Go Caye Caulker

This website is a comprehensive site providing all you need or want to know of Caye Caulker, Belize. Inside lies a library of information, from the rich history of the island to the activities and conservation efforts that entice many tourists visiting Belize to experience the island's wonders and fun.

**Location:** One mile west of Belize Barrier Reef  
**Length:** From North to South, 8.2 km (5 Miles)  
**Width:** .25 - 2.0 km (0.15 - 1.2 miles)  
**Population:** Approximately 1,300  
**Culture:** Mestizo, Garifuna, Creole  
**Hotels:** 57...with 887 rooms.

On early British maps the island's name is spelled "Cay Corker." Known historically for its plentiful supply of exposed fresh water at La Aguada, one theory holds that this island was a favourite stop for sailors to replenish and cork water bottles. The Spanish name of the island is Cayo Hicaco, which means "the island of the cocoplum." "Caye Caulker" could be an anglicized pronunciation of Cayo Hicaco. Another theory is that boats were caulked in the protected bay, La Ensenada, on the western side of the island leading to the "Caulker" name.

**Brief History of Caye Caulker**

Recent history of Caye Caulker began when Mestizo refugees from the Mexican Caste Wars arrived. The area that became the village on Caye Caulker was formally purchased by Luciano Reyes around 1870. Lots were sold to other families, most of which still have descendants on the island today. The influence of these families is still very apparent.

With few inhabitants, food could be grown with sustainable methods of agriculture. The coconut and the fishing industry became important economic staples of the island. Even today a few of the older women continue to process coconut oil for their own use and to sell, although generally the coconuts themselves are harvested and shipped to the mainland.
Large scale lobster fisheries arose in the 1920’s, when the lobster trap was introduced to the caye by Canadian Captain Cook and modified for use with the spiny lobster by Marcial Alamina. In 1960 the Northern Fishermen's Co-operative Society Ltd. was formed with thirty plus members including some women, which allowed fishermen to export both fish and lobster, eliminating the middleman. Due to its great success, the cooperative became a model for other cooperatives in Belize.

Caye Caulker is also noteworthy for its tradition of ship building. The Young and Alamina families historically are known as skilled shipwrights constructing wooden sailboats with a frame construction. Caye Caulker remains a shipbuilding and boat racing center of Belize with the Alamina and Young families still prominently active in these endeavours. The Belize Marine Terminal and Museum has an excellent exhibit of the Caye Caulker shipwrights, their tools, and the boats they have built.

Fishing continues to be an important industry, but tourism has gradually become an important force on the caye as well. Since the 60's and 70's, when small numbers of hippies found their way to the caye, tourism has grown each year and many islanders now also operate restaurants, hotels, or other businesses in the tourism industry.

Despite the growth of tourism, Caye Caulker remains a small village with a distinct cultural flavor not necessarily found in large-scale tourist development. Almost all the businesses are locally owned, vehicles larger than golf carts almost never roam the streets, and lodging is small scale and relatively inexpensive compared to many other tourist destinations. We prefer to keep it this way. We frown upon large-scale development and focus upon the preservation of our unique heritage.