

BRANDON SCUBA CLUB

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Summer has arrived, I hope everyone is able to get out and do some diving.

I would like to thank David Ford for the pictures on this page from his Belize dive trip as well as the article on diving in Belize he supplied for this newsletter.

Thanks also to Brian Kooistra for the dive safety article.

We had a great BBQ at the Sutherlands this week. Ryan chaired a short meeting following the meal. Don Sutherland is going to act as our new vice president and David Ford is going to work with Chris Bowman planning club events.

Don't forget to come out for the Crack The Safe Dive at Glen Beag on July 14th. See the upcoming events page for details.

Dive safe,
Ed BurrIDGE
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Laughing Bird Caye, Placencia, Belize



Argyle, divemaster with Aqua Dives



Ambergris Caye, Belize



Swimmers in Cenote Escondido, Tulum, Mexico

Scuba Diving in southern Belize

Scuba diving in Belize usually means flying into Belize City, staying at a hotel on Ambergris Caye, short boat rides out to the nearby reef, and a day trip to the 'Blue Hole'. However, there are several diving areas in the southern part of the country, but they get scant attention from both tourists and locals. In fact, most residents of northern Belize profess little (or no!) knowledge of their own country which lay south of Belize City.

Placencia is a peninsula resort community, 200 kilometres south of Belize City, and the second most popular Belizean destination for North American tourists. Several direct flights leave Belize City International Airport daily, but there is an hourly 'chicken bus' service from downtown Belize City for those with more time and/or less money. Scuba diving isn't the main attraction of Placencia, in fact, it's almost an afterthought. Most tourists come back here year after year for the slow pace of life, the ambiance, and the fishing. Then there are those diehards, like me, who insist that they came all this way to the Caribbean and they're darn well going to get wet!

Placencia is notable for its long sandy beach, has a small townsite (one gas station, a gelato shop, two general stores, several restaurants, dozens of small hotels and guest houses) and two dive shops along the harbour. My own world quickly narrowed itself down to a room at the Paradise Vacation Hotel (BZ\$30 / night, floor fan, private bathroom, access to the communal kitchen), the Purple Space Monkey Restaurant (BZ\$20 for coffee and a three-course supper), and the Splash Dive Shop.

Scuba diving in Placencia requires a 45-minute launch ride to the reef, which means paying US\$90 for a 9am departure, a two-tank dive, and lunch at Laughing Bird Caye National Park. Our group consisted of Prince (captain / divemaster), Kirk (snorkel guide / cook), two divers (Dean and myself), and two snorkellers (Barbara and Cindy). Visibility offshore of the caye was murky because of recent storms and wave action, but there is a good coral shelf and a wide variety of fish life - the usual Caribbean parrotfish / snapper / grunt / etc. species, plus several barracuda, arrow crab, a few indigo hamlet, and lots of butter hamlets. After dive #1, Dean and I shed our BCs at the boat and snorkelled ashore, a distance of only about 100 metres. Lunch under the palm trees was the Belizean standard of jerk chicken, cole slaw, rice and beans, with a jug of fruit punch. However, trading with other dive/snorkel/sunbathing groups snagged us sliced tomatoes and chocolate chip cookies. After dive #2, we once again swam ashore, then spent time talking with the other tourists, walking along the beach, sunbathing, checking out seashells, and kicking the sand, until Barbara and Cindy got tired of chasing the resident nurse shark and decided to call it a day. Trade winds usually pick up in the late afternoon, so our 2:30pm return boat ride was a bit rougher.

On my next trip to Belize, I plan to visit Tobacco Caye and/or Glover's Caye, just offshore from the town of Dandriga.

DIVING SAFETY

Once again the diving season is here and we have to start thinking about **SAFETY**. This is the time that you should be thinking about Refreshing your Dive skills; Servicing your Dive Equipment, Renewing your Dive Insurance and making sure that you know all the rules and regulations for the areas in which you might be diving.

Included in Diver Safety is ensuring that when you go on a dive that you let someone know where you are diving (Dive Location), when they can expect you back and how you can be contacted.

You must also ensure that you do a risk assessment for where you will be diving. What this means is to ensure that you dive within your limits, or if your partner is not at the level of diving that you are you stay within his/her limits. Positive peer pressure in the diving community is supporting your fellow divers on whatever decision they make with regards to that particular dive... Remember there is always tomorrow.

Do not forget your buddy checks before every dive so that you are familiar with the type of gear that he/she might be using:

B.W.R.A.F:

BCD air in air out;

Weight belt right hand release or what type of integrated system;

Releases that includes tank strap;

Air is on;

Final OK how much air does your buddy have.

A, **S.A.F.E Diver**, is that person that Slowly Ascends From Every Dive.