small fishing village of about 4,000 people.

The next leg was spent on Tom Owens Caye, which is a private island 24 miles off the coast of Placencia, owned by Reef Conservation International in the middle of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef. It's marked by the red point in the south.

Our last leg was spent in Placencia, which is a popular tourist destination in southern Belize.



What

- Earned a PADI SCUBA certification on a private island called Tom Owens Caye.
- Helped protect the largest barrier reef in the western hemisphere by removing invasive lionfish.



- Volunteered at the Wildtracks Manatee Rescue Center, cleaning manatee pools and learning the stages of rehabilitation.
- Worked alongside the Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development to monitor the Corozal Bay. We learned about marine research, species monitoring, habitat restoration, and community development initiatives.





- Visited Laughing Bird Caye National Park and went snorkeling in coral restoration gardens.
- Helped remove marine debris and cleaned up a local island mangrove forest.



- Visited the Maya King Waterfall.
- Visited a crocodile research center, then went on an eye shine survey with the Crocodile Research Coalition (CRC).
- Learned how to make tamales, crack coconuts, and cook crabs.



To the right is Gillie. He is the world's largest Moresett's crocodile in captivity at 14' long and 60 years old, and famous at the CRC because he has met Steve Irwin.



Why

I chose this program because it allowed me to do volunteer work on the 2nd largest coral reef in the world.

It also let me earn a scuba certification, while allowing me to see a new part of the world, as well as a new ocean ecosystem.



How

I worked hard to piece together the funding for this opportunity. This program was made possible by the generosity of the 21st Century Fund, Oppenheimer Fund, and Faculty Scholarship Association. Without their support, I don't think this program would have been possible. I'm grateful for this life changing experience, the people I met, and all the learning I was able to do.

