



# **NATIONAL CRUISE TOURISM POLICY**

**Updated Policy – Volume 1  
September 2023**

Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations  
[www.tourism.gov.bz](http://www.tourism.gov.bz)

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## *Minister's Message*

### **HON. ANTHONY MAHLER** **MINISTER OF TOURISM AND DIASPORA RELATIONS**

In the early 2000s, Belize became the first country in our region to have established a national policy for cruise tourism development. This initial policy work set the stage for Belize to undergo an unprecedented growth and development of cruise that has transformed Belize into a regional leader in the industry. After two decades, this transformation continues, creating a strategic opportunity for Belize to continue to evolve as an industry leader. However, important development constraints and challenges exist, including infrastructural limitations, weak legislative support, climate change realities, and undoubtedly the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the industry. Yet, the opportunities and importance of cruise tourism in Belize is significant, with the industry holding an important role in the socio-economic development of communities in the Belize, Orange Walk, Toledo, and Stann Creek Districts.

Therefore, the time is opportune for Belize to review and update its National Cruise Tourism Policy. As with the first iteration, the Belize Tourism Board and the Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations have taken an inclusive approach to the update of this policy. Through the establishment of a Cruise Tourism Work Group, representation across the cruise tourism value chain (public, private and civil) has been garnered to oversee the update process. In addition, a national consultation process has also been carried out across the various stakeholder groups that make up the cruise industry, including regional and international stakeholders such as our cruise lines partners. As a result, this policy document is a product of the industry, with key policy recommendations to ensure that Belize remains a leader in the sector, and position itself viably and responsibly for the next ten years. As the Minister responsible for the development of Cruise Tourism in Belize, on behalf of the Government of Belize, I confirm the government's commitment and endorsement of this updated National Cruise Tourism Policy 2022-2032.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



The update of the National Cruise Policy for Belize involved extensive consultations with local and international stakeholders in 2022. For a full list of consulted parties, kindly see “Stakeholder Engagement List” at the end of this document.

The Belize Tourism Board, and the Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations, wishes to recognize the ardent work and technical support provided by the Cruise Working Group (CWG). The CWG was instrumental in reviewing and overseeing the policy update process. A heartfelt thank you is extended to the members of the CWG, namely Ms. Noriko Gamero, Fort Street Tourism Village; Mr. Stanley Longsworth, Caribbean Shipping Agencies Limited; Mr. Matthew Castillo, Sea Charters Limited; Mr. Gilbert Swaso, Belize Port Authority; Ms. Alyssa Noble, Belize Network of NGOs; Ms. Denise Ockey, Belize Tourism Industry Association; Mr. Jose Negrón, Belize Island Holdings Limited (Harvest Caye); Mr. Nickoli Alvarado, BLAST; Mr. Yhony Rosado, Local Cruise Tour Operator (Cavetubing.com); Mr. Raymond Mossiah, Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations; Mr. Kenrick Gordon, Department of Environment–Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management; Ms. Emilie Gomez, Ministry of Blue Economic and Civil Aviation; Ms. Marilyn Young, National Institute of Culture and History; and, Mr. Abil Castaneda, Belize Tourism Board.

The Belize Tourism Board also acknowledges the vision and leadership of the Hon. Anthony Mahler, Minister of Tourism and Diaspora Relations for having requisitioned the development of this policy document.



# ACRONYMS

- 1) ATV- All-Terrain Vehicle
- 2) BAHA- Belize Agricultural Health Agency
- 3) BREA- Business Research and Economic Advisors
- 4) BTB- Belize Tourism Board
- 5) COVID-19- Corona Virus Disease 2019
- 6) ECPAT- Every Child Protected Against Trafficking
- 7) FCCA- Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association
- 8) FSTV- Fort Street Tourism Village
- 9) GCB- Gaming Control Board
- 10) GDP- Gross Domestic Product
- 11) GST- General Sales Tax
- 12) ISPS- International Ship and Port Facility Security Code
- 13) ITVET- Institute for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
- 14) LNG- Liquefied Natural Gas
- 15) NSTMP- National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan
- 16) MSME- Micro-, Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises
- 17) PACT- Protected Areas Conservation Trust
- 18) P3- Public-Private Partnerships
- 19) SDGs- Sustainable Development Goals
- 20) TO- Tour Operator
- 21) UN- United Nations
- 22) USD- United States of America Currency
- 23) US- United States



# INTRODUCTION

## *& Purpose*

The current Cruise Tourism Policy for Belize was developed to address unprecedented growth in cruise tourism arrivals in Belize in the early 2000s. Since then, Belize has seen a remarkable 264% growth rate in cruise tourism between the years 2000-2021. Within this time period, there have been three significant boom events in the performance of cruise tourism in Belize. The first was in the early 2000s, with Belize establishing itself as a new destination in the Western Caribbean itinerary, which saw a growth of 1200% within a span of six years. This, was by far the most considerable growth in cruise in Belize, and sparked the need for rapid development of infrastructure such as the Fort Street Tourism Village, new attractions at archaeological reserves, and services such as transportation, restaurant and tour services to sustain the explosion in demand from this sector. Another significant growth in demand, occurred in early 2010s, despite challenges such as the Ebola outbreak and rise in threat of terrorism. However, the outstanding economic recovery from the 2008 recession was also seen as the catalyst for growth in this decade. Overall, the 2010s was an important period for cruising in the world, as cruise tourism became a viable and competitive travel option for the main tourism source markets around the world. This growth in demand saw Belize pass for the first time the 1 million passenger mark in 2016, and showed a promising trajectory prior to 2020; where Belize was poised to have achieved the NSTMP's 2030 projections earlier than scheduled. However, the COVID-19 Pandemic realized a dramatic decline in cruise passenger arrivals due to the lockdowns in both Belize and key source markets. Today, the industry is in the process of recovery, with some indication of a return to pre-pandemic growth patterns expected for 2023.



# INTRODUCTION

## *& Purpose*

Therefore, this 2023 National Cruise Tourism Policy has the main purpose of modernizing Belize's policies and strategic direction for cruise tourism development for the period 2023-2032. This policy document considers the recovery process currently underway, however, proposes a strategic path for Belize to embrace its competitive advantages and establish itself as a leader in the cruise sector. As a result, this policy document will serve as the basis for more specific interventions via strategic actions, plans, legislative work and capital investments. In this regard, the purpose of this policy document is to provide an enabling environment for government ministries, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, tourism businesses, tourism workers and service providers, and all other relevant and interested parties to correlate and prioritize development actions to achieve the 10-year vision for cruise tourism development in Belize.

This policy document replaces the previous Cruise Tourism Policy for Belize, and should be read in the context of the National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan 2030, and the National Tourism Policy 2017. It has been developed in consideration of key economic, environmental, socio-cultural, legal, policy, technological, and strategic matters that currently and are projected to impact the development and operationalization of cruise tourism in Belize (for more details on the Policy Context and Framework, kindly refer to Annexes 2 and 3).

The implementation of this policy document will be monitored via integration of recommendations into annual work plans of relevant agencies, and will be evaluated for effectiveness at the five-year implementation mark. In addition, one of the principal areas for recommendation is the establishment of a formal governance structure that will serve as a steering committee for cruise tourism development in Belize. Via the convening of this Cruise Tourism Development Committee, this policy shall be monitored and evaluated periodically.



# THE UPDATED POLICY

## *Context*

This National Cruise Tourism Policy sets out the priorities and a direction for cruise tourism development in Belize for the period 2023-2033.

Cruise tourism has become an integral subsector within the national tourism industry in Belize, an industry that contributes close to 50 % of Belize's GDP. Since the early 2000s, Belize has seen a remarkable growth in cruise tourism arrivals of over 260%. Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Belize was on a positive growth trend with projections indicating that the country would have achieved its 20-year goal, 8-10 years early. However, with the socio-economic shock brought on by the Pandemic, it is critical now more than ever to assess, align and strategize an updated and renewed path of growth and development for this critical sub-sector.

This National Cruise Tourism Policy reiterates Belize's overall commitment to sustainable development, through an embrace and stewardship of sustainable tourism. It was developed based on extensive industry consultations of local and international partners, as well as stakeholders from the public, private and civil sectors. It aligns and complements the strategic vision for tourism development established within the National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan 2030, and the National Tourism Policy.



# NATIONAL CRUISE TOURISM POLICY 2023-2033

## 2033 VISION

“Enhance the quality of life for all Belizeans through a competitive, resilient, safe and sustainable cruise tourism sector that delivers world-class, modern, enjoyable, unique and authentic visitor experiences.”

In order to effectuate this vision, the National Cruise Tourism Policy adapts seven (7) Thematic Policy Areas under which specific policy guidelines and recommendations are proposed. These Policy Areas are:

**DEMOCRATIC  
GOVERNANCE**

**SOCIAL  
EQUITY**

**CULTURAL  
INTEGRITY**

**ENVIRONMENTAL  
STEWARDSHIP**

**ECONOMIC  
OPTIMIZATION**

**PRODUCT  
DEVELOPMENT**

**RESILIENCE  
BUILDING**

# POLICY AIMS

Therefore, the overarching aims of the policy are to:

- To optimize the number of cruise ship calls and passenger arrivals in a sustainable manner, countrywide, and establish a strategic path towards 2.5 million cruise passenger arrivals annually.
- To improve the quality of visitor experience in Belize.
- To improve the level of security for locals and visitors engaged in cruise tourism activities.
- Attract new markets and market segments through the diversification and planning of Belize's cruise tourism product, particularly in relation to conventional cruise tourism and the luxury/expedition style (Boutique) cruises.
- Enhance visitor satisfaction by improving the cruise tourism destinations, accessibility to existing and new destinations, to equitably distribute cruise tourists across the country and avoid over-crowding.
- To increase local employment participation and leadership in tourism economic activity and reduce poverty by using cruise tourism as a pro-poor tourism tool.
- To optimize the revenue's generated from cruise passenger expenditure's and ensure equitable distribution of economic benefits to all stakeholders.
- To develop synergies between cruise tourism activities and environmental management, conservation, stewardship, and resilience objectives in Belize.
- To increase overall benefits from cruise tourism by creating inter-sectoral linkages, where cruise lines source needed supplies and goods from Belize.
- To expand the absorptive capacity of the country by developing new attractions, and properly manage the stress factors of already established sites.
- To explore and adequately plan and mobilize other ports and suitable anchoring sites. Including the provision of auxiliary services for the sector.
- To develop effective conversion campaigns to convert cruise passengers to overnight stay visitors.



# CORE PRINCIPLES



## Environmental

**Responsible** - Ensure that sustainable and planned tourism development for cruise tourism is executed, giving strong consideration for proper environmental stewardship, respecting the integrity of ecosystems in which it occurs, supporting conservation efforts, preventing pollution and overuse of ecological resources and benefits.

**Resilient** - Establish legislation, plans and actions that build Belize's long-term resilience to the impacts of climate change.

## Social

**Socially Equitable** - Develop a cruise tourism sector that promotes and grows social equality, safety and security. It should create positive and inclusive opportunities for Belizeans, at all times upholding human rights of all.

**Cultural Integrity** - Ensure the protection and conservation of Belize's ethnic diversity and tangible and intangible cultural heritage and traditions.

## Economic

**Optimization** - Optimize the socio-economic benefits from cruise tourism, through a strategic program to optimize demand, and for Belize to diversify its supply offer. Equally, cruise tourism should be well integrated with the rest of the Belizean economy, avoiding over-dependency.

**Competitiveness** - Build Belize as a world-class cruise destination, with the adequate facilities, products and amenities that serve both conventional and boutique style of cruising.

## Governance

**Inclusive Leadership** - Ensure that platforms for cruise tourism governance are inclusive and support Belizeans in taking leadership over cruise development. It should also engage platforms that are accountable and transparent.

# THE POLICY

The following are the Policy Statements established for the seven priority areas for 2023–2033:



## 1. DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

### Objective

***Belize commits to establish an inclusive, participatory and streamlined governance system and strategy for cruise tourism development in Belize.***

#### **1.1 Cruise Tourism Development Committee**

**1.1.1** Establish a Cruise Tourism Development Committee with representation from both local and international partners (private, public, and civil sectors), that provides a communication platform, oversight and stewardship of future development and operations in the cruise sector in Belize. Composition may include:

- Local Governments
- Ministry of Tourism (Chair)
- Belize Tourism Board
- Port Managers
- Tour Operators (Contracted and Non-Contracted)
- Tour Guides
- Attraction Manager
- Shipping Agents
- Environmental NGO Partner
- Belize Chamber of Commerce
- Belize Port Authority
- Department of Environment
- FCCA
- Ministry of Blue Economy
- BTIA
- NEMO

# THE POLICY



## 1. DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

### 1.1 Cruise Tourism Development Committee

#### Cont'd 1.1

**1.1.2** Allow for the Cruise Tourism Development Committee to establish sub-committees that shall address and steward specific aspects of cruise development in Belize, including areas such as crisis management, urban zone management, security, and so on.

### 1.2 Strategic Partnerships

**1.2.1** Formalize strategic working partnerships with both conventional and boutique cruise lines, and the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association to support cruise development in Belize.

**1.2.2** Engage and lead in a regional platform for collaboration between destinations and ports that share itineraries, to support regional planning, development and strategies for sustainable cruise tourism growth.

### 1.3 Cruise Development Strategy

**1.3.1** Develop a comprehensive 10-year Cruise Tourism Development Strategy for both Conventional and Boutique (Small Luxury and Small Expedition-based) Cruise Tourism in Belize, including designation of Cruise Zones, in the Belize, Stann Creek and Toledo Districts.

Objective



# THE POLICY



## 1. DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

### 1.3 Cruise Development Strategy

### Objective

#### Cont'd 1.3

**1.3.2** The Cruise Tourism Development Strategy should operationalize strategic actions to prioritize product development, capacity development, marketing, employment and recruitment of Belizeans to work on cruise ships, as well as the purchasing of Belizean goods and services to be consumed by cruise lines.

**1.3.3** The Cruise Tourism Development Strategy shall set out a spatial and economic plan for the future development of cruise ports in Belize, and sites and attractions for cruise tourism.

### 1.4 Digitization and Centralization of Clearance and Scheduling

**1.4.1** Complete a consolidation exercise of all clearance-related fees, and establish a one-fee or one-stop payment system for the cruise sector.

**1.4.2** Digitize and establish digital clearance for all cruise vessels by all boarding party agencies.

**1.4.3** Modernize and digitize the cruise call scheduling mechanism and communication mechanism with cruise lines, via an online platform or mobile application for real-time updates and notifications.

# THE POLICY

## 1. DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE



### 1.5 Legislative Improvement

#### Objective

**1.5.1** Consolidate all cruise legislation into one National Cruise Development Legislation, inclusive of:

- Adjusted head tax,
- Development incentives and regulations specific to the cruise sector,
- Support for overnight stays and for operations of entertainment (casino) and duty free stores while in Belizean waters,
- Ensure that only Belizean-owned tour operators can have and operate contracts for tours with Cruise Lines in Belize,
- Recruitment facilitation,
- Supply of local goods to ships,
- Overnight stays for cruise lines in Belizean ports,
- Port development,
- Establish guidelines for promotion and sale of locally-made cultural products within cruise ports, and,
- Enforcement and Penalties.

**1.5.2** Review and revise the Immigration, BAHA, Public Health, Port Authority, and Customs and Excise Legislation to facilitate digital clearances of ships.

**1.5.3** The Government of Belize shall domesticate all relevant international maritime law that relates to cruise tourism operations.

**1.5.4** Review and revise the BTB legislation to expand the licensing and regulation of other tourism service providers in the cruise tourism value chain (eg. Artisans, Attractions, Tour Drivers, Tender Operators etc.), and to clarify the guest to guide ratio of tour transfer requirements for tour operators.

# THE POLICY



## 1. DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

### 1.6 Cruise Port Development and Investments

#### Objective

**1.6.1** The Government of Belize will institute a public-private partnership (PPP) or private approach for all new future cruise port development projects.

- Where it relates to the PPP approach the government must have a stake of at least 20% in the project, in which the asset developed, over a viable long-term period, will become an asset of the government and people of Belize.

**1.6.2** Establish a Ministerial Cruise Investment Vetting Committee, to be co-chaired by the Ministers responsible for Tourism and Port Authority. This committee will be responsible for processing, vetting and recommending to Cabinet future port developments, under a Public-Private Partnership or Private Model.

**1.6.3** Institutionalize a robust and accountable system for soliciting, mobilizing, processing and operationalizing Public-Private Partnerships or Privately-owned cruise port development in Belize.

**1.6.4** Establish a clear national vetting process for cruise port developments in Belize, inclusive of a Feasibility Assessment (Cost-Benefit Analysis, and a Social and Environmental Impact Assessment requirement).

- The Government of Belize shall hold the right to carry out an independent Feasibility Assessment prior to approval of a project.

**1.6.5** The vetting of any cruise port development project should be guided by the following:

- The port development project shall have written commercial support from at least one major conventional cruise line (i.e. a cruise line (s) that represents at least 20% of annual cruise calls to Belize, inclusive of their subsidiary brands).



# THE POLICY



## 1. DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

### 1.6 Cruise Port Development and Investments

#### Cont'd 1.6.5

- Cumulative impacts should be strongly considered in the approval decision by Government. In this regard, a determination must be made by Government that the proposed project is in line with national policy (inclusive of the Cruise Tourism Development Strategy), will be feasible in a competitive scenario, will provide a net positive socio-economic and environmental impact.
- Projects must justify that they are complementary and strategic in nature and that they would provide a competitive advantage and an opportunity for optimization of cruise tourism in Belize, as well as adjacent sectors such as live-aboard and yachting tourism.

### Objective

### 1.7 Shipping Agents

**1.7.1** Cruise Lines, of any category, are required to engage the services of a shipping agent to coordinate calls and port operations in Belize.

### 1.8 Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Implementation

**1.8.1** Assign the responsibility of oversight of implementation of the National Cruise Tourism Policy to the Cruise Tourism Development Committee.

**1.8.2** Establish annual action plans for implementation of the Cruise Tourism Policy via the work plans for the Ministry of Tourism and Belize Tourism Board, and in the medium- to long-term via the updated NSTMP.

# THE POLICY

The following are the Policy Statements established for the seven priority areas for 2023–2033:



## 2. SOCIAL EQUITY

### Objective

*Belize commits to ensuring that cruise tourism supports the provision of social inclusiveness, justice, fairness, safety, and social well-being for all, through the embrace of Belize's diverse society and through a profound commitment to protecting human rights, and preventing unlawful practices.*

#### 2.1 Fair and Competitive Employment

**2.1.1** Review labour legislation and policies to ensure that fair, standardized, and equitable wages for all in the cruise sector exists.

**2.1.2** The Government of Belize shall host job fairs to promote local employment in the cruise sector, annually.

#### 2.2 Recruitment of Jobs in the Cruise Industry

**2.2.1** Establish formal agreements and programs with cruise lines and/or their respective recruitment agencies for recruitment of Belizeans to work onboard cruise vessels at various levels.

# THE POLICY

## 2. SOCIAL EQUITY



### 2.2 Recruitment of Jobs in the Cruise Industry

#### Objective

#### Cont'd 2.2

**2.2.2** Develop a legislation specific to the recruitment of locals to work on cruise lines, that protects the rights of Belizeans being recruited by cruise lines or their agents, including coverage of social security and other employment-based benefits.

**2.2.3** Carry out at minimum 2 recruitment events in Belize annually, in conjunction with cruise lines.

### 2.3 Fair and Competitive Business Development for Locals

**2.3.1** Review legislation and agreements to ensure that Belizean's employment and business rights are protected and prioritized within the cruise sector.

**2.3.2** Promote that all cruise shore excursions include a requirement for cruise visitors to visit local businesses, either at the site and attraction or along the tour transfer path.

**2.3.3** The Government of Belize shall not promote, facilitate or support in any kind of format the establishment of monopolies in the cruise sector in Belize.



# THE POLICY

## 2. SOCIAL EQUITY

### 2.4 Prevention of Child and Sexual Exploitation

**2.4.1** The Government of Belize shall institute via its Police Department (Tourism Police Unit), and its social development agencies a program to combat and prevent child and sexual exploitation in the cruise tourism sector.

### 2.5 Community Support Programs

**2.5.1** The Government of Belize and its cruise partners shall work in collaboration to establish annual community support programs that seek to combat against poverty, negative gentrification and youth marginalization in communities that buffer cruise tourism activity.

### 2.6 Safety and Security

**2.6.1** Strengthen the capacity and resources available to the Tourism Police Unit to be able to adequately monitor and safeguard the security within the cruise sector.

**2.6.2** Formalize a Tourism Concierge System that will complement the Tourism Police Unit in providing safe and satisfactory customer experiences within strategic areas in key cruise destinations and sites.

**2.6.3** Strengthen the security, public health, and customs clearance systems used to screen cruise visitors entering Belize via its cruise ports, via the installation of surveillance and screening technology, and inclusive of proper training in international cruise port surveillance skills and systems.

# THE POLICY

## 2. SOCIAL EQUITY

### 2.6 Safety and Security

#### Cont'd 2.6

**2.6.3** Install Medical Emergency Facilities and Services at Sites and Attractions used for cruise tourism.

**2.6.4** Establish in all key cruise tourism destination well-equipped and prepared search and rescue and emergency-response systems.

### 2.7 Capacity Building

**2.7.1** Provide accessible and affordable basic training programs for Belizeans interested in working on cruise vessels, via the establishment of a Maritime Training Institute/Center.

**2.7.2** Via a Tourism Hospitality Training Institution, provide accessible and affordable tourism hospitality, customer service and other specialized training for Belizeans to be able to enter into the local cruise tourism industry. These trainings should include:

- Customer Service and Service Excellence
- Leadership
- Story-telling
- Specialized Tour Guide Training
- Defensive Driving for Commercial Vehicles
- Language Training
- Crisis and Emergency Management for Tours

#### Objective

# THE POLICY

## 2. SOCIAL EQUITY

### 2.7 Capacity Building

#### Cont'd 2.7

**2.7.3** Establish training programs for enhancement of tour packages and services offered by tour operators that service the cruise sector. In particular, in the following areas:

- Business Development and Etiquette
- Package Development and Pricing
- Marketing
- Quality Management

### 2.8 Accessible Tourism

**2.8.1** Develop requisite standards and execute infrastructural adjustments at sites, attractions and visitor facilities to ensure that equal access for persons of diverse abilities are available.

### 2.9 Safeguards

**2.9.1** Belize shall not encourage, promote and condone any acts of negative gentrification, displacement or discrimination by cruise lines, cruise projects, cruise tourism product and/or service providers.

#### Objective



# THE POLICY

The following are the Policy Statements established for the seven priority areas for 2023–2033:



## 3. CULTURAL INTEGRITY

### Objective

*Belize commits to developing, providing access to, promoting and safeguarding the cultural diversity and integrity of the Belizean people as a major tourism attractor for the cruise tourism sector.*

#### 3.1 The Orange Economy

**3.1.1** Belize will plan, invest, promote and offer to the cruise tourism sector a high quality cultural product, based on local, authentic, unique and experiential tourism offer. Focus should be placed on:

- Culinary experiences and products
- Music and dance experiences and products
- Artisanal experiences and products
- History/Storytelling experiences

**3.1.2** The Government of Belize will establish an Orange Economy Development Fund to provide support for tourism enterprise development, cultural tourism product diversification, and creative arts professional development.

**3.1.3** Will establish a quality standard and branding campaign for locally-made and authentic artisanal and creative products offered to the cruise tourism sector.

# THE POLICY



## 3. CULTURAL INTEGRITY

### 3.1 The Orange Economy

#### Cont'd 3.1

**3.1.4** Shall establish a “Unique Belize” network of stores within ports, sites and attractions and frequently visited cruise sites to promote and sell local and authentic products.

**3.1.5** Establish Community Craft Markets for locals to showcase and sell locally made products in rural and urban areas frequented by cruise visitors.

**3.1.6** Will establish an incentive program for Orange Economy enterprises to develop and get export-ready “Unique Belize” branded products.

#### Objective

### 3.2 Site Interpretation

**3.2.1** The National Institute of Culture and History, and the Belize Tourism Board shall assess and modernize all site interpretation and signage at cultural sites and attractions used by cruise tourism.

**3.2.2** The Belize Tourism Board and the National Institute of Culture and History shall establish a network of cultural heritage signage within key urban areas accessed by cruise tourism to provide adequate pedestrian and self-guided experiences.

# THE POLICY



## 3. CULTURAL INTEGRITY

### 3.3 Access to Cultural Heritage Sites

**3.3.1** An annual access road infrastructure maintenance and improvement plan will be developed and executed for roads that provide access to key cruise tourism zones, sites and attractions.

**3.3.2** An adequate directional signage network will be installed and maintained to and from cruise tourism visited sites and attractions.

### 3.4 Code of Conduct

**3.4.1** Belize will establish, promote and monitor a standardized code of conduct for all cruise visitors and tour guides in the use and enjoyment of Belize's cultural heritage.



# THE POLICY

The following are the Policy Statements established for the seven priority areas for 2023–2033:

## 4. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

### Objective

*Belize undertakes to responsibly develop cruise tourism in Belize, at all times prioritizing the protection and conservation of environmental resources and ecological services, and minimizing any detrimental impacts from cruise tourism activities.*

#### 4.1 Monitoring of Environmental Impacts

**4.1.1** The Government of Belize shall establish monitoring guidelines for multi-agency assessments to be carried out on the impact of activities within cruise tourism sector.

**4.1.2** A social and environmental impact report card, using Global Sustainable Tourism Council Criteria, for the cruise sector shall be published every two years by the Government of Belize.

#### 4.2 Nature-based Enterprise Development

**4.2.1** The Government of Belize, through the Protected Areas Conservation Trust and other similar funding platforms, will develop a Blue and Green Tourism Development Fund to support the modernization and enhancement of nature-based tourism enterprises and products.

# THE POLICY



## 4. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

### 4.3 Natural Tourism Product

**4.2.1** Belize will plan, invest, promote and offer to the cruise tourism sector a high quality nature-based product and experience, based on local, authentic, unique and experiential tourism offer. Focus should be placed on:

- Adventure-based experiences
- Marine-based experiences
- Agri-tourism experience
- Exploration and site-seeing experiences

**4.2.2** The Belize Tourism Board, in conjunction with the Protected Areas Conservation Trust, shall implement a nature-tourism standard operating procedure for tourism and recreation activities within natural landscapes, inclusive of capacity management at sites.

### 4.4 Code of Conduct

**4.4.1** Belize will establish, promote and monitor a standardized code of conduct for all cruise visitors and tour guides in the use and enjoyment of Belize's natural heritage.

### 4.5 Innovative Green and Blue Initiatives

**4.5.1** Collaborate with cruise lines and other sector partners to pilot and roll-out innovative green and blue initiatives within the cruise sector, such as electric tour buses and boats, waste and water management, shoreline protection, use of environmentally friendly visitor substances such as sunscreen, repellants, etc.

# THE POLICY



## 4. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

### 4.5 Innovative Green and Blue Initiatives

#### Cont'd 4.5

#### Objective

**4.5.2** Support and promote the transition of the cruise lines to more energy efficient fuels (i.e. LNG), shore side power supply, and more efficient sources of energy, in order to support emission reduction.

### 4.6 Environmental Awareness

**4.6.1** Collaborate with cruise lines and other sector partners to jointly design and implement an environmental awareness and stewardship program that highlights the responsible practices within the industry.

### 4.7 Dredging and Channel Maintenance

**4.7.1** Develop with port managers, developers and local agencies a robust dredging and channel maintenance plan near cruise ports.

**4.7.2** Establish an accountable and equitable financing mechanism, based on a PPP approach, to fund dredging and channel maintenance operations.

### 4.8 Environmental Compliance

**4.8.1** Promote that cruise lines submit a fleet environmental compliance plan or equivalent, that would be subject to monitoring by the relevant regulatory agencies.



# THE POLICY



## 4. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

### 4.9 Waste and Hazardous Substance Management

**4.9.1** Attraction managers shall ensure that an adequate solid waste program exists at sites used by cruise visitors, including collection, separation and recycling systems.

**4.9.2** Cruise lines are not allowed to release or dump into the sea or on any land in Belize sewage waste, solid waste, or other forms of waste (including bilge water), unless so allowed by an approved environmental compliance plan from the Department of the Environment.

**4.9.3** Tour operators, tour guides and other relevant service providers (i.e. tenders) shall ensure that no litter or waste is thrown over-board, outside the vessel or during tours and transfers.

**4.9.4** No hazardous chemicals will be used by cruise lines, tour operators and other cruise-related service providers.

### 4.10 Site Interpretation

**4.10.1** The PACT, site and attraction managers (inclusive of umbrella organizations such as APAMO), and the Belize Tourism Board shall assess and modernize all site interpretation and signage at nature-based sites and attractions used by cruise tourism.

**4.10.2** The BTB shall design and install directional signage to and from nature-based sites and attractions frequented by cruise visitors.

# THE POLICY



## 4. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

### 4.11 Mooring at Nature-based Sites

**4.11.1** The Belize Port Authority, the BTB, attraction managers and relevant agencies shall establish a mooring network at marine sites and attractions to ensure adequate and responsible use of marine resources.

### 4.12 Conservation Financing

**4.12.1** The Government of Belize shall ensure that the financing support currently established via the respective cruise passenger fees (head tax) will remain, and upon review, the contribution to environmental conservation should not be adversely affected.

**4.12.2** Any upward adjustment to the contribution of cruise tourism to environmental conservation, via PACT, shall be earmarked primarily for tourism recreation product development and management (Blue and Green Tourism Development Fund).

### 4.13 Shore-side Energy

**4.13.1** Establish proper standards and regulatory structures to support shore-side energy connectivity at current and future ports.

**4.13.2** Promote the installation of renewable energy technology at current and future ports to minimize use of hydrocarbons.

# THE POLICY

The following are the Policy Statements established for the seven priority areas for 2023–2033:



## 5. ECONOMIC OPTIMIZATION

### Objective

*Belize commits to a path towards 2.5 million cruise passengers nationwide, optimizing demand potential, embracing new market trends, building modern supply chains and infrastructure, and harnessing Belize's competitive advantage in the green and blue economies, at all times striving for an equitable economic integration of cruise tourism in Belize's economy.*

#### 5.1 Cruise Tourism Zones

**5.1.1** The Government of Belize shall carry out a spatial planning exercise to designate Cruise Tourism Zones, which will serve as priority areas to accommodate cruise activities in Belize, including urban centers, ports, sites and attractions and priority transport access corridors.

**5.1.2** Within the Cruise Tourism Zone planning process, the Government of Belize shall designate priority zones for Conventional and Boutique Cruise (Small, Luxury, Expedition) berthing and activities. Southern Belize, should be prioritized for the latter.

For the purpose of this policy document, the following definitions apply:

- Conventional Cruises- Cruise Vessels with maximum passenger capacity of more than 850 passengers.
- Boutique Cruises- Cruise Vessels with maximum passenger capacity of no more than 850 passengers.

**5.1.3** The Government of Belize, through its Transport Department and Belize Port Authority, shall establish transport passes for all tour operators that serve the cruise tourism sector to operate within a Cruise Tourism Zone, where delays due to checkpoints and other transport-related incidents will be minimized.



# THE POLICY



## 5. ECONOMIC OPTIMIZATION

### 5.2 Carrying Capacity

**5.2.1** Belize shall embrace a strategy of gradual arrival growth with the objective of receiving 2.5 million cruise passengers nationwide.

- For the Belize District, the maximum carrying capacity shall be set to 16,000 passengers per day.
- For Harvest Caye, the maximum carrying capacity shall be set to 10,000 per day.

**5.2.2** To accomplish the path towards 2.5 million passengers, the government of Belize shall address the triggers/bottlenecks, along the full length of the cruise tourism value chain, required to be able to accommodate this growth path responsibly.

**5.2.3** The Government of Belize shall prevent at all costs, the overcrowding and physical deterioration of sites, attractions and communities.

**5.2.4** All stakeholders, such as Tour Operators, Tour Guides, and similar should ensure that the carrying capacity and guest-to-guide ratios are maintained at the respective sites and attractions.

**5.2.5** All major sites and attractions will be responsible to develop their site-specific carrying capacities, and to set in place a monitoring and enforcement system.

**5.2.6** In the case of diving and snorkeling sites, no more than twenty-four (24) divers or snorkelers will be allowed to be present at the same time in an area of 100 square yards.

# THE POLICY



## 5. ECONOMIC OPTIMIZATION

### 5.3 Port Development

**5.3.1** Belize will establish adequate berthing facilities in destinations where conventional cruises call.

**5.3.2** In the case of the Belize District, no more than two new cruise port developments with berthing facilities for conventional and/or boutique cruise vessels will be allowed.

- This is in addition to the current facilities available at the Fort Street Tourism Village, Belize City.

**5.3.3** In the case of the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts, jointly, no more than one new cruise port development with berthing facilities for conventional cruise vessels, and/or boutique cruise vessels, will be allowed.

- This is in addition to the current port at Harvest Caye, Stann Creek District.

### 5.4 Home-porting & Other Services

**5.4.1** Belize shall develop a strategy to establish home-porting services, in particular for the smaller, luxury and expedition-based cruises.

**5.4.2** For boutique-type cruises, Belize shall also consider establishing the necessary legal and business development environment to establish dry-docking services.

**5.4.3** The Ministry of Tourism, and the Belize Tourism Board shall mobilize the development of proper accommodation facilities, transport services, port facilities, and other auxiliary facilities and services required for the provision of home-porting services.

# THE POLICY



## 5. ECONOMIC OPTIMIZATION

### 5.5 Multiple Day Visits

**5.5.1** Belize shall promote and facilitate, via legislative and policy adjustments, multiple day stays by cruise lines in Belize, including multiple port calls in Belize.

**5.5.2** Facilitate ship stores replenishment, and more competitive fees and head tax structure to encourage longer stays.

### 5.6 Supply Replenishment Port

**5.6.1** Mobilize the trade of an export-ready list of goods and services that Belize can offer to cruise lines, including but not limited to agricultural, fisheries, hospitality and medical goods and services.

**5.6.2** The Government of Belize shall enable a commercial purchasing platform between local suppliers and cruise lines for the provision of goods and services to ship.

**5.6.3** Belize shall so develop and implement a strategy to become a competitive replenishment port for supplies and goods for cruise lines.

### 5.7 Head Tax

**5.7.1** Belize shall re-assess its head tax (or equivalent) model, and shall adjust head taxes to align with regional and industry benchmarks, in conjunction with cruise lines, port development and managers.



# THE POLICY



## 5. ECONOMIC OPTIMIZATION

### 5.7 Head Tax

#### cont'd 5.7

**5.7.2** The reassessment above shall ensure that there is an equitable share of the head tax revenue amongst all relevant agencies.

**5.7.3** Head Tax revenue sharing should not go below 50% for the Government of Belize and local agencies, combined.

### 5.8 Navigation

**5.8.1** A National Mooring Plan and Navigational Aid System will be developed for local and international marine transport.

### 5.9 Local Business Development

**5.9.1** The Government of Belize, through its appropriate agencies shall partner with cruise lines to establish a business incubator program to support product development by local businesses, MSMEs in particular.

### 5.10 Economic Data Management and Research

**5.10.1** The relevant government agencies and partner cruise lines will improve the statistical reporting systems for cruise tourism, through the strengthening and integration of mobile app technology and the establishment of a tourism satellite account for Belize.

Objective

# THE POLICY



## 5. ECONOMIC OPTIMIZATION

### 5.10 Economic Data Management and Research

#### cont'd 5.10

**5.10.2** Establish, within the national university, a research center for continuous market and industry research to support planning, policy and legislative development in tourism.

### Objective

### 5.11 Scheduling of Calls

**5.11.1** Scheduling of calls shall be coordinated by the Belize Tourism Board, and will be based on a first-come first serve-basis.

**5.11.2** Cruise lines that request multiple visits over an extended period of time will be given priority.

**5.11.3** Cruise lines that request multiple day stays and overnight stays in Belize will also be given priority.

**5.11.4** The BTB shall digitize and issue out the schedule of future calls via a public platform, with at minimum three months of anticipation.

# THE POLICY

The following are the Policy Statements established for the seven priority areas for 2023–2033:



## 6. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

### Objective

*Belize will establish itself as a world-class cruise destination with competitive cruise product, services, facilities and infrastructure.*

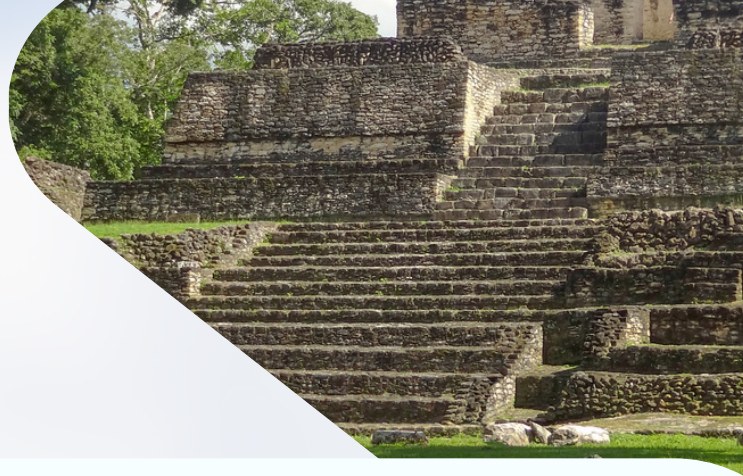
#### 6.1 Product Development Strategy

**6.1.1** Belize will develop a 10-year product development strategy, as an annex to the NSTMP, that promotes the following:

- Creation of Cruise Tourism Zones in Urban and Rural Belize.
- Development and diversification of the shore excursion offer for Belize, inclusive of prioritized tourism sites and attractions, and authentic cultural and natural tourism products and experiences.
- Development and implementation of product development initiatives to attract crew disembarkation, visitor conversion, and overnight port calls.
- Comprehensive Transportation Plan for each zone.
- Comprehensive Infrastructure and Road Maintenance Plans for access roads to cruise ports, sites and attractions.
- Comprehensive Security, Safety and Risk Management Plans for each zone.
- Standardized site and attraction management.
- Incentive programs for product development and business enterprise improvement.



# THE POLICY



## 6. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

### 6.1 Product Development Strategy

#### cont'd 6.1

**6.1.2** The Central Belize (Belize District and Cayo District) region, the Southeastern Coast Region and the Southern Region will be priority zones for cruise tourism product development.

**6.1.3** The Belize Tourism Board will prioritize the implementation of the Cruise Tourism Product Development Strategy in its annual operational budgets.

#### Objective

### 6.2 Product Development Funding

**6.2.1** A Product Development Fund, Trust or equivalent, inclusive of the Orange Fund and the Blue-Green Fund recommended in this policy, should be mobilized to support product enhancement and innovation, as well as infrastructure maintenance and upkeep. These dedicated product development funds should be established in conjunction with cruise lines and other sector partners.

**6.2.2** The Government of Belize will also establish affordable financing mechanism for local businesses to periodically improve their equipment, facilities and services to meet the demand.

### 6.3 Cruise Marketing

**6.3.1** The Belize Tourism Board will develop a robust cruise tourism marketing strategy and annual campaigns to ensure that Belize remains top of mind of cruise visitors, cruise lines and their crew.

# THE POLICY

## 6. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

### 6.4 Quality Standards

**6.4.1** The Belize Tourism Board will establish and monitor quality standards and codes of conduct for tour guides, tour operators, tour drivers, sites, attractions, and other tourism service providers.

**6.4.2** The Belize Tourism Board, along with the Tourism Police Unit and respective site and attraction managers, shall operationalize proper enforcement of the quality standards with tour guides, tour operators, sites, attractions and any other tourism service providers.

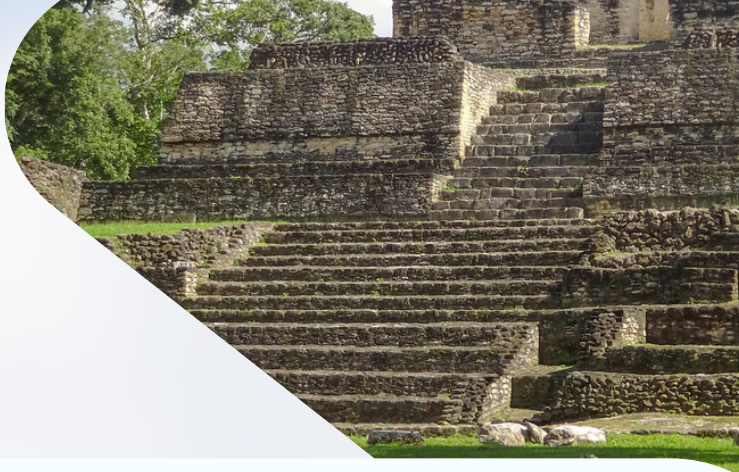
**6.4.3** The Belize Tourism Board will establish a Customer Satisfaction Rating Program for its Tour Guides and Tour Operators to track and incentivize high quality service culture in Belize.

**6.4.4** The Belize Tourism Board and the Protected Areas Conservation Trust will establish a Green and Blue Certification Program, inclusive of Recreation Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines for protected areas utilized for cruise tourism.

**6.4.5** The Belize Tourism Board shall carry out every two years a self, and an independent Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria- Sustainable Destination Audit of the Cruise Tourism Zones and their assets.

**6.4.6** Based on the results of the Audit referenced in 6.4.5, the Government of Belize will develop bi-annual work plans to address the shortcomings and gaps presented in the Final Audit Report.

# THE POLICY



## 6. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

### 6.5 Public Awareness

**6.5.1** The Belize Tourism Board will develop and execute a public awareness campaign for the local populace to build awareness of cruise tourism in Belize.

**6.5.2** The Belize Tourism Board, in conjunction with cruise lines, will host at minimum one annual cruise tourism public forums to support building public awareness of the cruise sector.

### 6.6 Entertainment, Casino Operations and Duty Free Stores

**6.6.1** Cruise lines are required to suspend all forms of entertainment activities on board, while in port, to promote shore visitation by passengers.

**6.6.2** Notwithstanding clause 6.6.1, cruise lines that wish to open casinos while in Belizean waters may apply to the Gaming Control Board on an annual basis for a Gaming License, at a fee to be established by the GCB, that shall allow casinos to be opened under conditions established by the Government of Belize.

**6.6.3** Notwithstanding clause 6.6.1, cruise lines may open duty free stores while in Belizean waters during time periods and under conditions established by the Government of Belize.



# THE POLICY

## 6. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

### 6.7 Modernization of Tour Vessel Fleet

**6.7.1** The Belize Tourism Board and Transport Department shall develop a Quality Standard for Tour Buses and Tour Vessels.

**6.7.2** The Government of Belize shall establish an incentive program to support the modernization of the tour bus and tour vessel fleet within 5 years of the implementation of this policy.

**6.7.3** The Belize Tourism Board and Transport Department shall carry out periodic enforcement and monitoring checks of tour bus and tour vessels quality standards.

# THE POLICY

The following are the Policy Statements established for the seven priority areas for 2023–2033:



## 7. RESILIENCE BUILDING

### Objective

*Belize commits to developing and strengthening the cruise sector's resilience to climate change, and to any other form of vulnerability, threat or emergency that may impede the sector's ability to thrive.*

#### 7.1 Disaster and Emergency Planning

**7.1.1** The Government of Belize shall develop and implement a Crisis, Disaster and Emergency Plan for the Cruise Sector, inclusive but not limited to the following types of events:

- Hurricane and Tropical Storms
- Fires
- Oil Spills
- Health Emergency
- Crime or Violence
- Shipwrecks or Sinking
- Terrorism

**7.1.2** The Government of Belize shall ensure that all relevant personnel are trained and able to implement the Crisis, Disaster and Emergency Plan for the Cruise Sector.

# THE POLICY



## 7. RESILIENCE BUILDING

### 7.1 Product Development Strategy

**7.1.3** The Government of Belize shall ensure that the requisite emergency management equipment and systems are in place to address crisis events, such as onboard fires, oil-spills, ship-wrecks, health emergencies, sinking of vessels, etc.

**7.1.4** The Government of Belize shall ensure that all new cruise ports have a crisis management plan, system, facilities and equipment.

### 7.2 Resilience Financing

**7.2.1** The Government of Belize shall establish an Emergency Recovery Fund to support tour guides, tour operators, and other tourism service providers in the wake of a disaster, emergency or crisis to recover business operations.

**7.2.2** The Government of Belize shall facilitate the introduction of affordable and accessible insurance coverage that would assist cruise tourism service providers in addressing expenses derived from crisis, emergencies and/or disasters.

**7.2.3** The Government of Belize shall develop joint proposals with cruise lines and cruise partners for cruise-related projects that seek to build resilience within the sector, in areas such as waste management, water management, energy management, shoreline protection of cruise tourism assets, and development of alternative livelihoods.

# THE POLICY



## 7. RESILIENCE BUILDING

### 7.3 Health and Safety Measures

**7.3.1** Belize shall develop a Communicable and Infectious Disease Standard Operating Procedure for the Cruise Industry, in order to have clear procedures on how to address events of infectious or communicable disease onboard vessels.

**7.3.2** To complement 7.3.1, the BTB shall develop within an appropriate time period industry-related standards and certification programs, where applicable, to support the readiness of the sector to address infectious disease spread event.

**7.3.3** The Government of Belize shall adequately prepare, train and develop health and safety capacities for all tour guides, tour operators, vendors and other frontline operations to safeguard the health and safety of cruise visitors and of tourism employees.

**7.3.4** The Government of Belize, through the Belize Police Department shall ensure that adequate human resources, equipment and capacities exist within the Tourism Police Unit to ensure that visitors and tourism workers alike are safe and secure during cruise operations.

### 7.4 Shoreline Protection

**7.4.1** In the development of Cruise Ports, Cruise Visitor Facilities, Sites and Attractions, the Government of Belize shall ensure that all cruise port developments address comprehensively shoreline protection needs of the projects, as well as shoreline protection needs of adjacent or nearby communities that are directly impacted by the cruise activity.



# THE POLICY



## 7. RESILIENCE BUILDING

### 7.5 Renewable and Low-Carbon Technology

**7.5.1** Belize shall embrace and promote the use and installation of renewable energy technology and low-carbon technology within local port developments, sites and attractions, local tourism businesses and cruise lines.

**7.5.2** The Belize Tourism Board shall develop an incentive program for all tour buses and tour vessels to be modernize and fitted with renewable energy sources and/or low carbon emission technology.



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