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## Manatee Facts

Belize has the largest population of the West Indian manatee *Trichechus manatus manatus* in the world. Still small, Belize's manatee population is probably less than 700 country wide. It is an endangered species and is protected by law. Manatees bring revenue for the tourist sector, they provide an ecological balance, and they help to diversify Belize's animal life!

*Help to increase the manatee population in Belize by abiding by the suggested guidelines. Be especially careful in the following areas:*

- ☛ **BELIZE CITY COAST and CAYS:**  
Swallow Cay, St. Georges Cay, Moho Cay, Port-O-Stuck, Drowned Cays, Hicks Cay, Bluefield Range, Rider Cay, Turneffe Atoll.
- ☛ **SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN LAGOON**
- ☛ **PLACENTIA LAGOON**
- ☛ **CHETUMAL BAY**
- ☛ **PORT HONDURAS AREA**
- ☛ **INDIAN HILL LAGOON**
- ☛ **RIVERS:** Deep River, The Belize River, Monkey River, Rio Hondo, Mullins River.

### Please Help Save the Manatee!

For more information, or to report manatee deaths or injury, please contact:

Manatee Researcher\*  
Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute  
Princess Margaret Drive  
P.O. Box 1884  
Belize City, Belize  
Phone: 501-223-0719/5739/2616  
Toll Free: 0-800-MANATEE  
email: [czmbze@btl.net](mailto:czmbze@btl.net)

Belize Audubon Society  
12 Fort Street  
Belize City, Belize  
Phone:

Forest Department  
Belmopan, Belize  
Phone: 501-822-3629

Fisheries Department  
Princess Margaret Drive  
Belize City, Belize  
Phone: 501-224-4552/223-2623  
Email: [species@btl.net](mailto:species@btl.net)



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# MANATEES IN BELIZE

## Guidelines for Tour Operations



**DO YOUR PART TO PROTECT BELIZE'S  
HERITAGE, ENVIRONMENT, AND FUTURE!!**

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# ONLY YOU CAN HELP SAVE THE MANATEE

## TOURIST ORIENTATION:

☞ *Familiarize tourists with proper behavior for viewing manatees:*

- ☞ NO loud noises as it frightens manatees.
- ☞ NO touching or feeding the manatees, this can alter their natural behavior.
- ☞ NO approaching females with calves.

## BOAT APPROACH:

- ☞ Slow to idle speed 1/2 mile to 100 yards from manatee site to prevent hitting or scaring away the manatees.
- ☞ Once within 75 to 100 feet from the site, turn engine off and drift or pole to site.
- ☞ When in position, use pole to hold boat.

## NUMBER OF BOATS AT A SITE:

*This will be different at each site, but guides should not use an area if many boats and tourists are already there.*

- ☞ NO more than 2 boats at a site. Very large areas can possibly accommodate 3-4 boats (without swimmers).
- ☞ Boats should cooperate and share a site.

## SWIMMING:

- ☞ NO swimming in "Manatee Hole" at Swallow Cay and at Gales Point.
- ☞ Swim only at deep, clear holes.
- ☞ Enter the water only if manatees seem undisturbed and stay in area.
- ☞ Enter water quietly and stay on surface of water with a guide [do not dive].
- ☞ No chasing nor attempting to corner or isolate a manatee.
- ☞ Small groups at a time in the water (about 5 persons).
- ☞ Minimize time in the water (no more than 15 minutes).

## TIME AT A SITE:

- ☞ If a boat is waiting, the boat using the site should only stay 20 minutes more, or share the site if big enough.  
*Accommodate one another.*

## DEPARTURE OF BOATS:

- ☞ Leave site by drifting or poling away 75-100 ft. before starting engine.
- ☞ Leave boat at idle speed, do not rev motor.
- ☞ *Please don't throw trash where manatee splash!!!*

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# PROTECTION BY LAW

The West Indian Manatee is protected in Belize under the **Wildlife Protection Act, No. 4 of 1981**. Jurisdiction is under the Forest Department, Ministry of Natural Resources.

Under this act, **no person shall hunt, meaning "to kill, molest by any method and includes attempting to kill, take or molest by any method" any manatee.**

Anyone who hunts a manatee will be fined **\$500.00** on a first offence, and **\$1000.00 and/or imprisonment** for 6 months for previously convicted wildlife offenders.

**CALL THE COASTAL ZONE  
MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY  
AND INSTITUTE TO REPORT  
MANATEE INJURIES,  
DEATHS, OR BIRTHS**

**0-800-MANATEE**

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