



MACHACA HILL

RAINFOREST CANOPY LODGE

ACTIVITIES & TOURS

There is always something to keep everyone as active as they choose during their stay at Machaca Hill. All of our activities, from the complimentary, optional, fishing or diving activity collection, are conducted by our own in-house guides. Not only are Machaca Hill Guides fully licensed and registered but have been trained to our specific standards in the intricate interpretation of our extensive bio-diversity as well as the delicate and fragile art of intelligent hosting of all of our guests. We call this providing "The Machaca Magic"...

The ***Complimentary Collection*** of activities available to every guest at Machaca Hill:

- Guests are invited to take **Canoe Trips on the Rio Grande**; it is not a difficult paddle either up or downstream. Guides point out various plants, animals, birds and sites of interest as guests navigate their own canoes and kayaks. All equipment is provided, as well as instruction if needed.
- **Guided Walking Jungle Safaris** at Machaca have a concentration on special interest topics, such as birding for beginners, rainforest animal identification and an introduction to medicinal plants. Guests may visit a number of areas, including our own pristine 12,000 acre reserve where wildlife and birds are plentiful. Hike through huge tracts of untouched rainforest to the seven hills or indeed to the long abandoned sugar mill which provided much of the economy in the South during the early part of the 20th century.
- Guests with an interest in **Mountain Biking** will appreciate the well-maintained, brand-name bikes, guided tours and marked trails on your doorstep within our private reserve.
- **Bird Watching** - Extensive habitat diversity surrounding Machaca Hill makes the lodge a birder's paradise. With a low human population density and active preservation activities, the area's river banks, meadows, rainforests, cayes and swamps provide numerous hideouts for the more than 618 recorded species of birds found in Belize. Serious and casual birders alike appreciate the lodge's world-class guides, terraced bird friendly landscaping, marked trails and strategically placed viewing scopes and binoculars. Machaca offers a variety of ways birding can be combined with other activities, from canoeing and hiking or simply relaxing around the pool or on the veranda of the lodge. Winter brings more than 200 visiting species from North America and summer sees many of the migratory birds from South America making this an area of interest for birdwatchers year-round. Impressively, a recent annual bird count totaled 276 species in a single day. Species from the following families can be found at Machaca and within the surrounding habitat (a detailed list is available on request)

The ***Optional Collection*** of activities and tours encourages Machaca Hill guests to explore the area through an impressive selection of private guided tours. With an average of six, and never more than eight passengers, guests are guaranteed personalized attention and window seats on all tours. Machaca offers both day and night tours, which often combine more than one site or activity and can easily be customized to suit individual guests' desires. All of our tours are combined in such a way to provide you with an exciting and insightful way. Our guides will take time prior to embarking in a journey of discovery with you to establish your preferences and interests to ensure that every tour is genuinely meaningful and personalized. The tours are typically a full day in length with a sumptuous and substantial signature picnic lunch taken in some spectacular setting which is

included in the rate. Tailor-made Half day activities are offered and these are available upon check-in in consultation with management and the guides.

Our certified guides utilize private trails as well as a modern fleet of land and water vehicles to access sites and activities. Machaca emphasizes low-impact travel; customized open-air Land Cruisers, Polaris Rangers and motorized boats have the lowest emissions and noise pollutant technology available.

The day's activities will be tailor made by you and your guide upon check-in taking into account your interests and desires, the length of duration an activity normally takes and the weather from a safety and enjoyment perspective. Below are some of our suggested optional tours:

- Uxbenka is an ancient Maya site that was inhabited during the Classic Period (AD 250-900). Since 2005 the **Uxbenka Archeological Project** has conducted annual digs. Machaca guests visiting from March through June, 2009, have an opportunity to volunteer and participate in the dig alongside archeologists.
- **Lubaantun** is one of the most unique archeological sites in the Meso-American region, and was possibly a Maya athletic training center or stadium. Machaca Hill guests visit the site with a knowledgeable guide to explore ruins of pyramids, numerous ball courts and learn about its mysterious Crystal Skull.
- **Nim li Punit** was a residence for Maya royalty from 700-800 AD. Guides show Machaca guests ruins of the *Plaza of the Royal Tombs* and the *Plaza of the Stelae*, as well as an astronomical observatory that houses many stone monuments, featuring intricate carvings.
- A **Maya Cacao and Village Tour** provides an introduction to today's life of the native Maya. Machaca Hill guides lead guests through villages and homes to learn about Maya traditions, farming techniques, chocolate and tortilla making and the different dialects.
- **Caving Adventures** lead guests on exciting treks and interesting underground caverns. Caves visited often include Yok Balum, Santa Cruz and the impressive Hokeb Ha cavern, where stalactites loom overhead and stalagmites fill the floor. The cavern at Blue Creek awaits those with an interest in cave swimming.
- **After Dark Jungle Drives and Hikes** offer Machaca guests an opportunity to head out with guides in search of the reserve's nocturnal creatures, including jaguar, ocelot, coati, peccary, kinkajou, tapir and fox.
- Machaca's guided **Reef Snorkeling** tour takes guests to the Belize Barrier Reef, the second largest barrier reef in the world, to see a variety of aquatic species including sea fans, coral, colorful tropical fish, seahorses, rays, eels and turtles.
- Guided **Boat Adventures** on the Rio Grande or Moho River feature a variety of Belize's flora and fauna, including Howler Monkeys, numerous tropical birds and green iguanas. A second tour takes guests to the nearby Sapodilla and Port of Honduras Marine Reserves and Payne's Creek National Park. The rivers, creeks and mangrove lagoons surrounding Machaca Hill are the preferred habitat for the shy West Indian Manatee.
- **After Dark Rio Grande Cruises** offer Machaca guests an opportunity to head out with guides, utilizing red low impact spotlights, in search of the reserve's nocturnal creatures. Each night it is possible to spot a wide range of nocturnal animals along the way.

Diving activities offered through Machaca Hill are offered to all guests on a supplementary basis and require advance reservations.

Machaca offers divers access to numerous sites, including the Belize Barrier Reef at the Sapodilla Cayes, the second largest barrier reef in the world. PADI certified instructors and dive masters provide services suitable for beginners to experts. Divers specifically looking for an encounter with whale sharks should plan to travel from March to June when the gentle giants are just off of the coast near Machaca. A packed picnic lunch is included in this activity with thought and attention paid to your preferences and dive schedule.

Please discuss the details of departure and launch with your guide on check-in.

Fishing activities offered through Machaca Hill are offered to all guests on a supplementary basis and require advance reservations.

Machaca Hill's prime location on the Rio Grande, just minutes away from the Caribbean Sea, provides limitless options for anglers. Machaca's highly trained guides specialize in the "Big Three" – bonefish, tarpon and permit. For those with an interest in learning, Machaca offers fly fishing lessons to teach new anglers about gear, casting technique, sighting fish and the art of picking the right fly.

Most anglers visit for the world-class permit fishing; however the area around Machaca Hill is one of the few destinations on earth with large numbers of the "Big Three" – bonefish, tarpon and permit. Visiting anglers have the chance at a "Grand Slam," catching all three species on a single trip. Belize is working to protect and grow these fisheries; in 2008 a law was passed making all three species available for catch-and-release fishing only.

Our fishing activities are usually fully inclusive of a qualified and extremely competent specialist guide, skiff, fishing equipment and all fuel for the entire day. Fishermen are encouraged to bring their own equipment if they choose and adequate rod holders and equipment stowage is available on board the skiff.

Machaca's most frequently targeted species:

- **Permit:** The flats, lagoons and river channels around Machaca are among the best permit fisheries in the world. The migration begins in February and ends in November. The largest fish are found between March and May.
- **Tarpon:** Large tarpon are migratory and are found in the waters around Machaca from May through September. Smaller tarpon, under twenty pounds, can be found in the mangroves and brackish estuaries, creeks and lagoons year-round.
- **Bonefish:** The flats, lagoons and river mouths attract shrimp and in turn hungry bonefish from April to November. The largest migratory fish are generally found in October.
- **Snook:** Coastal marine and brackish mangroves offer the best fishing from November through March when snook move into shallower water in search of warmer temperatures.
- **Jack Crevalle:** Thriving in the area since the 1995 commercial net ban, large schools of jacks are found in the shallow flats and lagoons around Machaca from February through November.
- **Mutton Snapper:** This coveted species is found year-round in the sandy areas around mangroves, lagoons and river basins.

A tailor-made picnic lunch is included in this activity; please discuss your preferences with your server or directly with the management or executive chef.

Please discuss the details of departure and launch with your guide on check-in.