

## CARIBBEAN REEFS & MAYAN CULTURE | BELIZE

Middlesex (Belizean Jungle), Altun Ha & Caye Caulker | 2026 • 7 Days / 6 Nights

Two ecosystems, one week. Students spend three days in the jungle learning bird banding and conservation alongside experienced scientists. Then ferry to Caye Caulker and snorkel the second largest barrier reef on earth: nurse sharks, stingrays, sea turtles, coral gardens.

### What Might Stay With You

Learning jungle medicine from an expert bush guide. Identifying birds by their plumage. Snorkeling among sea turtles and rays at a protected marine reserve. Encountering a nurse shark up close at Shark Ray Alley.

### At-a-Glance

- **Service Provider:** Rustic Pathways
- **Destinations:** Middlesex (Belizean Jungle), Altun Ha, Caye Caulker
- **Dates:** Thanksgiving, 2026
- **Duration:** 7 Days / 6 Nights
- **Group Size:** 10 - 30 students
- **Teacher Ratio:** 1 free teacher per 6 students
- **Accommodation:** Jungle accommodations (Belizean Jungle), Island hotel (Caye Caulker). Full details upon confirmation
- **Fitness Level:** Moderate (trail work, hiking, swimming, snorkeling)
- **Climate:** Warm year-round. Dry season Nov–Apr. Hurricane season Jun–Nov.
- **Service Hours:** 22 hours (estimated)
- **CAS Alignment:** Creativity, Activity, Service
- **SDG Focus:** Life on Land (15), Life Below Water (14)



### Learning Goals

1. Apply field methods, including bird banding and mist nets, to track and monitor wildlife in the jungle and on the coast.
2. Analyze community-based partnerships for their role in local sustainability and wildlife protection.
3. Practice self-reliance and teamwork by navigating different cultural and natural environments.
4. Study marine ecology and coral reef conservation through guided snorkeling and academic sessions.

### Our Community Partner

Students collaborate with local residents and organizations throughout the program, particularly the Ocean Academy on Caye Caulker and the Toucan Ridge Ecology and Education Society (T.R.E.E.S.) in the jungle interior. The academy focuses on protecting the Meso-American Barrier Reef, one of the world's most extensive reef systems, while T.R.E.E.S focuses on conserving Belize's natural and cultural heritage through education, income-generating conservation-based community projects. Students contribute through service work and engagement, helping to understand how conservation, education, and community partnerships support local communities.

## 7-Day Overview

**Day 1: Arrival & Jungle Orientation** Arrival in Belize (BZE), meet program leaders, and transfer directly to jungle accommodations • Expert bush guide in jungle medicine and medicinal plants

**Day 2: Bird Banding, Farm Tour & Belizean Cooking** Bird banding introduction, learning to set mist nets and safely handle birds • Traditional Belizean cooking workshop

**Day 3: Bird Identification & Community Involvement** Hands-on workshop focused on bird identification and safe handling • Tour a local village to study community involvement in conservation

**Day 4: Altun Ha & Caye Caulker** Drive to Altun Ha Mayan ruins • Ferry to Caye Caulker • Settle in, explore the island

**Day 5: Barrier Reef Snorkeling** Full-day boat excursion • Hol Chan Marine Reserve, Shark Ray Alley, coral gardens, North Channel • Nurse sharks, rays, sea turtles, manatees • Island cleanup service

**Day 6: Marine Ecology & Ocean Academy** Visit the Ocean Academy • Learn about the Meso-American Barrier Reef and local conservation strategies

**Day 7: Departure** Morning water taxi to mainland • Airport transfer • Departure

## Signature Experiences

- Learning about conservation from local village residents
- Cooking traditional Belizean dishes
- Exploring the temples and history of Altun Ha Maya ruins
- Snorkeling the Hol Chan Marine Reserve
- Encountering nurse sharks and rays at Shark Ray Alley
- A night walk through an organic orchard and aviary
- Engaging with local students at the Ocean Academy

## What's Included

- 6 nights accommodation (jungle and island hotel)
- All meals (B/L/D)
- 22 hours service
- All scheduled activities and entrance fees
- Bird banding workshops
- Belizean cooking workshop and farm tour
- Altun Ha Maya archaeological site visit
- Full-day barrier reef snorkeling excursion
- Visit to Ocean Academy
- All ground and water transportation
- Daily reflection sessions
- Rustic Pathways Program Leaders throughout
- 24/7 emergency support

## Safety & Supervision Snapshot

- 7:1 student–adult ratio
- Licensed, insured transport providers
- Daily safety briefings
- Documented emergency plan

## Not Included

- Flights
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses