

WHAT TO EXPECT AT GOLDSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (BZE)

Belize has a single international airport, officially known as the Philip S.W. Goldson International Airport (designated BZE). **All international flights to Belize arrive here.** It's about the size of a typical regional airport in the US. There is only one runway and one arrival and departure terminal. About 75% of all overnight visitors to the country will come through this airport, according to the Belize Tourism Board.

Here is a little information about the airport, an explanation of what you can expect when you arrive, and tips on navigating through BZE. **Don't stress**, it's a small airport, and it will be a breeze.

Where is the Belize Airport?

Belize's only international airport is located near the village of Ladyville, about 10 miles north of Belize City proper. It's the only airport with a runway long enough to accommodate large aircraft.

Note that **you are NOT landing in Belize City**, which means if you plan to catch a water taxi to Caye Caulker, you will need ground transportation to get to Belize City and the Water Taxi Terminal.



There are several other airstrips throughout the country that are serviced by smaller planes, sometimes called puddle jumpers. Each major destination for these smaller planes has an airstrip, including Caye Caulker.

Arrival at BZE

1. IMMIGRATION & CUSTOMS FORMS

You can fill out the Immigration and Customs forms **in advance** online, helping to streamline the travel experience. The online forms can be accessed at https://ideclare.gov.bz/Belize_Digital_Forms/. If you complete the form online, be sure to print it out or have it on your phone so the officials can scan the QR code on your arrival. Note there are forms for both arriving to and departing from Belize. Also be sure to note the Reference ID of your completed forms so that you can go back and make modifications should your travel itinerary change.

The immigration form requires you to provide your flight number (e.g. AA2347), port of embarkation (airport city you left), origin of trip (if different from embarkation city), personal info (name, address, dob, etc.), passport number, country and dates of issue/expiration, countries recently visited, intended address in Belize (BluZen, North Caye Caulker), length of stay, reason for visit, and accommodation type (hotel).

The Customs form asks you to indicate the purpose for your visit, number of family members with you, the number of bags you have, and whether you have anything to declare (likely, NO).

The Departure form asks similar information. All are mandatory.

If you have not filled out the online forms, you will need to fill out paper forms before going through Immigration and Customs at the airport and/or departing the country. They are available inside the terminal.

2. LANDING

As you approach the airport runway, enjoy the view from above. You'll get a glimpse of the coast and nearby mangrove swamps. You might even get a glimpse of Belize City and spot some cruise ships in the distance. Brace yourself when you see the Belize River because it will be a hard and fast landing. The runway is small by most standards, and for that reason, your airplane will land and immediately turn on the reverse thrust and brakes.....HARD. You definitely want to have your seatbelts on!

If you're on the left side of the plane as you land, you will get a glimpse of the Belikin Beer brewery, which is housed in the old airport compound. On your right will be the main airport terminal building. Your plane will make a U-turn on the runway and park in front of the terminal building.



3. DEPLANING

There are no jet way bridges at the Belize airport. It's going to be old school deplaning via a stairway onto the tarmac, and it might be a tad noisy. They will likely open the front and rear doors for deplaning. This is not always guaranteed but if you're at the back of the plane, you may end up getting out first and get processed through the airport quicker. Be prepared when you step off the plane, particularly if you came from a cool climate! The warm, tropical air will be a noticeable change. It helps if you were able to put on some shorts and loose clothing at the airport before departing for Belize.

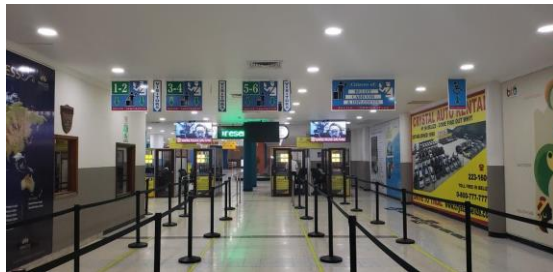


The crew on the ground will guide you along a pathway to the doors to enter the arrivals terminal. It will be to the far right of the building so you may have to do a little walking. Upon entering the terminal there will be a long hallway that may have other arrivals in the queue for Immigration. Follow this hallway to the end where you'll turn left to another hallway and into the main part of the building. Restrooms are located at the end of the second hallway just before you get to Immigration. Be sure to have your passports and documents (QR Codes) ready for the Immigration officials. You can't get lost in here...everything is literally in one large room.



4. IMMIGRATION

After entry into the arrival terminal, your first stop is the immigration check. Make sure to have your online Immigration and Customs Form QR codes ready. As mentioned, these forms are also available in paper form in the arrival hall if you didn't fill them out online. This is an easy process, but if you end up at the back of the line, it can take a while, especially if multiple flights just arrived.



Try to get in line as quickly as possible, especially if you need to catch a puddle jumper flight or a ground shuttle. If you're a visitor, you will line up in the lanes on the left side. Belize citizens and CARICOM country citizens will line up on the right lane (which is usually the shorter line). There will likely be multiple immigration officers working arrivals, so just wait in line for the next available agent. There may be someone there to guide you.

Travel Documents and Visa

All travelers must have a passport that is valid beyond your departure date. Most visitors, including those from the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, will not need a visa prior to arrival. The immigration officer will provide up to a 30-day visitor's visa. If you stay longer than 30 days, you will need to renew your visa. Check with the Belize Immigration and Nationality Department for more information.

Traveling with Children?

Important. If you are traveling with children who are not your own or if both parents are not traveling, you **MUST** have a notarized travel authorization letter from the parents or non-present parent. You could be denied entry or denied boarding at the airport just before departing to Belize.

5. BAGGAGE CLAIM

If you have checked luggage, the baggage claim is immediately in front of you as soon as you are done with the immigration check. There are only two baggage carousels but you need to pay attention because it can get confusing if multiple flights arrive at the same time. This is probably where you'll have the longest wait.



Grab a free luggage cart if you have lots of luggage and keep an eye on both carousels. Also, if you were in the back of the immigration line, your luggage may have already been removed from the carousel. Look through the pile of luggage either in the middle or along the right-side wall.

There are duty-free stores on the left of the luggage carousels, but don't buy anything yet if you're planning on taking items back with you. There are more duty-free shops in the departure terminal.

6. CUSTOMS

Your last stop in the arrival terminal is the customs inspection station. Turn around after you've collected your luggage and walk to the top-right side of the room. Most times there may be a long line because the customs officers may need to manually open and inspect a lot of luggage, and you will need to run all your baggage through an x-ray machine.

If you don't have any checked luggage, turn the corner to your left as soon as you clear immigration and go to the first available customs inspection table.



If you're just visiting and only have your personal effects, then you have nothing to declare and you should use the "Nothing To Declare" line, as it will be quicker.

If you are importing any goods, such as gifts or commercial merchandise that you will leave in the country, then you DO have something to declare. In that case, you may be assessed a small tariff which you will pay at the cashier window just as you exit the room. Make sure you have cash on hand if you expect to pay any customs tariffs and taxes of goods you are importing.

Note: Drones are not allowed in Belize without a special permit. If you bring your Drone, make sure you've done some research first and have the permits ready. If not, they may confiscate it and return it when you depart.

How long is the process? The entire process from deplaning to clearing customs and immigration can take up to 1 hour on busy days, and as quick as 10 minutes on slow days. We always expect about 30 minutes for each flight that has landed ahead of you, which is about average for airport processing, but we suggest giving yourself one hour to catch a connecting flight or ground transportation.

7. WAITING AT THE AIRPORT

If you need to wait at the airport because your ride is delayed, or if you're meeting others arriving on a later flight, you may want to step back into the main terminal building if it gets too hot outside. Restrooms are available upstairs beside the Global Spice restaurant, and downstairs to the far right as you enter the building.

There's a restaurant and bar upstairs if you want to grab some food or drinks. The prices are a bit hefty, but it's a comfortable place to wait. If you want to try some good and cheap local food, you can venture behind the main parking lot outside. To the far left across the street, you will see some tents and local food vendors.

Airport WiFi

Free WiFi is available throughout the airport terminals. Use the "PGIA Courtesy Wifi" network to connect. It generally works inside the terminals. No password is necessary.

You can also get free WiFi at the Global Spice restaurant located upstairs in the arrivals terminal building. You will need to ask them for the password to connect.

8. CONNECTING FLIGHTS

Your connecting flight (puddle jumper) will be with either Maya Island Air or Tropic Air. After clearing customs inspection, go STRAIGHT ACROSS through the double doors. You do not have to exit the building, but if you do you can simply veer left and go back into the building. There you will see the check-in counters for the local airlines.



Don't worry if you are too early or a bit late for your flight. They will do their best to put you on the next flight out as long as seats are available. This happens often, and they have flights about every 30 minutes until about 6:30 pm. Most International flights get in with plenty of time to switch to a puddle jumper, but if you miss the last flight, you'll need to stay over at a hotel. Keep that in mind when booking your flight to BZE.

If you have luggage that needs checked here, be sure to **hold on to your baggage claim tags** which usually get stapled to your boarding pass. You will need them, particularly if your luggage is somehow misplaced. It doesn't happen often, but having your claim tags makes it easier for the airlines to track them down.

Before entering the departure lounge for your connecting flight, you will need to clear the local security inspection. If you purchased anything in the arrivals duty-free stores, you should put it in your checked luggage first. From here you will enter the departure lounge and proceed to your gate. It's a noisy place!



Maya Island and Tropic Air gates are at the far end of the terminal. **Be sure to let the Blu Zen Front Desk know via WhatsApp which flight you are on so they can arrange transportation once you land on Caye Caulker.** However, there are always plenty of taxis outside.

When you board your puddle jumper, (outside the building where you just deplaned), try to be toward the back of the line. It's a tight fit, and you don't want to have to crawl over the folks going on the San Pedro once you land. They'll likely need to use every seat. A window seat will offer fantastic views!

9. AIRPORT TAXI

If you're headed into Belize City to catch the water taxi to Caye Caulker, you can grab an airport taxi as soon as you exit the arrivals terminal. Walk to your left as soon as you exit, past the crowd of people, and you will see the taxi cabs lined up. Blu Zen will likely have a taxi waiting for you and the driver will be holding a sign with your name. If not, it won't be long until a taxi driver approaches you. These taxis are from the Ladyville taxi association. **You can identify a taxi anywhere in Belize by their green license plates.**



A taxi ride into Belize City starts at \$30 USD or \$60 BZD. It must be paid in cash. Make sure you know the fare before you get in. There are no meters, just standard fares depending on where you are going. Always make sure your taxi has a green license plate.

Departure from Belize

1. ARRIVE ON TIME

You are required to arrive at the airport two hours prior to departure for your international flight. If you arrive by taxi, you will check in at the far-right end of the building, the first entrance you encounter when you drive into the compound. If you've taken a puddle jumper back to BZE, you will be led to baggage claim, then you will turn right into the check-in area.

Standard procedures apply just as with most airports. If you have not filled out the departure form online, you will be given one when you check in for your departing flight. Make sure you sign it. If you lose it, you can request a new one. **Note that you MUST check in and receive a paper boarding pass. Boarding passes on your phone are not accepted at Exit Immigration.**

2. EXIT IMMIGRATION

While it is uncommon to have to go through immigration screening when you are leaving a country, Belize has exit immigration, so you will clear immigration after you've checked in at your airline counter. This is a quick process to get an exit stamp, and they will take your signed departure form or scan the QR code from your online form. You'll then head directly to the security screening and on to the departure terminal. **If you are screened for extra security at the gate, be sure to get drinks/food, if needed, as you will not be allowed to leave this area until your flight.**

Are there any departure fees? Yes but don't worry, all your departure fees are most likely already paid for via your airline tickets (check your ticket just to make sure).

The total fee is roughly \$55 USD per person and if for some reason it is not included in your ticket fare (this is rare), then it is payable when checking in at the airport. Check your tickets for these fees in your fare breakdown.

3. DEPARTURE TERMINAL

After you've cleared security screening, you'll be in the main departure terminal. Make sure you take a quick note of where your gate is. It's a really small airport so it's no stress to find your gate. The area may be full of departing passengers, so you may want to grab a seat before they are all taken.



There are several duty-free stores, snack shops, and gift shops in the departure terminal. This is your last chance to get rid of the extra Belize currency you didn't spend, grab a final Belikin, or buy that last-minute gift or your friends back home. Leaving is a sad day, but you can always come back!