

Many ruins indicate that Belize was originally inhabited by the Maya Indians. Their civilization reached its height between 300 A.D. and 900 A.D., but thereafter collapsed and many of the people migrated.

Even though Columbus, in 1502, sailed near the region, the first recorded European settlement was established in 1638 by shipwrecked British sailors. Later came the lost British soldiers and sailors after the capture of Jamaica from Spain in 1655.



The settlers, who became mainly logwood cutters, were the target of many attacks from neighbouring Spanish settlements as Spain had claimed ownership of almost all of the New World. Logwood mostly used to produce dye. It was only in 1763 that Spain, in the Treaty of Paris, allowed the British settlers to engage in the logwood industry. This was reaffirmed by the Treaty of Versailles in 1783 and the area of logwood concession was extended by the Convention of London in 1786. But Spanish attacks continued until a solid victory was won by settlers, with British naval support, in the Battle of St. George's Caye in 1798. After that, British control over the settlement gradually increased and in 1862 British Honduras was formally declared a British Colony.



Early politics took the form of self governing public meetings until 1765 when it became a constitution, later governed by an Executive Council. This, in turn, was later replaced by a Legislative Assembly in 1853 with the British Superintendent as Chairman. When the settlement became a crown colony in 1871, the Superintendent was replaced by a Lieutenant Governor under the Governor of Jamaica. An unofficial majority was created in 1892, and this continued until 1935 when the elective system was again implemented on the basis of adult suffrage with a low-income qualification. The administrative ties with Jamaica were broken in 1884 when the title of Lieutenant Governor was changed to Governor. Further constitutional advances came in 1954 with the introduction of adult suffrage and an elected majority in the Legislature; the ministerial system was adopted in 1961. The country's name was changed on 1st June, 1973, from British Honduras to Belize. Belize achieved full independence on September 21, 1981 and is now a member of the Commonwealth, the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of American States and CARICOM.

You can find a comprehensive look at the history of Belize [HERE](#).