

**For immediate release:**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**BELIZE LAND BORDERS WILL REOPEN TO FOREIGN TOURISTS ON MAY 31**

**May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021**

The Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations (MTDR), along with the Border Management Agency (BMA), and the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) announce the reopening of Belize's land and sea borders to foreign tourists who wish to visit the country for recreation and vacation purposes only.

The points of entry will reopen in a phased approach, and in Phase 1, only tourists who are booked at Gold Standard hotels, and transferred by Gold Standard taxis or tour operators will be permitted to enter. Tourists will be required to present proof of a negative PCR Covid-19 test taken within 72 hours prior to arrival in Belize; or a rapid antigen test for SARS-CoV2 approved by the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) taken within 24 hours prior to arrival in Belize. All tourists, including those who provide proof of full Covid-19 immunization, may be required to submit to testing at their expense, at the discretion of the MOHW. Foreign travellers testing positive for Covid-19 shall be denied entry.

Santa Elena Border and Belize Western Border stations will reopen on Monday, May 31, 2021, and the time of operations at the borders will be from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily, until further notice. The San Pedro and Punta Gorda border points will also reopen in Phase 1 on a date to be announced.

The re-opening of the Ports of Entry will take place under the following phases: Phase 1: Foreign Tourists Only (or travelers with special permission); Phase 2: Foreign Tourists and Visitors of Friends, Family & Relatives; and Phase 3: Full Re-opening.

Under the first phase, the direct transit of travellers from border to border (in-transit passengers) will not be permitted. Entry or exit by Belizeans, diplomats, military personnel, permanent residents, etc. will continue on a restricted basis and still requires official permission from the relevant agencies.

To ensure the safe entry and departure of travellers, a new set of Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) are being implemented at the points of entry that follow the strict health and safety protocols that have been successfully implemented at the Phillip Goldson International Airport, to include health and temperature screening, physical distancing, and sanitizing. There is a mandatory requirement for facemasks to be worn in all public spaces while in Belize, and all foreign nationals must abide by the laws of Belize.

The BMA will be the agency responsible for the coordination and oversight of the SOPs. Its implementation will be the responsibility of all regulatory and management agencies at the respective ports of entry, including the MOHW, Department of Immigration and Nationality, Customs and Excise Department, Belize Agricultural Health Authority, Belize Police Department and the BTB.

The MTDR welcomes the safe reopening of our land borders to international tourists as this represents another important step toward tourism recovery and overall economic recovery.

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