

# Belize:

## An Immersive Learning Experience

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I chose to attend the Middlebury Institute of International Studies because I have a **lifelong dream of owning and managing my own ecolodge.**

An ecolodge is a type of tourist accommodation designed to have the least possible impact on the natural environment in which it is located while also promoting an authentic travel experience that incorporates the local community and local culture.

I traveled to Belize to visit properties similar to those I am looking to buy and aiming to own. I also chose to visit areas of the country I would like to personally live in in an effort to narrow down WHERE I would like to make this dream come true.

# Where?



# Belize

I chose Belize because it is a politically stable country with easy travel access from the US. It is also an English speaking country with a thriving tourism industry.

... a potential location where I would open my ecolodge.

# Where?



  
**Matachica**  
-RESORT & SPA

  
ADVENTURE & DIVE RESORT, BELIZE

  
**COPAL TREE**  
LODGE

# Belize

I chose three well known resorts in 3 very different parts of Belize...

First, I chose Matachica located in San Pedro on Ambergris Caye - featured in Condé Nast Traveler, Travel & Leisure Magazine, The Coveteur, and ranked by Jetsetter as one of the best hotels in Belize.

The goal of visiting Matachica was to see how a very basic property could be sold as a luxury accommodation.

Matachica is not built on a remote mountain top or deep in a jungle. I was curious how a simple property of several acres could still be marketed as an “off the beaten path” relaxation lodge.

I successfully learned that with the right amenities and a top notch level of service, hotel properties do not need massive amounts of land or difficult infrastructure to be a luxury property.

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Condé Nast  
**Traveller**



# COPAL TREE

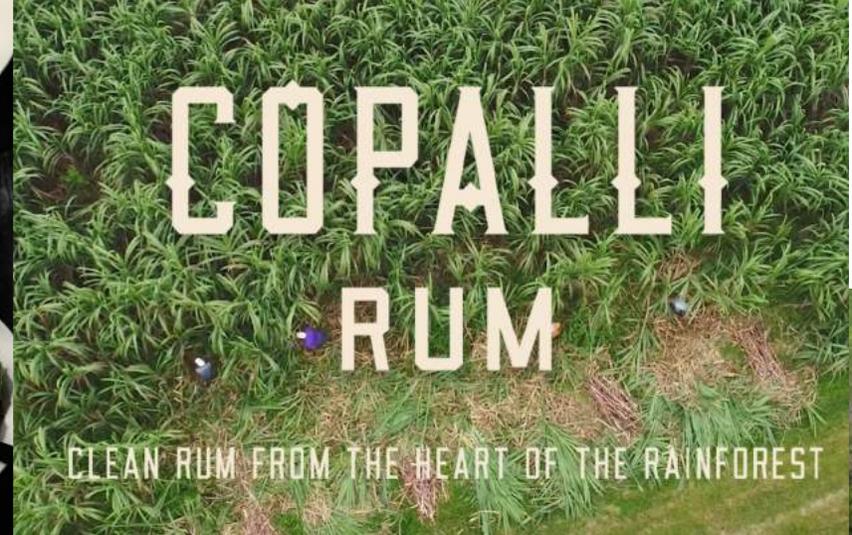
## LODGE

My second stop took me down to the southern tip of the country to Punta Gorda.

Copal Tree Lodge is the only “National Geographic Unique Lodges of the World” property in Belize.

They run a luxury eco-lodge that is a leader in sustainability, luxury, and sustainable agriculture.

This experience filled me with ideas! Copal Tree Lodge rehabilitated a former sugar cane plantation and has now developed a luxury line of rum where they teach their guests the entire rum making process along with hosting a mixology class to learn how to mix their rum with fruits and herbs from their garden.



### ORGANIC FARM

Organic farm where we grow 70% of the produce we serve



### JUNGLE & RIVER

Unique jungle and river location in beautiful Southern Belize



### LAND & WATER

Land and Water activities that highlight the natural beauty of our sanctuary



### AGRI-TOURISM

Agri-chic tourism at its best with coffee, chocolate and rum programs



### PRIME SPOTS

One of the prime spots in Belize for fishing & birding



### HOSPITALITY

A home away from home

The last stop took me back up the coast to Hopkins, Belize to a place called Hamanasi.

I found Hamanasi via an online auction with the Center for Responsible and Ethical Travel (CREST). CREST features some of the world's best and most ethical accommodations in their auctions.

Hamanasi gave me a wonderful opportunity to interview their managers on the struggles of running an eco-resort. I was also given a tour of the property where I visited the garden and compost center while also seeing the staff areas and their own woodshop where they sustainably build and repair the furniture and décor of the hotel.

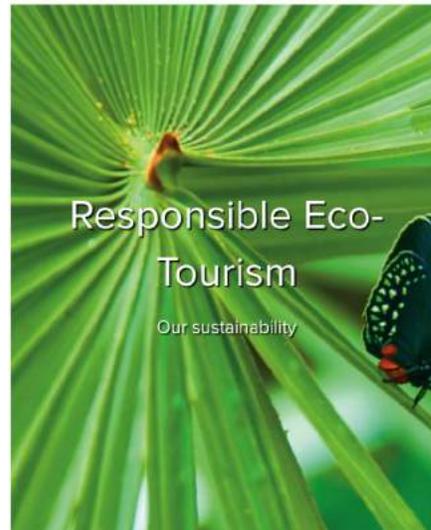


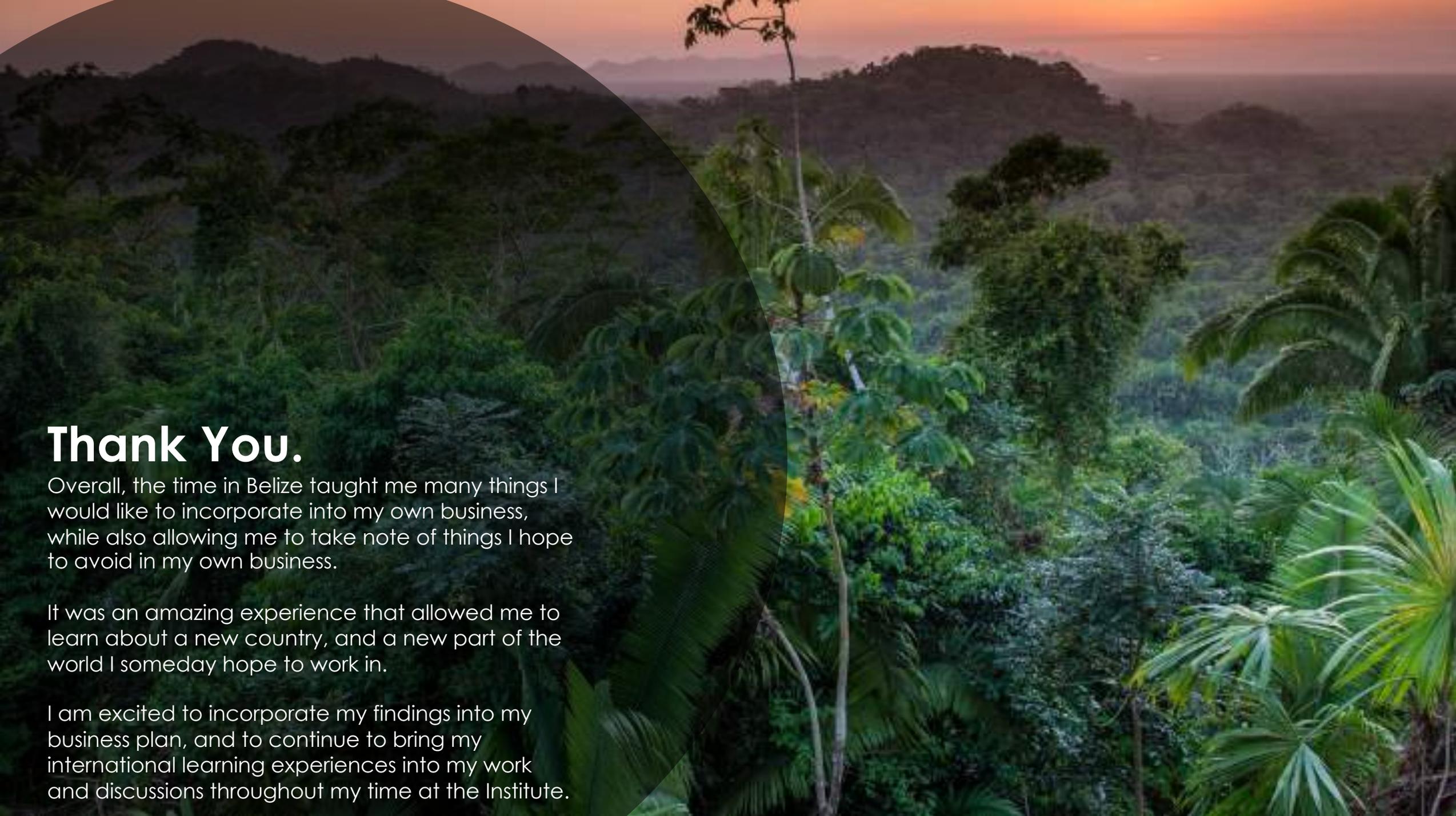
## Hamanasi Resort Eco Statement



*Hamanasi believes in responsible, natural and cultural based eco-tourism. We understand the importance of preserving our environment and indigenous communities. Hamanasi is committed to protecting our ecosystems and their biodiversity by taking continual steps to be more environmentally friendly and aware. We actively encourage all employees and visitors to participate in these endeavors. Together we can make a difference!*

**hamanasi**  
ADVENTURE & DIVE RESORT. BELIZE





# Thank You.

Overall, the time in Belize taught me many things I would like to incorporate into my own business, while also allowing me to take note of things I hope to avoid in my own business.

It was an amazing experience that allowed me to learn about a new country, and a new part of the world I someday hope to work in.

I am excited to incorporate my findings into my business plan, and to continue to bring my international learning experiences into my work and discussions throughout my time at the Institute.