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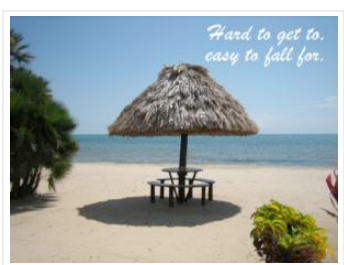
IL Postcard

Postcard

If I Never See Another Dirt Road...

Date: 07/10/2008

Author: [Suzan Haskins](#)



Thursday, July 10, 2008
Placencia, Belize

Read more about [Belize](#) in [International Living Postcards](#)—your daily escape

Bone-jarring, teeth-breaking, headache-making, dusty, bumpy dirt roads. If I never see another one, I would be happy indeed. But these come with the territory when you're on Latin American scouting missions. And like giving birth, you soon forget the pain and start planning your next trip down Pothole Road.

To prove that memory is fleeting, I recently found myself banging down the exact stretch of back-breaking road that I first traversed 16 years ago. Some things haven't changed...like Belize's Placencia Road. Nor has my threshold for punishment, it seems.

On my first visit to the Placencia Peninsula in southern Belize's Stann Creek district, in 1992, I arrived via a rickety 10-passenger single-prop plane that wobbled out of the sky over the Caribbean and onto a dirt-path runway cut out of the jungle.

Staying in Placencia village on the edge of the seas in a wooden cabana on stilts, I couldn't help but fall in love with this part of Belize. The locals—a gorgeous mix descended from Carib/African slaves and European settlers—speak a litingly beautiful Creole (English is the official language), and they live a life I aspire to: no deadlines, no shirt (for men, of course), no shoes, no problem.

There are few better places for fishing, diving, or just sitting, enjoying a cold Belikin beer and a meal of rice and fish, a faint smell of wood smoke, and the rhythm of Garifuna turtle drums off in the distance. And there are few other places so close to the U.S. that feel so remote. You have to want to come here...either by small plane, as we did, or by driving from Belize City. The road trip can take up to five hours due to the last 16 miles of unpaved washboard-like road.

All that is changing, though. Thanks to the Internet, more people know about and are visiting Placencia. While the dirt runway remains, there is now a small air-conditioned building with comfortable chairs for waiting passengers. The planes are a bit bigger, too, and better maintained. There are more small resorts than there were 16 years ago. And far more condos and gated communities.

A realtor I spoke to says this is the time to buy here. Of course he would say that. But his reasoning makes sense. Two things are planned that will have immediate impact, he says, "and buying before those things happen would be very smart." One of these is the paving of the Placencia Road.

"It will happen," he says. "The funding is there. The contract has been awarded, although no physical work has begun yet."

Possibly having even more impact, he believes, will be the building of a major brand-name resort or hotel chain. Two major chains are expected to announce plans to build here very soon. It's been reported that the Marriott brand is being wooed by a group of well-heeled investors who plan to build a hotel and condo project on a 61-acre private island, called False Caye, off the coast of the peninsula.

We will keep you posted!

Suzan Haskins
Your Latin America Insider, *International Living*

P.S. If you're interested in learning more about opportunities in Placencia, my full report can be found in an upcoming issue of [International Living magazine](#). Now is the time to go...before the road is paved, before the major players move in, and while the U.S. economy is in dire straits. Americans are spending less these days and fewer are traveling abroad. For now, fewer tourists means fewer prospects for real estate sales...and that translates to a buyer's market. If you go to buy, go to negotiate. [Find out how to subscribe to International Living magazine so you don't miss my full report.](#)

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