

Xunantunich (tours available from Hopkins)

A Maya archaeological site in western Belize, about 80 miles (130 km) west of Belize City (Latitude : 17.083 , Longitude : -89.133), in the Cayo District. Xunantunich is located atop a ridge above the Mopan River, within sight of the Guatemala border. Its name means "Stone Woman" in the Maya language (Mopan and Yucatec combination name), and, like many names given to Maya archaeological sites, is a modern name; the ancient name is currently unknown. The "Stone Woman" refers to the ghost of a woman claimed by several people to inhabit the site, beginning in 1892. She is dressed completely in white, and has fire-red glowing eyes. She generally appears in front of "El Castillo", ascends the stone stairs, and disappears into a stone wall.

Cahal Pech (tours available from Hopkins)

A Maya site located near the Town of San Ignacio in the Cayo District of Belize. The site was a hilltop palacio home for an elite Maya family, and though most major construction dates to the Classic period, evidence of continuous habitation has been dated to as far back as far as 1200 BCE during the Early Middle Formative period (Early Middle Preclassic), making Cahal Pech one of the oldest recognizably Maya sites in Western Belize. The site rests high near the banks of the Macal River and is strategically located to overlook the confluence of the Macal River and the Mopan River. The site is a collection of 34 structures, with the tallest temple being about 25 meters in height, situated around a central acropolis. The site was abandoned in the 9th century CE for unknown reasons.

Caracol

Historically the most important site, Caracol ('the snail' in Spanish), is located in western Belize, near the border with Guatemala and within the Belizean part of the Peten rainforest. Caracol was the center of one of the largest Maya kingdoms and today contains the extant remains of thousands of structures. The city was an important player in the Classic period political struggles of the southern Maya lowlands, and is known for defeating and subjugating Tikal (while allied with Calakmul, located in Campeche, Mexico).

Cerros

The site of Cerros, located on Chetumal Bay in northern Belize, is notable as one of the earliest Maya sites, reaching its apogee during the Late Preclassic on Chetumal Bay, and for the presence of an E-Group, a unique structural complex found in Maya architecture.

Lamanai

Lamanai, located on the New River in Orange Walk District, is known for being the longest continually-occupied site in Mesoamerica. The initial settlement of Lamanai occurred during the Early Preclassic, and it was continuously occupied up to and through the colonization of the area. During the Spanish conquest of Yucatán, the conquistadores established a Roman Catholic church at Lamanai, but a revolt by the native Maya drove them away. The extant remains of the church are still standing today.

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