



TURNEFFE ISLANDS

The Turneffe Islands Atoll is the largest of the offshore trio and also the closest to the Belize coastline. Here you will find an area dominated by purely mangrove islands. These mangrove ranges, both offshore and coastal, make Belize diving special as they are the nurseries on which almost all marine life depends to ensure juvenile protection and biological productivity.

Although the atoll is best known for its walls, there are many shallow sea gardens and bright sand flats inside the reef which are excellent for scuba diving.

Undoubtedly, the highlight of Turneffe Islands diving is a spot called **The Elbow**, located at the atoll's extreme

southern tip. Here at the convergence of several ocean currents you may dive through enormous schools of permit, snappers, eagle rays, Atlantic spadefish,

Turneffe Islands		GOOD SNORKELING	NOVICE	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
17	SANDY SLOPE			•	
18	AMBER HEAD SOUTH & NORTH			•	
19	TRIPLE ANCHOR			•	
20	SAYONARA			•	
21	THE ELBOW				•
22	MYRTLE'S TURTLE			•	
23	BLACK BEAUTY			•	
24	FRONT PORCH			•	
25	GRAND BOGUE II			•	

grouper and jacks numbering at times in the thousands. Visibility here ranges from great to rather poor, depending more on the wind direction than currents. A lot of wave action can stir things up in the mangroves, carrying nutrients into the water and reducing the visibility. But on a good day, this atoll holds many pleasant surprises.

Diving here can be done by staying on one of the lodges on the atoll's cayes, by live aboard, or by day trip from Belize City and the San Pedro area.

The northwest site moorings normally sit in 35ft to 40ft of water and the reef becomes a spur and groove system that leads to a vertical wall. This drops to a sandy shelf around 100ft to 120ft at most sites, then falls off again past sport-diving limits. The northwest side is protected from the occasional strong eastern and southeastern winds that sometimes blow in, so divers can visit these sites all year round and in most types of weather.

When the wind shifts to the north northwest, blowing down from the US Gulf, sites on the east side are divable. This reeftop and wall starts a bit deeper in the 40ft to 60ft range, and is known for being less of a slope and quite sheer in some spots. The reeftop also has interesting swim-throughs and some tight spurs and grooves.



The Offshore Atolls

Lighthouse Reef Atoll, Turneffe Islands Atoll and Glover's Reef Atoll together cover more than 400 square miles with a total 140 miles of drop-off walls. Incredibly, these atolls comprise as much reef surface as the Belize barrier reef itself! Unlike Pacific atolls built on volcanoes, these sit atop two parallel submarine ridges close enough to the surface to allow the formation of massive coral and sponge growths.

At night with the Milky Way overhead, the Caribbean moon rising and the jacks and yellowtails playing and feeding in a live aboard's lights, this can be a superb experience. The sky is alive and shooting stars are common.