

International Zoological Expeditions, Inc.

210 Washington Street Sherborn, MA 01770

www.izebelize.com

**Please read this handbook carefully.
It includes a great deal of information that will
help make your travel with IZE an adventure of a
lifetime!**

IZE OFFICE - US

Phone:.....	508-655-1461 (8:00AM – 5:00PM M-F)
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IMPORTANT:

BELIZE LAW

Students under 18 years of age must have proper documentation, including a valid passport and letter of parental consent/or school's authorization letter. *Children (under 18 years of age) traveling with one parent require a notarized letter of authority from the other parent indicating travel consent.

DOCUMENTATION

Visitors to Belize must possess a passport valid for at least three months after the date of arrival and a return ticket. Visas are not required for citizens of the United States and its territories, Canada, United Kingdom and its territories, European Union, Caribbean and Central American Countries. Traveling from Belize to Guatemala: Entry fee of BZ\$37.50 (US\$18.75), payable in BZ\$ or US\$. Non-US citizens be sure that your papers are in order for re-entry into the US if returning there. Re-Entry fee from Guatemala to Belize by air is \$25.00 US per person. You may be asked by Belizean Customs the purpose of your visit, the length of your stay and your address while in Belize. Tell them you are there to study Biology for the total length of your stay with IZE (International Zoological Expeditions) and you will be staying at the IZE sites in Belize. If you are not a US citizen you should check with the Belize Consulate about a visa. You can call them at 800-624-0686 or the Belize Embassy in Washington, DC at 1-202-332-9636.

INSURANCE

It is recommended but not required that all participants should carry an active health and trip cancellation insurance policy. Low cost trip cancellation and baggage insurance is available for your expedition. Please contact Jon at 508-655-1461 for more details.

REFUNDS

IZE has a no refund policy. The reason we have such a no refunds policy is because these workshops are run on such a tight budget that if anyone cancels it would absolutely affect the cost for every other participant and we can not raise the rates in the 11th hour. For a small fee, we strongly recommend you purchase travel insurance. Please contact the IZE office for a travel insurance application.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

IZE works very hard to keep the cost of your program to a bare minimum. The aim is to give as many students and teachers the opportunity to experience the ecosystems of the reef and rain-forests. Included in your program fee is the cost of all charter busses, guides, hotels, lodges, charter boats, meals at IZE field stations only, and boat trips to study sites at South Water Caye (unless otherwise provided for). The cost of meals while in transit or meals at the hotels (other than IZE sites), departure tax of \$36.25 US, park fees, Scuba diving trips and rentals, fishing trips and guides, tips or porter fees are not included.

We would like to thank you for choosing IZE for your study abroad experience. We expect that your time spent with us will leave you with a better appreciation and understanding of two unique ecosystems, the coral reefs and rainforests of the tropics. We are certain that the warmth of the Belizean people and the mysteries of the ancient Maya will have you planning your return trip! We urge you to ask lots of questions and to get as deeply involved as you can.

IZE has an impeccable safety record. Since 1970 we have shown tens of thousands of people the wonders of Belize without a single major accident. This good fortune may be attributed to strict safety policies that we have set up and which we expect all of our guests to abide by. We simply will not tolerate any individuals who act in an irresponsible manner as to jeopardize the safety or well being of themselves or any of the other group members.

BLUE CREEK

There is one main fieldstation with several cabins of various sizes. All cabins except one are equipped with single bunk style beds with mattresses and pillows. One cabin is equipped with a double bed. **You will need to take along your own sheets or light sleeping bag and pillowcase.** Since most workshops are filled, you will not be able to have your own cabin and all will have to share accommodations with other members of your group. The showers and toilets are in the fieldstation. You may also use the river for bathing as long as you use biodegradable soap.

Be prepared - conditions may be hot, humid, muddy and down right wet. After all it is a true rainforest and heat, humidity, and lots of rain are what rainforests are all about. You may want to consider making a rule among your bunk mates to leave all muddy shoes outside the cabin on the deck. Clothing seems to never really get dry so bring lots of talc powder, extra sneakers, plastic bags for wet clothing and waterproof containers for your cameras.

In the past many of our clients have asked what they could bring as gifts for the Mayan & Ketchi children. The best items would be pens, pencils, notebooks, paper, crayons, children's storybooks and any educational items you may no longer need. The Mayan Children and Adults will be on hand to carry your bags into Blue Creek for a small porter fee.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS AT BLUE CREEK

1. Bottled drinking water is provided in the main lodge – be sure to bring your water bottle.
2. While visiting with the local Mayans in the village, you may be offered food and drink. Unless they are served freshly cooked and hot, it would be best to graciously pass with a very polite “no thank you”. Our digestive bacteria's are not quite the same.
3. Never leave the station area without checking with staff or chaperones.
4. Do not travel off on trails alone.
5. Never step over logs (step on top and then off) or place hands or feet where you can not see.
6. Learn to identify Warre Palms and avoid touching them.
7. Never walk out at night without a headlamp or flashlight.
8. Do not enter any caves without guides.
9. Never go barefoot.
10. Shake out all shoes and clothing before putting them on. Scorpions and tarantulas are common but their stings are not serious unless you are allergic. Please let IZE Staff know of any and all allergies that you may have.
11. The electrical system is 110V at both Blue Creek
12. There is no internet service at the field station & lodges at Blue Creek.
13. Sunscreen and bug repellent are highly recommended.
14. Report any scrapes, cuts, etc.. and get them treated.

With the Mayan Village of Blue Creek so close to the IZE field site, you will have a chance to meet many people from this community while you are studying and working at Blue Creek. This community is rich in culture and knowledge of the surrounding habitat. There is much that this village has to offer and teach, and you are highly encouraged to interact with village members. Please remember that you are from a different culture and that you are a guest. During the process of conversation it is possible for misunderstandings and confusion to be encountered by both sides. In order to ensure that interactions between you and members of the Blue Creek Community are rewarding and void of misunderstanding, please keep the following in mind:

There are many artisans from the Blue Creek Village that have created beautiful crafts for sale that should be purchased only at designated locations during organized craft sessions that will be set by your IZE leader. Please remember that your interest to purchase crafts is highly encouraged but you should buy only things that interest you and should not feel forced to buy anything that you do not want.

Plan on using either Belize or US currency for any purchases, do not plan on trading any of your belongings for crafts, unless you are asked by someone who is specifically interested in what you have.

If you and or your group have things such as books, pencils, paper, etc., that you wish to give to the Blue Creek Village please go through the appropriate IZE staff person.

Please do not leave your belongings around the field site and only IZE participants and IZE staff are allowed in your cabin. If you want to bring someone from outside of your group into your cabin please check with the appropriate IZE staff person first.

Please do not bring candy or gum to give away to people outside of your group, and do not give away money unless you are paying for a service or making a purchase.

Try to be considerate with regard to conversation, remembering that the people of the Blue Creek Community have a rich and complex culture equal to your own. Topics such as religion, and certain aspects of family life are very personal to people of all cultures which includes members of the Blue Creek Community, so respect should be taken with discussions of a sensitive nature.

Do not walk in someone's home unless you are invited and be respectful with regard to photography.

Please do not pick any herbs or fruits, which grow around someone's house or Milpa farm. Care should be taken if you are offered any food or drink that has not been prepared in an IZE kitchen or at a designated IZE site. It only takes one small sip of water that has not been properly treated to send you to your bunk for 2 or 3 miserable days.

Do not accept as gifts or purchase artifacts, ecofacts, plants, insect or animal products. Please be appropriate with the consumption of alcohol (minors are prohibited in the partaking of alcohol beverages) and the use of illegal drugs is strictly prohibited.

There are a number of small family run stores (COOL STOPS) in the village that sell sodas and snacks. You are welcomed to visit these vendors. When arriving and leaving the field site many residents of Blue Creek village will offer portering services for transporting your baggage. You can use this service but plan on spending between \$5.00 - \$10.00 US per bag.

Many people visit and study at the Blue Creek Research Station each year and to keep the impact on the ecology and wildlife to a minimum please keep the following in mind:

Do not cut, remove, collect, or trample vegetation such as vines, shrubs, trees, and ground cover unless advised by the field station biologist.

Do not collect, kill or relocate wildlife such as insects, arachnids, mollusks, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and birds unless advised by the field station biologist.

Do not litter or start fires.

Replace all over turned rocks and logs.

Do not fish from the Blue Creek River.

Keep the noise level to a minimum, please use headsets while listening to music.

Do not flush paper products down the toilet, discard them in appropriate receptacles.

Use only biodegradable products when bathing in the river

SOUTH WATER CAYE

On the island the lodge will sleep 34 people in two dormitory style rooms. It is attached to the dining hall, lecture hall and lab and surrounded by a wrap around porch to catch the sea breezes. There is an attached bathroom for the males and one for the females. We have a second lodge for smaller groups. We also have cabanas that might be available for use by group leaders as well as a smaller lodge for students for those groups that exceed 32 people.

SAFTEY CONSIDERATIONS

- 1) Except at immediate beach area, NEVER wade barefoot.
- 2) Do not swim at night unless you are on an organized night snorkel/dive.
- 3) Do not walk on the reef or step on any living coral.
- 4) Never ever swim in water over your head without IZE supervision.
- 5) Never swim alone; the buddy system is required at all IZE sites.
- 6) Use plenty of sun screen and reapply it often.
- 7) Use a life jacket when traveling in any boats.
- 8) Get out of the water during electrical storms
- 9) Report any scrapes, cuts, etc.. and get them treated.
- 10) Please respect the property of others; do not trespass. Check with the station manager for private property boundaries.
- 11) Please help us conserve water. Fresh water is a precious commodity on the Caye!
- 12) Please let IZE Staff know of any allergies you may have.

South Water Caye is powered by solar and a generator backup system. Please, no hairdryers or curling irons. Use lights conservatively and shut off when not in use..

CONSERVATION WHILE AT SOUTH WATER CAYE

- 1) Do not pick anything, including coral, dead or alive.
- 2) No spear guns or slings may be used
- 3) Please do not capture hermit crabs or lizards on the island
- 4) If you are fishing please keep only what you can eat for the day.
- 5) Do not purchase turtle shell or black coral crafts and jewelry.
- 6) Do not touch any living coral, their polyps will die when touched.

- 7) When snorkeling, do not stand or lean on the coral.
- 8) When walking out to the reef, step onto sand and not live coral. Also do not stand on the reef crest.
- 9) Do not tear hermit crabs or snails from their shells.
- 10) Secure all of your trash, plastic and cigarette butts properly. Do not discard paper and plastic waste in the water or beach.

We do appreciate and thank you for keeping your impact on this area to a minimum.

Take with you Photographs and Memories ⇒ Leave Behind only Footprints

Our South Water Caye Field Station is located within the one of the largest marine reserves in Belize. The Belize Fisheries Department helps protect these precious resources and charges a Park Fee to support the sustainable management of the reserve which is included in your package cost.

HEALTH

No vaccinations are required for entrance into Belize or Guatemala. We urge you however, to consult your physician for his or her advice in this respect. In particular you should ask about the advisability of anti-malarial medication, gamma globulin and typhoid and Hepatitis A and B shots and updating your tetanus shot. Throughout the course of the expedition you will have several orientation meetings discussing health and safety precautions. If you have any physical or medical limitations you must advise IZE before beginning your expedition.

TIME

Belize is 2 hours behind Eastern Standard Time (only one hour between October and April because Belize does not observe daylight savings).

MONEY

US dollars are accepted almost everywhere we visit. The rate of exchange is BZD 2 = \$1 US. Large bills (anything above a \$20) are a little more difficult to cash. Most restaurants, shops, etc. are listed in BZ\$. Travelers checks are typically accepted although not always at some of the smaller shops, so make sure you have some cash with you. You will lose slightly on the exchange when using travelers checks. Visa & MasterCard are accepted at most sites and are accepted for purchases to pay for any diving on South Water Caye. ***US Coins are not accepted in the country of Belize.***

MEALS

The food is good and plentiful with local Caribbean fruits and vegetables and typical Belizean dishes. Meals are generally served buffet style and our breads are home baked. Juice or kool-aid is served with every meal. Anyone with special dietary needs or requests – make sure you filled out your participant forms and is in the IZE US office prior to departure. Also, be sure to speak with the managers when you reach IZE field stations.

*Local diet - Like most Caribbean countries, the diet in Belize stresses corn, rice, beans, chicken, fish and fruits.

*Expedition Food - If you imagined eating cold, unsavory foodstuff out of tin cans, you will be pleasantly surprised. Most of our meals will be hot and balanced. A typical breakfast might include fruit, eggs, bacon, OJ, coffee (instant), tea and journey cakes or fry jacks. Lunch might be a hot plate of rice and beans, fried fish or a sandwich. Dinner - chicken, beef or fresh sea food. Take notice - Beans and rice are the primary foods of Belize so get ready!!!

TIPPING

Is a personal decision. Throughout the country, service staff can be tipped for a job well done. When deciding on a tip, the same basic formula you would use in the States will do in Belize.

WATER

All drinking water at IZE sites is purified Water. Bottled water can be found throughout the facilities, don't forget your water bottles to refill! It is very safe!! For other water usage on South Water Caye, the water is rainwater collected from the roof. It is stored in a large cement vat beneath the field station and periodically pumped into a 500-gallon overhead vat. It's fed from there to the sinks and showers. Toilets are flushed with well water. Water at Blue Creek is pumped from the river and should not be used for drinking or brushing teeth. Please do not waste water. Very little rain falls between February and June. Never let water run excessively. When you take a shower, get wet, shut the water off, soap down, and then rinse. This will help us, in our efforts, to conserve this very precious resource.

WEATHER AND WHAT TO WEAR

The weather is, for the most part, hot but beautiful! Sometimes... very hot and humid. Lightweight casual summer clothing should make up the majority of the clothing you take along. Loose fitting, cotton clothes are best. During the months December through March, cold fronts from Canada, called NORTES, may arrive unexpectedly and the temperatures can plummet all the way down to 65°. I know what you're thinking - Wow! All the way down to 65°!! Let me warn you that after temperatures close to 100°, 65° will feel mighty nasty, so take along at least one set of warm clothes, such as jeans and a nice thick sweatshirt or sweater.

Daytime temperatures will range in the 90's the evenings will be in the 70's. March starts the dry season with daytime temperatures in the upper 80's to low 90's and evening temperatures in the upper 60's. The height of the dry season is the months of April and May. Daily temperatures exceeding 100° are not uncommon. The rainfall is usually less than one half inch

The months of June through October are the wettest with as much as 31 inches of rain falling in any one month at our rainforest field station in the Toledo District. The rain often comes in heavy downpours followed by bright sunshine daily. This is the time of year when the wildlife is most active. Rain gear and waterproof footwear should be part of your wardrobe.

INSECTS

Not very often, but once in a while, biting insects may come around, especially if the wind stops at South Water Caye or it has been overly wet at South Water Caye or Blue Creek. A little insect repellent will do the trick. Long gauze or light nylon pants will also be helpful for wearing at all sites at nighttime if the bugs are bothersome. Windows are screened at South Water Caye.

TRANSPORTATION - BOATS

It takes about 45 minutes for the crossing from Dangriga to South Water Caye. Dress to get wet with sea spray if the weather is windy or the seas are rough. There is no protection from the sun or rain on these boats. On occasion the seas may be too rough for safe passage and the captain may opt to postpone your trip, either to or from the island. This does not happen often but please be patient and understanding if the winds are not in your favor. It is for your own safety. The trip can be very enjoyable and it is often possible to spot sea turtles, dolphins and even a shark or two.

TRANSPORTATION - BUSES

Once in Belize, ground transportation is by chartered buses which are usually air-conditioned although there are times when something goes amiss and we get to take a bit of ole fashioned fresh air! Roads can be rough and dusty but the scenery is magical.

SNORKELING

You will be able to snorkel from both the shore and excursions on our boats during your trip. We recommend that you bring your own snorkel mask, fins and snorkel for proper fit and safety since these are personal items. We do have a limited supply of this equipment for rent on the island, please check with your group leader about availability prior to departure.

SCUBA

Scuba diving is available when you are on the island. IZE contracts with experienced Independent PADI Dive Operators in Belize. If you are certified, you must have with you your certification card or you will not be able to dive. If you are not certified, you can take the Discover Scuba course and be diving the same day, if you qualify. You can become PADI certified at our site on South Water Caye if your time here allows. Diving is not included in our packages. Check out the Diving information for pricing on our web site at: izebelize.com. Equipment can be rented from the island. If you are under 18, you must bring a signed dive form from our web site to be allowed to participate in dive activities.

RECREATION

Swimming, sunbathing or just kicking back in a hammock are available at both our fieldstations. Also available are kayaks and paddleboards for your enjoyment. All boats must be checked out with an IZE Staff member. You must wear a life jacket at all times — We also have a beach volleyball at South Water Caye and afternoon games are fast becoming a ritual. Evenings at South Water Caye can be spent at our “Theater Under the Stars” weather permitting of course. At Blue Creek there is a soccer field and the students are welcome to try their luck against the local Indians.

LIABILITY, TERMS, CONDITIONS

RESPONSIBILITY

In organizing, managing and operation these expeditions, International Zoological Expeditions, it's agents, employees and staff give notice that they act solely on behalf of and for the benefit of the participants, on the express agreement that IZE shall not be liable, financially or otherwise, for non performance or unsatisfactory service; for injury to persons, including death; for loss of, or damage to property; for accident or delay; and/or for expenses rising from strikes, weather, quarantine, sickness, government regulation, or from any act or omission of its agent or employees, and/or airline, railroad, bus company automobile rental agency, hotel, or other supplies or service.

IZE reserves the right to refuse any applicant to any expedition if it deems him/her unsuited for the project for any reason. IZE reserves the right to require any participant to withdraw from an expedition at any time, if the expedition leader deems his/her acts or conduct — including use of drugs not authorized by a medical doctor and uncooperative behavior — to be detrimental to or incompatible with the interests, harmony, comfort, or welfare of the expedition. Should such a withdrawal occur, IZE will notify parents or guardian (if the student is under 21) and return the student to the point of departure of the expedition, at which time any and all responsibility on the part of IZE will cease.

SUGGESTED READING LIST

- Humann, Paul. 1992 *The Reef Set*. New World Publications.
- Beletsky, Les. 1999 *Belize and Northern Guatemala*. Academic Press.
- Kricher, John. 1989 *A Neotropical Companion*. Princeton University Press.
- Dobson, Narda. 1973 *A History of Belize*. Longman Caribbean
- LaBastille, Anne. 1993 *Birds of the Mayas*. West of the Wind Publications
- Kaplan, Eugene. 1982 *Coral Reefs*. Peterson Field Guides.
- Myers, Norman. 1992 *The Primary Source*. W.W. Norton Company.
- Littler, Littler, Bucher, Norris. 1989 *Marine Plants of the Caribbean*. Smithsonian Institute.
Peterson Field Guide Series. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Central America*.
Houghton Mifflin Co.
- De La Haba, Louis. 1972 *Belize the Awakening Land*. Reprint from the January 1972 *National Geographic*.
- Colin, Patrick I. 1978 *Caribbean Reef Invertebrates and Plants*. THF Publications.
- Randall, John E. 1968 *Caribbean Reef Fishes*. THF Publications
- Hoeyers, L. & Henderson. 1974 *Reptiles and Amphibians of Belize*. Milwaukee Public Museum
Press
- Whitlock, R. 1976 *The Everyday Life of the Maya*. Putnam Sons, N.Y.
- Janze, Daniel. 1975 *The Ecology of Plants in the Tropics*. Edward Arnold publications, London.
- Dobson, Narda. 1973 *A History of Belize*. Longman Caribbean

CHECKLIST FOR STUDENT GROUPS

The following is a list to aid you in organizing your equipment for your expedition to Central America. Items marked with an * are absolute must - you will not be able to function properly or comfortably without them.

CLOTHING:

- ___ Trousers (Nylon) 1 or 2 pair (zip-out legs best)
- ___ Shorts - some Nylon
- ___ Underwear (cotton is best)
- ___ Shirts (at least one long sleeve)

- ___ *Sweater, sweatshirt or windbreaker - Winter Groups*
- ___ Socks (cotton)
- ___ Sturdy Hiking Boots – not leather
- ___ Sneakers with sturdy soles
- ___ Water shoes
- ___ Poncho
- ___ Hat (for sun protection) & Bandannas
- ___ Bathing suits
- ___ Sandals
- ___ Towels /washcloth

TOILETRIES:

- ___ Soap (Liquid-biodegradable)
- ___ Shampoo and rinse
- ___ Toothbrush and paste (floss)
- ___ Hair Brush

- ___ Shave gear
- ___ Small mirror
- ___ Deodorant
- ___ Hydrogen peroxide
- ___ Baby Powder
- ___ Baby wipes (quick clean-up)
- ___ Swim Ear Drops
- ___ Band-Aids
- ___ Benadryl (Topical)
- ___ Prescription medicine
- ___ Tampons, sanitary napkins
- ___ Necessary medication

**Pack all toiletries in ziplock plastic bags- 3 ounce rule in carry on luggage!
No Curling Irons or Blow Dryers Please!**

EQUIPMENT:

- ___ Light sleeping bag or 2 sets of sheets and pillow
- ___ Mask, fins and snorkel*
- ___ Day pack
- ___ Flashlite & headlamp with extra batteries *
- ___ Photo equipment and extra cards
- ___ Insect Repellent
- ___ Sun lotion - sun block*
- ___ Underwater Camera - disposable
- ___ Water Bottle*
- ___ Note book or journal
- ___ Plastic bags for wet clothes (whole box)
- ___ Leather Gloves for climbing
- ___ Mesh bag (to hang wet clothes in)
- ___ Binoculars
- ___ Strong plastic bags (for wet clothes)
- ___ snorkel gear Fins, mask, skins. Dive skins or wet suit (if sensitive to sun or cold)

OTHER STUFF:

- _____ Passport *
- _____ Visa if not U.S. citizen
- _____ Cash *(at least \$300.00 more if you are diving)
- _____ Plane ticket*
- _____ Credit card or travelers checks
- _____ Tetanus shot should be up to date
- _____ Beach Towel (at least 1)
- _____ Sunglasses

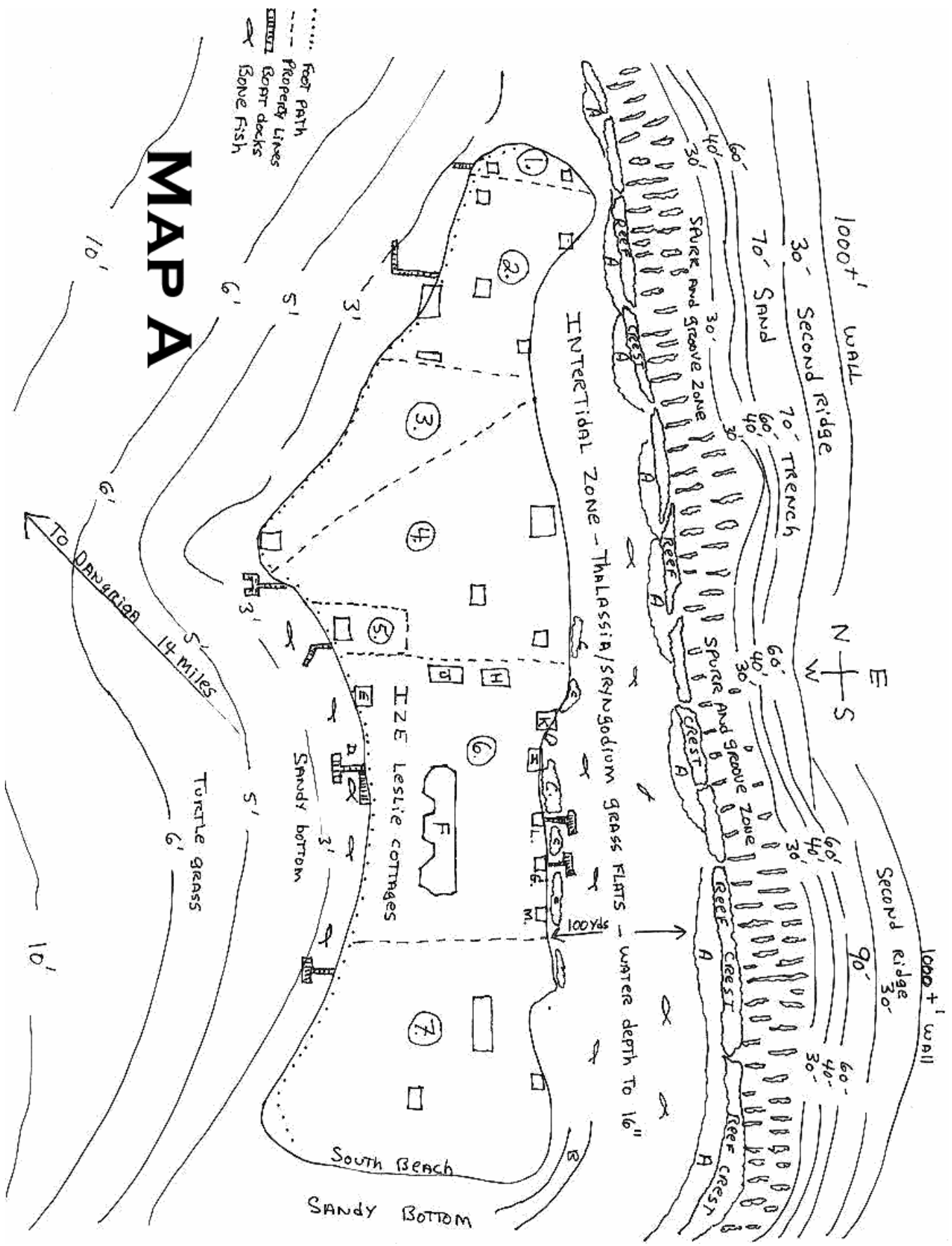
Map

1. Vacation Cottages of local Belizean residents
2. Private property of the Blue Marlin Lodge
3. Private property
4. Private property
- 5 & 7 Private property of Pelican Beach
6. IZE/Leslie Cottage property

A. Coral Rubble Zone - A high energy zone, the water ranges from 2 to 45 feet in depth. These rubble areas extend northward for nearly five miles (almost to Tobacco Caye). It is an excellent place to snorkel with an abundance of coral and fish. Many lobsters can also be found in this area.

B. This is a small channel which drains the inter-tidal zone during tide changes. The depth is approximately 4 to 5 feet. This is another rubble area with a sandy bottom, laced with dead coral. It is a good place to check out your gear and become re-adjusted to snorkeling. The water is generally a bit more turbid here than out at the reef. There are lots of eels and yellow rays in this area. It is here between the channel and the beach that the water can exceed 98 degrees. The sun heats the water over the dark Thalassia flats, and this heated water drains into the channel.

- C. Clumps of Red Mangrove trees.
- D. The IZE / Leslie Cottage boat dock.
- E. Leslie Cottage, Manager's residence
- F. The IZE Marine Station Lodge, Dining area, and Lab
- G. Reef House (cabana)
- H. No longer exists
- I. Karen's Cottage, Sea Belize, Dive shop and staff residence, Joe's Cottage
- L. Swamp House (cabana)
- M. Mangrove Cottage



MAP A