



## 2015 Packing List: Belize

**In the spirit of living counter-culturally in JVC and with the goal of living simply in solidarity, we invite you to consider the packing list here (compiled with the input of JVs in the field), through the lens of the following questions:**

- How is what I am bringing demonstrative of my intention to immerse fully into the local culture and live as they live?
- How is my approach to packing reflective of a commitment to being dependent on the resources locally available to purchase?
- How might what I bring debunk or reify negative stereotypes about U.S. Americans living, traveling, or working abroad? How can I learn what those are, generally, and in my particular host country?
- How might what I bring into the JV house affect security, perceptions of security, especially knowing that it is easy to observe when new, “green” JVs are arriving, how much luggage they are bringing, etc.?  
*\*Also please note the bag policy and packing recommendations on page 18 of your handbook*
- What items may be more advisable to purchase in-country, after receiving local perspectives on what is most culturally appropriate? *e.g. volunteers in the past who have chosen to not purchase work clothes in the U.S., rather put their stipends towards having clothes or uniforms locally made or bought, have tended to be perceived as dressing more appropriately in the local culture, often find they receive more respect (from local students, co-workers, supervisors, etc.) initially from the local community by seeking out advice and reflecting this sensitivity to culture*
- What items may I perceive as necessary, though would be a privilege to have (not because of cost but because of access)?
- How might I consider adapting certain habits rather than looking to continue them? *e.g. bringing a 2-yr supply of contact lenses and solution to circumvent that they are not available; consider adjusting to glasses all or most of the time*
- How might the choices I make in items I bring have the potential to hinder (intentionally or not) my ability to bridge the gap of power and privilege between my co-workers, local neighbors, etc. and me? *To reinforce perceptions that foreigners think local resources and resourcefulness are ‘substandard’? e.g. bringing a year’s worth of teaching supplies to be able to carry out my job well – well intentioned and a positive effort towards a strong work ethic, though also begs the question of what does that mean for co-workers who reply on what the school can provide or not provide? Their perceptions of your resources? How they might perceive your openness (or lack thereof) to learn from their resourcefulness, accept their conditions as is, be willing to sacrifice to learn new approaches to teaching and/or understand their educational systems?*

**We also encourage utilizing the handbook as a tool for reflection as there are a number of sections that could be helpful in framing how you approach packing.**



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### Packing List with JV input

Yeah! You're going to Belize. A short time ago you may not have even known where Belize was. Now you know that it is a country located in Central America, but that is more Caribbean than Central American in nature: Belizeans speak Creole, English, and a few other languages which you will come to hear; there are as many mosquitoes in Belize as there are grains of sand on its entire coastline; and it's HOT. Does that help you any as you stand there with your empty suitcase staring back at you? Well, not really. So, here are some tips. They are just ideas. YOU use your own best judgment, but always remember to pack light.

Belize is a tropical nation, and "tropical" needs little explanation - it means very warm, sunny, and sometimes, in some places, humid. There are, however, periods of weeks and nights when long sleeves and sweaters are necessary. There really are quite a few mosquitoes and sand flies, so long pants are sometimes helpful at night though it still is very hot.

There has been a big shift in recent years in regards to how JV men and women should dress for work in Belize. For teaching especially it is important to note that you are expected to dress professionally. Don't get alarmed, this simply means no sun dresses (big, sacky dresses) or sandals for work. For guys it means you may have to practice your ironing skills -- you wouldn't want your students or coworkers saying you are "mash up."

Many Belizean workers (schools, bank, electric company, post office, etc.) wear uniforms -- so do students. You can also get "uniforms" made by a local tailor pretty inexpensively. If working in a school setting, you will most likely have uniforms made when you arrive in country. This expense can be covered by your community budget.

Consult your community -- especially those who are teaching at your school or has an understanding of your work placement.

**In addition, here are a few more basic ideas:**

#### **WOMEN**

- Most women wear shorts or skirts when not at work/school.
- Generally, women in Belize dress very fashionably for Mass, weddings, funerals, and especially for the holidays (long dresses, nice sun dresses, heels, etc.)
- Two nice 'dress-up' outfits are recommended for events.
- It is nice to have at least one pair of jeans/pants.
- Sun dresses, skirts, and shorts (both nice casual shorts and athletic shorts) are great for after work, traveling, retreat weekends, etc. Capri pants are also a good option.
- Consider bringing gym/basketball shorts to lounge and relax in. It can be helpful for them to be modest so you can wear them around town if you would like.
- Two long sleeve cotton or flannel shirts and a sweater should suffice for the colder months.
- A good supply of cotton underwear and socks is necessary. Bring more underwear than you think you might need. Mice and old washing machines are notorious for causing holes and stretching out the fabrics.
- Shoes
  - 1- 2 pairs sturdy shoes (tennis shoes or "adventure-type" shoes like chacos, tivas, etc.)
  - 1-2 pairs of flat shoes (for teaching/parish work)
  - 1 pair casual flip flops (plastic or rubber is fine)
  - 1 pair summer sandals (for church or going out)

Remember, mud and gravel can wreak havoc on shoes!

- Bring hair items (headbands, brushes, combs, bandannas/sweat rag)
- Pads/tampons/heating packs/Mitol™



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### **MEN**

- Cotton long pants/Khakis are generally the best to wear when teaching or working. Summer-weight pants are nice. Darker colors are much easier to keep clean but lighter colors are cooler.
- Shorts and t-shirts are good for casual wear
- Short sleeve dress/polo/tennis type shirts are good for teaching and work.
- Dress shirts will be good for formal occasions (weddings, funerals, etc). **Also, a tie could come in handy.**
- Two long sleeve jerseys or flannel shirts should suffice for the colder months along with a sweater.
- Nice sneakers are OK for teaching in certain cases, but bring a pair of nicer shoes.
- Cotton (100%) is the best for underwear. Bring a lot of extra underwear and extra socks: they shred, de-thread and lose their elasticity easily because of strong detergents and the hot, humid weather.
- White undershirts will also come in handy for both casual wear and to wear under your work shirts to keep you cool and sweating through all of your layers.

### **Women and men**

- A good, light WATERPROOF rain jacket is necessary.
- Umbrella (but you can buy a cheap one there too).
- A sweater or a sweatshirt is a must for cool evenings.
- A pair of sandals that can hold up to wet/muddy conditions like Tevas, Chacos or Keens
- Maybe a pair of comfortable sweat pants, yoga pants, exercise pants, etc.
- A headlamp for blackouts and travels....or even reading in bed 😊
- A hat is useful if you are sensitive to the sun.
- Bring nice, sturdy clothes and not your favorite outfit that you'll cry over if it gets ruined. The detergent and sun will wear out your clothes throughout the course of two years.
- Bring *some* bath items such as shampoo, deodorant, razor blades, powder, and tampons to get you through the beginning of your time. All of these items can be found in Belize City and Punta Gorda. Again, don't over pack.
- Contact lens solution is **not** available, so bring a supply or have it sent regularly.
- Bring an ample supply of any medicines you may take. Both communities have many different types of non-prescription medications. Email your roommates with any questions.
- A swimsuit

### **ALWAYS GOOD TO HAVE:**

- Insect repellent (Avon Skin-So-Soft works well for many)
- Aspirin/Ibuprofen
- Multi-vitamins
- *Small* first-aid kit
- Sunglasses ~~suntan lotion~~ & sunscreen
- Band-aids, anti-fungal powder ((Check with your community – they may have A LOT of this in the medicine cabinets.)
- You may also want to bring dental floss, chapstick, skin care items (Something like Oxypad wipes for your face if you are remotely acne-prone)



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### OTHER ITEMS TO BRING:

- School supplies: pens (various colors), tape, magic markers, scissors (This is only if you are working at a school.)
- Alarm clock (battery type is best)
- Most communities have ample sheets and towels -- check before you pack!
- Guitar (or other instruments) and music (check your community to see if there are any already available)
- Journal
- Arts/crafts supplies (paints, jewelry-making supplies, etc.)
- Camera (be careful with very expensive equipment as humidity can wreak havoc. Also a nice camera could get stolen.)
- MP3 player / iPod (Again, these could potentially be stolen throughout your time as well though they can also come in handy for community/spirituality nights or relaxing)
- Small portable speakers that can connect to an iPod/MP3 (This is wonderful for spirituality/community nights or to plug into a laptop to watch movies.)
- Extra batteries or rechargeable batteries (Though, you can buy common types of batteries in Belize)
- Flash drive/external hard drive
- Room decorations (hooks, sticky-tack, etc.)
- Photos of family/friends (it's very expensive to print photos in Belize)

### DON'T FORGET

- PASSPORT (make a copy of every page of your passport – identification page, all stamped pages – this will be used for your visa application process)
- Prescription medicine
- Addresses of friends, writing paper/notepad for letters, journal, etc.

### A LITTLE ADVICE ON PACKING

- Try to pack light. Don't bring your entire medicine chest or wardrobe. Don't bring things you've never used over the year. Think tropical: hot and usually humid. The idea is simple lifestyle! Don't forget, however, things you'll need for teaching or your job. **Contact your new community for advice before coming down, they'll offer the best packing advice. They may let you know of something needed for the house.**