

BELIZE 2008

Divers: David Melendez, Lisa White
Photos by David Melendez

Above the water, Ambergris Caye is an absolutely beautiful place. It is full of supremely friendly people, fantastic food and as we were soon to find out, below the water things were just as good. The wildlife was plentiful, varied and large. Three foot Midnight Parrotfish, six foot Green Morays, massive, healthy corals and sponges of all types were the rule rather than the exception. Lots of white sandy floored canyons and a nice smattering of long swim-thru's rounded out the attractions making this trip a week of great diving.

A normal day here was a two tank boat dive in the morning, back for lunch at the condo, then either kick back and relax or wander around San Pedro (the town...the ONLY town... on Ambergris Caye) during the afternoon. When evening rolled around, we enjoyed the second best reason to come here, the food. All over San Pedro are little restaurants and every one of them had mouthwatering food. Don't come expecting linen table cloths and fine china though, half of the restaurants just had sand floors, and they still served the best food I've ever had. Fresh everything, actually cooked in a kitchen...I'm not sure they even had can openers.

THE AREA Photos 1-16

Ah, the hotel! Sunbreeze Suites: right on the beach, in the center of San Pedro and the place was gorgeous. The rooms are all suites, with kitchens and ocean view balconies. All the restaurants are within a short 10 min walk and there are a number of little stores and such, to buy groceries at, around every corner.

GENERAL DIVING Photos 17-63

These pictures are a smattering of the bucket load that I took across 9 dive sites. I figure there's no sense in posting 20 pictures of Nurse Sharks, so I picked the ones I liked the best...and here they are. I did separate out the Blue Hole dive and the Night Dive though; they're further down the page. As a side note, this is the first trip with a new wide angle lens and an external strobe for my camera. I like them both, but there's a steep learning curve with the strobe. It's bringing more color into my pictures but it's going to take more practice before I've got its settings mated up with the camera's settings (and when to use which ones) for really nice results.

At 60 or so feet, the visibility wasn't the best I've been in (and some of the pictures are a little grainy because of this) but the sea life was more than abundant to keep you from having to look much past your fingers to see something cool...and why else do we do this.

BLUE HOLE DIVE Photos 64-81

The Blue Hole is an underwater sink hole 1000ft across, over 400ft deep and 60 miles offshore of Belize. The trip to this dive site was a 3 hour rodeo boat ride in some pretty bad seas. There were about 30 divers on the boat and all but about 6 of us had decided to hunker down in the lower section mostly protected from the waves. Lisa and I stayed up on the flying bridge and took the waves as opposed to the engine noise and seething humanity below. It was wet (very wet), it was rough but it was fun.

The dive profile was to slowly descend to about 130..ish feet where there were plenty of stalactite and stalagmite formation to see and swim around. Bottom time of about 10 minutes there and then a slow ascent to a slope off point (about 40') where we hung around until it was time to get back to the boat. This dive was the only dive of this trip where I saw a new sea creature, Bull Sharks..and lots of them. They appeared (sharks just magically appear...you don't seem to see them coming, they're just there) when we got down to the 130' level and stayed with us until we got back on the boat. When they first appeared, I was busily taking pictures of them when I realized my group of divers had gone on and I was dawdling. I thought, "Hmm...the sharks have culled me from the herd". I figured that was a pretty good time to get back to my group. :)

HOL CHAN MARINE PARK Photos 83-93

I do love the night dive. The Marine Park is actually inside the reef break wall so the boat trip was nice and smooth. This started off as a really shallow dive, with a back roll off the boat into about 7' of water, and dropped down to a max of about 25'. There was a pretty strong current that was flowing straight out a cut in the reef...that would shoot you straight out into the Caribbean...after dragging you over the coral, if you didn't pay attention to it. These types of things rank way up there in my Things-To-Pay-Attention-To list. The dive was like dropping into a fish hotel. Rays, sharks, Morays...etc, etc, etc everywhere

NORTH ISLAND TREK Photos 94-109

The town of San Pedro is about 2 miles long. To the south of this is the ocean and to the north of this, along the beach, are numerous 5 star resorts. Without exception guests reach these resorts by taking a water taxi from San Pedro to the dock of their resort. There is a road that runs up the backside of these resorts for land traffic, but to be quite honest, it can really only be considered a road due to the lack of jungle on it. It's not smooth...it's not flat...and it's definitely not straight. We figured it would be fun to rent a Mad-Max Golf Cart and drive up this road to see what we could see. 7 miles later we were sure we were right.