

Beat: Travel

BELIZE Announces PHASED RE-OPENING PLAN FOR TOURISM

RE-OPENING STRATEGY FOR TOURISM

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USPA NEWS - Yesterday, the Prime Minister of Belize made the official announcement that Belize's international airport (BZE), the Philip Goldson International Airport will be opened on August 15, 2020, as part of the country's five-phase re-opening strategy for tourism. The opening of the international airport will kick-off Belize's third phase of re-opening, allowing for further travel relaxation and open entry for chartered flights, private aviation and limited re-opening of international leisure travel with approved hotels only.

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Enhanced health and safety protocols for hotels were also approved by the Honourable Jose Manuel Heredia, Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation, which serve as the foundation for the destination's newest "Tourism Gold Standard" Recognition Program for hotels, restaurants and tour operators. This 9-point program seeks to enhance the tourism industry's health and safety standards by adapting new behaviors and procedures to ensure both employees and travellers are confident in the cleanliness and safety of Belize's tourism product. Some of these new standards include:

*** Hotels

- Social distancing and the use of face masks while in public spaces
- Online check-in/out, contactless payment systems, and automated ordering/booking systems
- Hand sanitizing stations across the property
- Enhanced room cleaning and increase sanitization of public spaces and high touch surfaces
- Daily health checks for guests and employees
- Designated 'Isolation/Quarantine rooms' for suspected Covid-19 cases and action plans for handling suspected employees or guests

*** Tours, Archaeological Sites & National Parks

- New capacity restrictions for all tourism sites to ensure social distancing can be maintained
- Smaller tour groups to provide a more intimate tour experience
- Sites and Parks to manage tours by appointment to limit the number of persons on site
- Enhanced sanitization of tour equipment

Although limited in scope, this phased approach allows for the industry to re-open responsibly, to test new entry protocols, and to allow for adjustments as necessary to ensure the wellbeing of Belizeans and visitors. As the country re-opens for travel, Belize wants to assure travellers and residents that hotels and restaurants will be cleaner and safer than ever before.

*** The Travel Journey

Travelers to Belize will be comforted to know that based on proper management and containment efforts applied during the height of the pandemic, Belize was able to enjoy over 50 days of a Covid-19 free environment. Ongoing efforts will offer vacation opportunities with minimal risk of contracting Covid-19 while in Belize. In addition, with Belize having such low population density and being just a short flight away from most major US cities, the destination is well poised for post-Covid-19 travel.

All travelers to Belize will be required to adhere to health and safety measures implemented by the Government of Belize (GOB) including social distancing, hand sanitization, proper hygiene and the wearing of face masks in public spaces.

*** Pre-Travel Arrangements

- All passengers travelling to Belize will be required to download the Belize Health App and complete the required information prior to boarding the flight to Belize. A QR code with a unique ID number will be returned to the passenger, and will be used for contact tracing while in Belize.
- Passengers are encouraged to take a Covid PCR test within 72 hours of travel to Belize.

As a part of the pre-travel process, the passenger should start by booking their flight and hotel. Opening of hotels will be in a phased approach, and the first grouping of hotels that will be allowed to open include properties that:

- Have achieved the Tourism Gold Standard Certificate of Recognition, and
- Provide full service to guests. This means that these hotels are able to provide all amenities, so as to contain the guest on the property, and minimize opportunities for guest interaction within the local community. These amenities include having transportation to offer pick-up/drop-off services from the airport; access to a restaurant on property; have a pool or access to beach front; and be able to provide isolated tours, limited to guests of the property only.

Passengers are therefore encouraged to book Gold Standard approved hotels. A list of the Gold Standard approved hotels will be available at www.travelbelize.org in the coming weeks.

*** Entry Requirements

- Passengers that provide certification of a negative test result from a Covid-19 PCR test done within 72 hours of travel, will be allowed immediate entry into Belize via a 'fast track' lane.
- Passengers that do not provide a negative Covid-19 test, must test upon arrival in Belize, at the passenger's expense. A negative test result will allow entry into Belize.
- Passengers who test positive for Covid-19 at the Belize International Airport will be placed in mandatory quarantine for a minimum period of fourteen (14) days at the passenger's expense.

*** All visitors to Belize will be required to:

- Wear a mask during the entire landing, deplaning and arrival process, and while inside the airport.
- Undergo temperature checks using non-contact digital infrared thermometers or Thermal Imaging Cameras.
- Adhere to social distancing guidelines in all queues for health checks, immigration and customs inspections.
- Follow and respond to the comprehensive, pro-active, contact tracing guidelines to facilitate appropriate and rapid response from health officials, should Covid-19 symptoms develop.
- Utilize the sanitizing stations to sanitize hands frequently and facilitate other health screening requirements on arrival.

*** At the Airport

The Philip Goldson International Airport (PGIA) has implemented enhanced cleaning and sanitization protocols. These include:

- Installation of barriers and sneeze guards between passengers and Immigration & Customs officers
- Hand sanitizing stations throughout the terminal building to assist with proper hand hygiene
- Floor markers placed 6 feet apart to promote social distancing and assist passengers in the queuing process
- Sanitization of passenger luggage prior to transfer into the terminal building.

*** Departure

Residents and visitors departing from Belize will also see new enhanced health and safety measures implemented. Some of these new measures include:

- Limiting entry into the terminal building to only ticketed passengers
- Mandatory use of face masks at all times while in the terminal building
- Safety barriers installed at check-in counters and the Immigration area

- Social distancing to protect passengers

Preparation for the return of visitation via land borders and cruising are still underway and re-opening plans will be announced at a later date. The Government of Belize, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Tourism & Civil Aviation, and the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) continue to actively monitor this very fluid situation.

Source : Belize Tourism Board

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