

When packing for your travel to Belize, you should think about the following:

Luggage: We recommend bringing a backpack as your carry-on bag. Backpacks provide an easy way to carry your belongings as you travel to and from Belize and on field trips in Belize. For your checked luggage, we highly recommend that you bring only one piece, preferably a larger backpack. If you do not own a large backpack, try to bring a bag that can be carried on your shoulders or that has sturdy wheels. Please note, you will be responsible for carrying your own luggage, so be sure you can handle all of your bags!

On your international flights to and from Belize, American Airlines will allow you **2 pieces of checked luggage**, each weighing *less than 50 pounds*, free of charge. You are also allowed to take **1 carry-on** weighing *less than 40 pounds* and **1 personal item** (e.g. purse, briefcase, laptop, small book-bag style backpack, etc.) on the plane with you free of charge. All carry-on pieces, including laptops, must fit either underneath the seat in front of you or in an overhead bin. Do not lock your luggage as it will need to pass the security check at the airport.

You are *not* allowed to take liquids or gels over 3 ounces (100 ml) onto the plane in your carry-on items. In order to carry liquids or gels below 3 ounces, you will need to place all liquid containers in a *separate clear plastic, 1-quart zip-top bag* no larger than 8 inches x 8 inches (20cm x 20cm). Close the bag completely, and remove it from your carry-on at the security checkpoint for separate x-ray screening. Any liquids or gels over 3 ounces will be taken away at the security checkpoint. You can take *empty* water bottles, disposable or reusable (e.g. Nalgene or sports bottles), through security to be filled at a water fountain beyond the security checkpoint.

Clothing: Please refer to your program itinerary in selecting the clothing you will take to Belize. Think about what you will be doing and where you will be going during your program in Belize. You will be outside a lot. We recommend that you bring lightweight clothing as humidity and the possibility of getting wet is likely. Also, you may want to bring a rash guard/surf shirt to help minimize UV exposure while snorkeling. You can find out more about the weather in your host country at <http://www.worldweather.org>. As a group, you will discuss a dress code suitable for your program and country of destination. You can also check with your faculty contact.

Laundry: Laundry facilities are limited in the dormitory/bunkhouse where you will be staying during your time in Belize. We would advise you to bring enough change of clothes, and from a fabric which dries quickly if you need to do a quick wash in the bath sink. If you do plan on washing any of your clothes, including underwear, please bring a suitable biodegradable soap.

Electricity: Belize provides electricity on the same cycle as the United States, 110V, with standard two and three prong sockets. Be advised that the Hill Bank Field Station dormitory is 100% solar powered, so your opportunities to use electrical components, recharge batteries, etc. may be limited.

Communications: If you want to call home from Belize, you can check the internet for pre-paid calling cards from major carriers such as AT&T or MCI before you leave, but pre-paid calling cards are also readily available for purchase in Belize. Calling the United States from Belize costs about \$1.50BZD (US\$0.75) per minute. There is also toll-free access for credit card or collect calls through AT&T (1-800-235-1154), MCI (1-800-746-1154), and Sprint (1-800-578-1154).

During the post-arrival orientation, ask the PFB representative about the nearest phone that can be used to call home. The Hill Bank Field Station phone accepts locally purchased pre-paid phone cards. Limited access to email and the internet will also be available but only during part of the program, but not at Hill Bank. You will be able to use PFB computers to email your relatives after landing in Belize.

Cell phones: If you wish to bring a cell phone, check with your service provider to find out if your phone will work in Belize or if you can purchase a SIM card for it. In general, it is very expensive to use a cell phone abroad, and recharging may be a hassle, too.

Currency exchange: All of your program-related expenses are covered by the program fee; however, we advise you to bring some pocket money along if you'd like to purchase souvenirs or other local items. PFB advises *not* to exchange US dollars into Belize Dollars prior to travel. US currency is widely accepted in Belize, but only paper currency, not coins. The Belize Dollar (BZ\$) has a fixed rate of exchange of BZ\$2 to US\$1. ATMs are available across the country, and you may be able to use the ATMs to make withdrawals from your account in local currency. ATMs from Atlantic Bank and Belize Bank should accept Visa and MasterCard as well as cards that use the Plus or Cirrus networks. Taking an ATM card, which can also function as a credit card, may be your best bet for getting the local currency from ATM machines abroad.

It may be wise to take an additional credit card with you that can also be used in ATM machines. Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted in Belize, but American Express cards are not. Ask your credit card company in advance to give you a PIN number for your "true" credit card so you can get cash with it in case of an emergency – it generally takes a few weeks to go into effect. You may want to ask about fees charged for ATM withdrawals/cash advances and also about additional charges or fees for transactions made in foreign countries. When using your credit cards in Belize, most establishments will automatically add a 5% service charge to your bill.

Finally, always be sure that you understand which dollar rate is being quoted - Belizean Dollars or US Dollars.

NOTE: Hold at least \$85 dollars in reserve throughout your trip. You will need \$35 to pay the official exit fee when departing Belize, and in case of the need for medical treatment, you will need \$50 as your insurance policy has a \$50 deductible to be paid by the patient.

Papers: Take the CCID travel document holder/pouch with you to keep all of your personal papers in one place: passport, air tickets, emergency flash card, emergency contact list, and insurance ID cards. **Don't forget to take copies of all of these documents (and put them in various places in your luggage)**, and you should also leave copies with your emergency contacts in the US. This way it will be easier to replace any of them if they get lost or stolen.