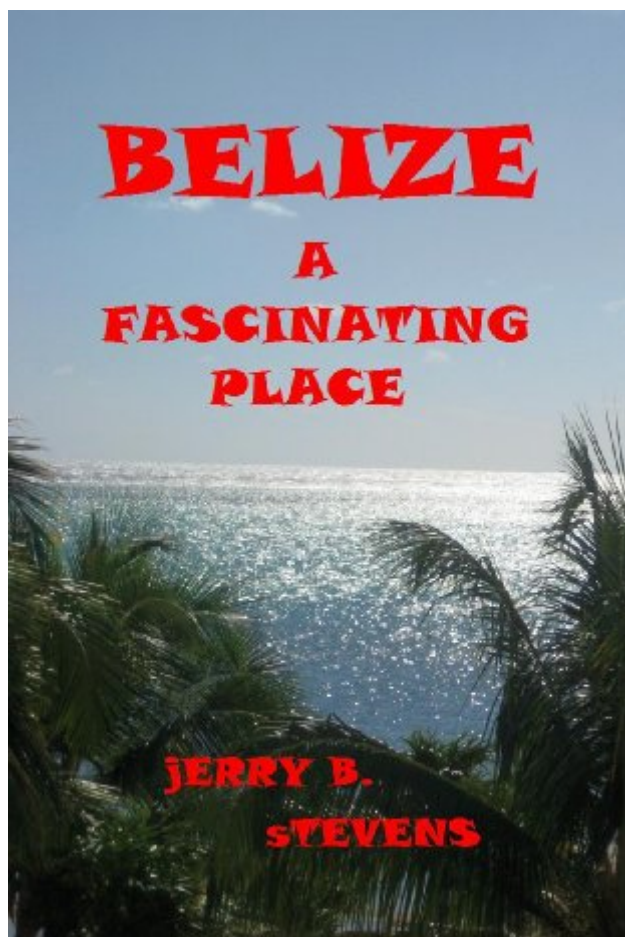


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BELIZE: A Fascinating Place



Synopsis

Belize: A fascinating Place is a living history of sorts. The author and his wife first visited Belize in 1977. They lived in San Pedro Ambergris Caye from 1983 until 1985 when they returned to the United States for ten years. In the fall of 1994, they again returned to Belize to live for another 17 years. In 2012, they returned to the United States for insurance reasons. Over all those years, they met many interesting individuals against an even more interesting and dramatically changing social background; thus, the first part of the book is about San Pedro as a sleepy little village on Ambergris Caye. Some of the villagers had grown up in families whose immediate ancestors subsisted by owning or working coconut plantations, which covered the north end of the island. Around the time of the collapse of the coconut market, hurricane refugees from Xcalac, Mexico both replaced and displaced a number of families. These people brought their fishing skill with them. Another dramatic change occurred once the island was "discovered" as a tourist destination. At the time, the population of San Pedro was about 1000 people about 17 of whom were gringos. The tourist industry melded with and then displaced fishing as the main industry. With this evolution, many islanders became tourist guides and Creole people from Belize City moved to San Pedro to work in the hotels and bars that flourished. These resilient people adapted in one or two generations to each other and to three markedly different working norms. The author and his wife witnessed the population shifts and shockingly swift transition from a traditional fishing village to a thriving tourist center. They decided to live in sparsely populated western Belize. Mayan artifacts made it abundantly clear that we were interlopers into one of the world's early civilizations. As one of the villagers asked me, if the Mayans died out, why is there so many of us. Without ever shaking the feeling of being cultural gatecrashers, the author and his wife retired to a small sheep ranch near a Mayan village eight miles, as the crow flies, from Guatemala. The peace and tranquility of their sedate sheep ranch was soon shattered by a non-traditional church representing a sudden Pentecostal invasion of Catholic territory, which had invaded Mayan tradition only one hundred and fifty years before. They soon realized that an influx of people was doing to Cayo what had happened to San Pedro, only this time, they as gringos along with people from the coastal regions of Belize, were displacing a mixed resident mestizo and Mayan population. What had happened in the United States to the Native American population over centuries was now happening within a couple of generations in Western Belize. What was surprising was that the influx of people was not only from foreign places such as the United States, Canada, Zimbabwe, and Guatemala but also was due to sudden shift in population within Belize. The result was a fascinating kaleidoscope of people and cultures or as some people say, a "rainbow coalition". Belize is truly a

fascinating place.

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Customer Reviews

This book was so poorly edited it was difficult to read. I got the Kindle version and have found that to be true of other books converted to Kindle, so maybe that was the problem. Despite that, it was interesting to read about the history of Ambergris Key and other areas in Belize.

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