

The Archaeology of **BELIZE**

WITH DR STANLEY GUENTER



**FAR
HORIZONS**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL TRIPS

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THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF BELIZE

with Dr. Stanley Guenter



Rediscover hidden temples and palaces that have stood in forested splendor for thousands of years... boat down a lazy river where the elusive crocodile floats among lily pads...sink your toes into the white sandy beach in the land of the Garifuna... travel with our archaeological specialist, who has intimate ties with the country and its people.

Far Horizons proudly offers our Belize archaeology tour – a colorful abundance of archaeology, culture, and natural history. During this special 9-day trip, explore lost Maya ceremonial centers concealed by jungle shadows and meet people from the country's varied ethnic groups while seeing spectacular wildlife that is considered "endangered" in other countries.

Long thought to be a backwater of the ancient Maya civilization, archaeological work here has proven the opposite. Explore Caracol, conqueror of Tikal in the 6th century; Lamanai, an important commercial center for more than 3,000 years; Xunantunich, where recent excavations have uncovered the tomb of an important king; Altun Ha, a major center that controlled the Maya trade routes along the Caribbean coast; and the remote southern cities of Lubaantun and Nim Li Punit, where yet another inscribed stela has recently been found.

Keep reading to learn more about this incredible Belize archaeological tour, and please [get in touch](#) if you have any questions.



Daily Itinerary

Day 1

Depart for Belize

Depart on a flight bound for Belize.

Upon arrival, we will drive north to the New River. From here, a river cruise through unspoiled lowlands takes us to our lodgings for the next two nights, the Lamanai Outpost Lodge. Along the way, we may see hawk-like snail kites, ospreys, gray-necked woodrails, and northern jacanas, locally known as Jesus Christ birds or “lily trotters” as they appear to walk on water.

Our accommodations at the lodge feature charming wooden casitas built on a bluff overlooking an uninhabited lagoon on the edge of Lamanai National Park. Join a sunset cocktail cruise before gathering for a special welcome dinner at the lodge. (D)

Day 2

Touring Lamanai

We spend today at Lamanai. Archaeological excavations have revealed that the site was occupied as early as 1500 BC. Maya were still living here in 1641 when Catholic priests attempted to convert them — there is evidence that the city had a continuous occupation for over 3,000 years.

One of the most intriguing pieces found here is Stela 9, a finely carved monument created in 625 to commemorate Lord Smoking Shell, who had died 17 years earlier. As we walk through the ruins, we may also visit the historic section of the site. Standing in front of the ruins of the church is an unpainted stela carried here by the 17th century Maya from the prehistoric part of the site. (B/L/D)

Day 3

Tour of Altun Ha

Today, we depart back downriver and drive to Altun Ha, the first archaeological site in Belize to be scientifically excavated. Occupied since 1000 BC, the site flourished throughout the Classic period before being abandoned around AD 900.

The site’s many pyramids cluster around two large plazas and many unusually rich tombs were discovered within them. One of these, nicknamed the “Sun God’s Tomb” contained the largest carved block of jade ever found in the Maya area, and was thought to portray the Sun God himself, K’inich Ahau.

Overnight tonight in The Great House, a Belizean landmark located in the renowned Fort George area. Built in 1927, this magnificent four-story residence is probably the largest classic wooden home still in existence in Belize. Originally built as a family home, it is now a small hotel that will take us back to the early colonial times of Belize. (B/L/D)



Daily Itinerary *(cont'd)*

Day 4

Visit the Belize Museum and Belize Zoo

The day begins at the Belize Museum, housed within a two-story brick fortress built in 1857 that was once Her Majesty's Prison. Home to some of the most hardened criminals from Belize's colonial period to shortly after Independence, today the transformed Museum of Belize provides visitors with a historical roadmap into Belize's vibrant past while retaining mementos of the building's former residents.

As we drive southwest from Belize City, we will stop at the Belize Zoo, dedicated to the preservation of Belize's magnificent biodiversity. Here, Sharon Matola, the Founding Director of the zoo (and former lion tamer!), will meet with us to introduce us to the Belizean indigenous animals housed at the zoo.

Overnight for three nights at Sweet Songs Lodge, a jungle lodge in western Belize's Cayo District. (B/L/D)



Day 5

Visit Cahal Pech and Xunantunich

Cahal Pech, situated along the west bank of the Macal River, offers a commanding view of the Maya Mountains to the south and the fertile valleys of the Belize River below. The city's late Preclassic temples and two separate ball courts display fine examples of Maya craftsmanship, suggesting this site was a royal hilltop residence. We will meet with the project director of this site for a private tour.

After lunch in a local restaurant, continue to Xunantunich, reached only by hand-cranked ferry across the Mopan River and a mile hike on the other side. The tallest pyramid at this site, towering over the surrounding countryside, displays a splendid 30-foot-long stucco frieze dating to 800-900 AD, at a time when much of the rest of the Maya world was collapsing. If available, Dr. Jaime Awe, the project director, will join us to talk about the discovery of a royal tomb in 2016 that suggests tantalizing connections to the Snake Dynasty. (B/L/D)



Daily Itinerary *(cont'd)*

Day 6

Tour of Caracol

Hidden deep within the Maya Mountains lies the remote Maya city of Caracol, one of the largest of the ancient American cities and the largest in Belize. It is noted not only for its size but also for its prowess in the Snake Kingdom war which includes the defeat of Tikal in 562 AD and subsequent conquest of Naranjo in 631 AD.

In 1986, a ball court marker was found that recorded the military victory of Yajawte' K'inich of Caracol and his allies over the warlords of Tikal. This magnificent city was built in an area without a natural water source, but the ancient Maya constructed a reservoir system that is an engineering masterpiece that still functions today.

There will be time to walk through the canopy deck to observe the animals that appear after dark. (B/L/D)



Day 7

The Gulisi Garifuna Museum and Punta Gorda

Our drive along the Hummingbird Highway takes us to the town of Dangriga, home to the Garifuna, a unique Belize ethnic group. The Gulisi Garifuna Museum will be our first stop to see the displays about Garifuna history and culture.

Lunch will be at the Pelican Beach Resort, with views beyond the white sand beach to the sparkling azure sea beyond. We will then continue south across river after river to Punta Gorda and the Cotton Tree Lodge, a resort that is a Jungle Lodge, organic farm, and a 12,000-acre nature reserve. This is our home for the next two nights. (B/L/D)

Day 8

Touring Lubaantun and Nim Li Punit

Today's all-day tour takes us through the spectacular jungle-shrouded Maya Mountains to two archaeological sites. Lubaantun was a late Classic ceremonial center noted for its unusual style of construction, distinctive for southern Belize. Shadowed by the jungle canopy and standing on stone terraces are large temples made of dressed stone blocks with no mortar binding them together.

Nim Li Punit was an important city during the Late Classic Period and may have held a special relationship with nearby Lubaantun. Of the more than 25 stone monuments found at the site, at least eight are carved. One of them is 32 feet long and is the tallest inscribed stela in Belize. Nim Li Punit means "Big Hat" in the local Maya language and is named for the impressive headdress worn by the ruler depicted on the monolith. Enjoy a farewell dinner at the hotel. (B/L/D)

Daily Itinerary *(cont'd)*

Day 9

Depart Belize

Fly from Punta Gorda to Belize City in time for our flights back home. (B)

PLEASE NOTE: This is a sample itinerary that is typical of our trip offerings. In general, you can expect a very similar program, though days may be swapped depending on availability, opening hours, and other affecting factors.

Pre and Post Trip Extensions

Far Horizons offers pre or post extensions for many of our trips. We can also arrange extra nights at the arrival and departure hotel should you wish to arrive early or depart later. Please contact us for details.

Why Take This Tour?

Private tour of Xunantunich with the Project Director

Learn about a unique culture at the Garifuna Museum

Private tour of Cahal Pech with the Project Director

Private tour of the Belize Zoo

Evening cocktail cruise on the New River

Limited to 14 participants





Tour Information

Pricing

For current pricing, please visit farhorizons.com and navigate to our trip page.

Inclusions

Price based on double occupancy and includes:

- Internal flights during the trip (if applicable/unless otherwise noted)
- The accompaniment of your scholar throughout the entire trip
- Local English-speaking guide
- Hotel accommodations (3 or 4 stars; or best available based in the area)
- Ground transportation
- Airport transfers for arrivals and departures
- Most meals as noted in the itinerary
- Entry fees to all included sites and museums
- Gratuities to guides, drivers, and restaurant and hotel staff
- Coordination for any private presentations or tours

Trip prices are based on a minimum number of participants. If this minimum number is not met, trip prices are subject to change. Should the prices need to change, Far Horizons will reach out to registered guests to discuss directly.

Single Supplement

Should a roommate be requested and one not be available, the single supplement will be charged.

Exclusions

- International round trip airfare
- A separate donation check of \$150.00 per person to a designated donation project
- Passport or visa fees
- Required vaccines or tests
- Airport or departure taxes
- Alcoholic drinks, beverages or food not included on set menus
- Excess baggage charges
- Personal tips and hotel incidental expenses
- Laundry or other items of a personal nature

Donation Checks

As a tour company that benefits from the cultural and natural riches of our destinations, we have a policy of donating to the scientific and cultural sites and projects which we visit. This has created a bond between Far Horizons and the academic and local communities that has helped us establish an extensive list of lecturers and contacts in each of our destinations. We ask that each participant donate to the noteworthy project we designate. The donation amount is \$150.00 per person. Note that the donation is required as part of your registration for the trip and that it is non-refundable.

Exchange Rate Fluctuations

Prices are based on currency exchange rates keeping below a projected level. While it is unlikely, if the exchange rates should change substantially, Far Horizons reserves the right to charge an additional amount to the trip cost.

Registration

A deposit of \$1000 per person is required along with your registration & health forms, which will be linked in the email confirmation you receive once you pay your deposit on our booking platform. Final payment is due 120 days before departure. Prior to departure, you will be sent a reading list and a tour bulletin containing travel information.



Tour Information *(cont'd)*

Cancellation

Cancellations received in writing at least 120 days before departure will receive a refund less a \$500 per person administrative fee. Cancellations received less than 120 days before the departure date will not receive a refund. If for any reason you are unable to complete the trip, Far Horizons will not reimburse any fees. Upon registering for the tour, the purchase of travel protection with both trip cancellation and emergency evacuation is strongly advised. Links to recommended insurance policies will be included in the email you receive confirming receipt of your deposit.

Expectations During Travel

Our trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active, have a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. We have designed this trip to be as comfortable as possible, while also aiming to visit some remote or unique sites that other companies do not attempt to include in their itineraries. There may be days where we have very long drives and the conditions of the roads may vary. Hotels and transportation in some remote areas may not be up to western standards. There may be times when no bellhops are available; please pack with the understanding that you need to be able to handle your own luggage at times. Sometimes we may be walking over uneven trails for a mile or more; hiking boots are strongly recommended. Not every meal will be haute cuisine and several lunches may be picnics or box lunches. By maintaining a flexible attitude we will soon be captivated by the beauty of the natural scenery, the hospitality of the local people, and the fascinating sites we will see. Your flexibility and patience will be appreciated.

Air Ticketing

International round trip flights are not included in the cost of the trip. If Far Horizons must change the trip dates or cancel the trip for any reason, Far Horizons is not responsible for any air ticket you may have purchased. Please send your complete air schedule as soon as you have it. NOTE: Please contact Far Horizons if you would like for us to handle your air ticketing.

Private Tours and Talks

The private tours of archaeological sites and talks by specialists are scheduled in advance and include a donation to each. Specialists working at these sites are excited about showing their work to interested enthusiasts. However, please be aware that there may be times when the director or a member of the staff may not be on site when our groups arrive due to other commitments.

Walking and Standing

Far Horizons expects all participants to be physically active and able to walk and climb independently throughout the full touring days. This includes walking over uneven terrain (uphill and downhill) for 2 miles or more at each site. You should expect to be on your feet for much of each day, averaging as much as 5 miles of walking per day. **As such, each participant should be able to walk unaided at a pace of 3 miles per hour for at least an hour at a time, and to stand unsupported for at least 60 minutes.** Bearing this in mind, we suggest that, if you have not already done so, you begin walking several miles every day, ideally including stairs and hills. If you have questions about your ability to keep up with the group or the strenuous nature of this trip, please contact the Far Horizons staff.



Travel Insurance

We strongly recommend that you consider purchasing travel insurance. Should illness or an unforeseen event force you to cancel your travel plans after your final payment or during your trip, it would be doubly unfortunate to incur a significant financial loss. Trip cancellation protection will enable you to be reimbursed for the loss of your payment if you are unable to travel for any of the covered reasons in the "Outline of Coverage" section, or should you have an accident or suffer from any medical conditions during the trip.

Far Horizons offers customized protection plans through Travel Insured International (a Crum & Forster Company) with the following benefits:

- Trip Cancellation and Trip Interruption for covered reasons
- Trip Delay
- Baggage Loss and Baggage Delay
- Emergency Medical Expenses and Emergency Medical Evacuation
- 24-Hour Accidental Death & Dismemberment
- 24-Hour Travel Assistance & Concierge Services
- Option to upgrade to 'Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR)

We recommend reviewing the language in detail so you are aware of specific parameters; Depending on the policy, to waive the Pre-Existing Medical Condition Exclusion or to upgrade to CFAR coverage, the plan must be purchased within 14 to 21 days of the initial trip deposit, full trip cost must be insured, and traveler is medically fit at time of plan purchase. Otherwise, coverage may be purchased at any time prior to departure.

To obtain a personalized quote and/or purchase a plan through Far Horizons/Travel Insured International, simply click [HERE](#). For specific questions regarding the Worldwide Protector Plan, please contact Travel Insured International's Customer Care Center at 1-800-243-3174 or by email at customercare@travelinsured.com, and refer to Far Horizons' account number: 54070.

Itinerary Changes

Changes in our itinerary, accommodations, and transportation schedules may occur while traveling. While we are committed to keeping as close to the published details as possible, sometimes it is simply not possible. Weather events, government affairs, or other factors out of our control sometimes come into play. A good book to read as well as patience, flexible attitude, and a sense of humor are essential.





Meet Your Study Leader...

Dr. Stanley Guenter

Stanley Guenter was first introduced to the Maya culture and ancient script at the age of ten. He has been studying the Mesoamerican cultures ever since. He obtained his undergraduate degree at the University of Calgary, his Master's Degree at La Trobe University in Melbourne Australia, and his PhD in Archaeology from Southern Methodist University.

He has worked on archaeological projects in eastern Tabasco, Mexico and is currently an epigrapher and archaeologist with two archaeological projects in Guatemala: The Regional Archaeological Investigations of Northern Petén, Guatemala (RAINPEG) and the Southern Methodist University El Peru/Waka' project.

Stanley is one of the outstanding rising stars of Mesoamerican writing systems and has taught and presented at many conferences in Canada, the United States, Australia, Germany and Denmark.

He has done a full study of the inscriptions of Dos Pilas in relation to Tikal (you may see the readings on mesoweb.com).



What People Are Saying About...

Dr. Stanley Guenter

“Stan is amazing! He was full of information and attentive, and was always so quick to share. He was very attentive and patient with questions. He had a great sense of humor too and a very pleasant, easy going personality. I hope you can entice him to lead future trips!”

– DAVID WESTPHAL



Why Travel with Far Horizons?

With over forty years of experience, and an 85% customer return rate, we have stood the test of time. Remind yourself what makes Far Horizons so unique.

✦ Scholar Led Tours

Every tour is led by a well-respected PhD scholar with expertise in the subject & regions we visit.

✦ Trusted Partnerships

Trusted Partnerships: Every tour is led by a well-respected PhD scholar with expertise in the subject & regions we visit.

✦ Behind the Scenes Access

Our groups have private access to closed areas and on-site specialists.

✦ Unique Trips

Our itineraries are designed to showcase sites that are off-the-beaten path; we explore places that many travelers never see.

✦ Personalized Service

We love knowing our guests and helping with the decision process. We are here to assist you.

✦ Small Groups

Our tours have a maximum of 14 travelers. So you can trust that you will have a boutique experience every time.



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Email with Questions

journeys@farhorizons.com

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