



Mr I L Williams
Director of Sport
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14th March 2017

Dear Explorer,

Ellesmere College Belize Expedition – July 2019

Ellesmere is offering a once in a lifetime opportunity to visit and work in one of the worlds natural wonders. The Belize barrier reef is the second largest reef system in the world and, with only 10% explored, it is a natural paradise. Working with Blue Ventures, we intend to travel to Belize for a two-week camp. We will help to study the marine life and ecosystems in an attempt to help preserve this reef system and raise awareness of sustainable practice in the community. The trip will provide an unrivalled opportunity to study and learn about this bio diverse area.

Blue Ventures is an award-winning marine conservation organisation dedicated to conservation, education and sustainable development in tropical coastal communities.

They have a team of dedicated researchers and volunteers who study all aspects of the marine ecosystem - from fish species and coral all the way through to local fishing techniques and ways of life.



View from the cabanas at Bacalar Chico Dive Camp the base for the expedition

Belize Expedition overview: The focus of the work in Belize is the monitoring of the Bacalar Chico Marine Reserve through surveys carried out by the teams of staff and volunteers. With numerous marine species on the endangered species list found in Bacalar Chico Marine Reserve in northern Belize, including the Goliath and the Nassau Groupers, fish species and abundance surveys are one of the priority monitoring activities presently carried out by Blue Ventures in the region. Research teams are actively involved in collecting baseline data for the area and establishing sites for long term monitoring. This will assess the sustainability of fishing practices and the effectiveness of the existing Marine Protected Areas. Surveys of benthic community composition, coral species diversity, and the size and health of coral colonies are additional priorities of the Blue Ventures team at present, assessing the long term health and resilience of the region's reef ecosystems to future environmental disturbance and climate change.

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The huge expanses of mangrove and seagrass ecosystems and the region's extensive seagrass beds are also being monitored by Blue Ventures teams in order to improve the understanding of the status of – and threats to – these vulnerable ecosystems. Northern Belize's mangroves are one of the few remaining strongholds for the West Indian manatee and the American saltwater crocodile, while the region's seagrass beds provide a key food source for both manatees and the 5 species of turtle found in Belize's waters.

The Blue Ventures Expedition in Belize is based at the Dive Camp within the Bacalar Chico Marine Reserve where the expedition team is based. You do not need to have any diving experience to take part in this expedition.

For a 2-week expedition for Ellesmere College, a bespoke training programme and research programme will be developed in collaboration with the teaching staff to meet the objectives for the trip. The science training requirements are dependent on the objectives of the trip, examples of activities that could be undertaken include: snorkel surveys of fish populations in mangroves, bird surveys, manatee surveys, and dolphin surveys. An example itinerary is listed below but as there is a large permanent staff team and two boats there is the flexibility to offer a number of water based activities and surveys.



**If you like this,
Then this expedition is for you.**

or this...

Date	Location	Activity
Day 1	Arrive Philip S.W. Goldson International Airport	Transfer from airport to Bacalar Chico Marine Reserve. Dive Camp (BCDC) via: Private bus from airport to Belize City (30 minutes). Water Taxi to San Pedro town on Ambergris Key (75 minutes). Boat from San Pedro to BCDC (75 minutes).
Days 2 to 6	BCDC	Snorkel survey and marine mammal survey training and marine science training.
Day 7	San Pedro or BCDC	Day-off – rest day at BCDC or recreational trip to San Pedro Town on Ambergris Caye.

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Days 8 to 13	BCDC	Science surveys.
Day 14	Depart BCDC	Transfer from BCDC to airport via: Boat from BCDC to San Pedro, Water Taxi from San Pedro to Belize City, Belize City to airport for international flight.

Expedition fees

For the expedition based at Bacalar Chico Marine Reserve the expedition cost will be £2450. Including flights, meals and transfers outside the UK.

What is and isn't included in the expedition fees:

Included in your expedition cost:

- Expedition accommodation for the duration of the stay in locally constructed cabanas. There is a maximum of 4 people per cabana in bunkbeds. Sheets, pillows and sand-fly nets are provided.
- All group transfers to and from Phillip S.W. Goldson International Airport – see itinerary overview for details.
- Three meals per day, including water, tea and coffee during the expedition dates while at BCDC. Meals during transit and off-site are the responsibility of the individual. It may not be possible to cater for all dietary requirements.
- Science Training with the team, including science Survey training.
- Comprehensive logistical support and pastoral care from the team of permanent staff – the staff team would comprise: an Expedition Manager, two field scientists, two boat captains, a chef and a night-watchman.
- Health and safety provision from the Expedition Manager and field team. Safety protocols and risk assessments are available to view on request. Full Medivac insurance.
- International flights.
- Carbon offset donation.

Not included in your expedition cost:

- Personal equipment for in-water activities: wetsuit or rash-vest, mask, snorkel, fins - Blue Ventures can provide detailed lists of requirements.
- Personal field equipment: e.g. sleeping bag and torch.
- Malaria prophylaxis and some vaccinations, please contact your family doctor or local travel clinic for the latest information on requirements for Belize.
- Medical checks for fitness to participate in the expedition – some Doctors will charge for this service.
- Belize Visa cost, ESTA.
- Additional Personal travel insurance, comprehensive policies are recommended – The trip will be covered via the comprehensive school trips insurance at no additional cost.
- Spending money for drinks, snacks and souvenirs.

I am sure you will agree that this is truly a remarkable opportunity - a once-in-a-lifetime adventure. This kind of experience will certainly help with university applications and help grow you individually. We visited in 2015 and were only the second school in the world to be hosted so it really is a very unique opportunity.

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Applications will close on Tuesday 2nd May 2017. We are starting the payment and application process early because it will help to spread the payment costs and we need to secure a bespoke program with Blue Ventures for a short two week expedition.

Spaces on the trip are limited. We need a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 16. The last trip proved very popular so an early reply would be recommended. A final selection process may need to be undertaken to secure a place.

Yours sincerely,

L Williams

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Please return this completed slip by **2nd May 2017** to: Mr I Williams, Director of Sport, Ellesmere College.

Ellesmere College Belize Expedition – July 2019

I would like my son/daughter (*Pupil Name*): _____
be included in the Belize expedition. I enclose a deposit of £250 and **I understand that this will only be refunded if the trip does not take place.**

Spaces on the trip are limited and I understand that a final selection process may need to be undertaken to secure a final place, in which case the deposit will be returned in the event of your son/daughter not being selected.

I agree to the following schedule of payments and will set up a Standing Order with the College once a place has been confirmed. (Details of the account to be credited will be sent out with the confirmation).

By Standing order payments of £100 over 22 months starting on 1st June 2017

A final balance payment may be required when flights costs are confirmed, but at present it is anticipated that the deposit plus Standing Order payments (£250 + £2200 = £2450) will be sufficient to cover the cost of the trip. Any surplus monies will be returned upon the completion of the trip.

Signed (*Parent*): _____ Date: _____

Print name (*Parent*): _____

Email contact (*Parent*): _____

Name of Pupil: _____ Tutor Group: _____

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