

14 TRAVEL



TRAVEL FACTS

- Rick, Beth and Thomas travelled to Belize, via Continental Airways, with Journey Latin America. Flights with Continental via Houston start at £692 per person including taxes. The child fare (for under 12s) is £442 per person including taxes. For reservations call 020 8747 8315.
- Alternatively try the Journey Latin America website at www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk
- Overnight accommodation in Houston was at the Derek Hotel. For rates and availability check the hotel's website on www.derekhotel.com
- Information on the Belize Jungle Dome, including accommodation details and the wide range of excursions and tours Andy and Simone offer, is available on their website — www.belizejungledome.com

A jungle paradise to make



READY FOR ACTION: Tom getting ready for his trip through the caves and down the jungle river.

Part two of Rick Waghorn and his family's trip to Belize.

Admittedly kayaking up a pitch dark cave with just a torch, a guide and a thousand Mayan Indian ghosts for company might not be to everyone's tastes.

Certainly, anyone with a more than passing interest in the finer points of recent European health and safety directives might be well advised to give Belize a miss.

For holidaying in this particular corner of Central America is very much as Mother Nature intended, not as Brussels decreed. Wherein lies so much of the country's fascination. It is — the odd, American cruise ship party aside — still far enough off the beaten tourist track to retain its magical, untouched charm and yet still has everything that anyone would ever need to keep up with the Indiana Joneses.

In particular — and, again, great credit to our hosts at the Jungle Dome, ex-Charlton Athletic striker Andy Hunt and his partner, former MTV presenter Simone Angel — the standard of guides was superb.

Take Barnaby, our guide for a morning's cave tubing. Given that it requires a certain leap of faith to entrust your well-being to an inner tube and a small caver's lamp as you bob and bump your way down a shallow jungle river and on through three extensive cave systems, it helps to have Barnaby's calm authority and deep knowledge guiding your every move.

Particularly when you are entrusting a five-year-old to his care. Rafted



together by nothing more substantial than his toes hooked underneath the little man's inner tube, the pair of them were soon floating off into the darkness without a care or a fear in the world — happy to let the river's crystal-clear water take them where it wanted.

If I had one complaint, it was Barnaby's story of the time he found himself floating downstream with a fierce electrical storm raging in the mountains above.

One bolt of lightning later and his legs and arms started to tingle — the river having become "live" with a heaven-sent electric charge. An unscheduled break on the bank swiftly followed.

Fortunately, we barely saw a dark cloud all fortnight. It was sunshine and smiles all the way.

Belize is far from a one-trick pony — it is not just a tropical Wales with Mayan temples and jungle trails for Pembroke Castle and the M4.

It has a coastline to rival any in the Caribbean. Once more, Andy and Simone turned up complete trumps in arranging a three-day, two-night excursion to their "sister" resort in San Pedro on Ambergris Caye — the biggest of the Florida-style "Keys"

that follow the line of the largest barrier reef in the northern hemisphere just off the coast of north-eastern Belize.

The outward journey was in the company of a detachment from the Green Howards, who looked set for some serious R&R on the neighbouring island of Caye Caulker after the hour-long water taxi trip out from Belize City.

The return journey was just as entertaining — if, alas, distinctly short-lived as a tiny, 14-seater plane lifted off out of San Pedro "airport", flew back along the barrier reef for 15 minutes before dropping back down into Belize Municipal Airport.

In between, our home was Exotic Caye Beach Resort which was the real, Caribbean thatched-cabana deal — complete with beach bar, home-made rum and hammocks swaying gently in the on-shore breeze.

The excursions were top class — be it manatee whale spotting or the chance to snorkel over the reef in the hope of finding Nemo, the latter experience made all the more entertaining by the lurking nurse sharks feeding off the change of tide.

At night, San Pedro comes alive as well-heeled American tourists mingle easily with

