

Ballum-Na (*House of the Jaguar*) Enters Resort Race With a Roar

New adventure lodge lets guests stay next to resident jaguars.

UTE FRANK

If you've ever dreamed of staying right on nature's doorstep, with the flora, fauna and wildlife you're not going to get any closer than this. Belize Lodge and Excursions (BLE) Ballum Na (*House of the Jaguar*) will offer guests the opportunity to stay in the comfort and safety of their beds, while live Jaguars prowl the jungle floor below.

Ballum Na – or, *House of the Jaguar*, is BLE's fourth exclusive lodge to come online, featuring the lodge's main attraction, and only long-term tenants, a set of adult jaguars for guests to observe. Ballum Na, located two miles south of BLE's Indian Creek Lodge, engulfed within an exotic jungle habitat, is home to two male jaguars, Bosch and Xupi, brothers born in captivity. They live in a habitat that encompasses 2.1 acres of jungle.

The jungle cats were part of a captive-breeding program and were set to be sent to a zoo in Mexico. But Kenneth Karas, founder of BLE stepped in and now the pair will inhabit a 2.5-acre sanctuary, complete with pool, located in the middle of the accommodations. Though the great cats can be observed by the public, they and Ballum Na are home to a greater ideal that is - at the heart of BLE's philosophy – that of nature conservancy.

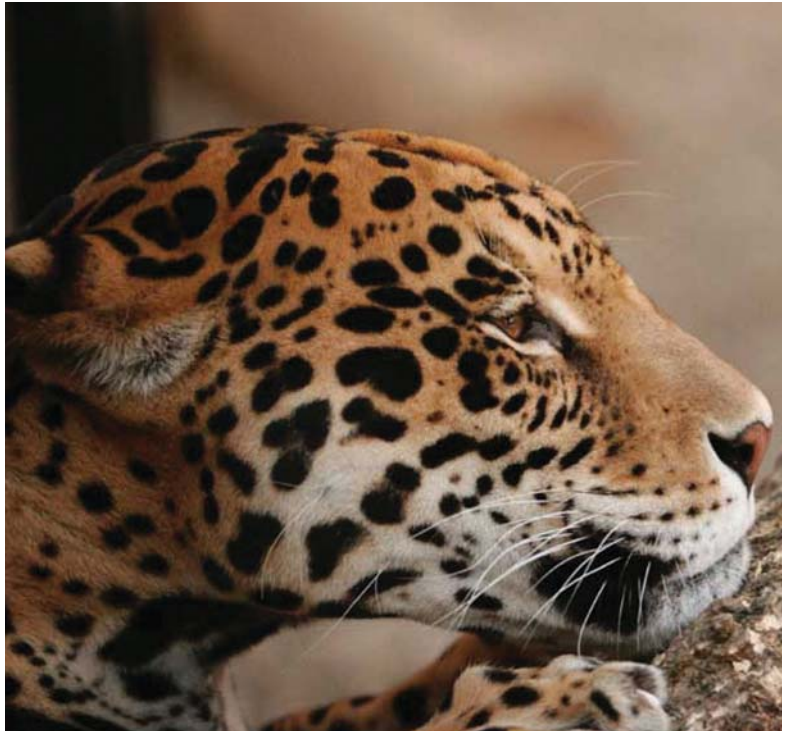
"Ballum Na is part of a wildlife program of rescue, rehabilitation and re-introduction," said Karas. "This is a better way to educate people – not in a zoo setting, but in a natural setting. And, it is a way to restore this natural habitat through sound wildlife- and forest-resource management practices."

Next to this is the lodge, whose 2nd floor is home to deluxe 5-star Master and two Junior Suites. On the 3rd floor, guests will find their own private restaurant and bar, with expansive decks and a canopy walkway overlooking the jaguar enclosure, Boden Creek and Parrot Falls.

On the 4th floor an observation deck looks out in every direction over the top of the jungle canopy and a carpet of green. Complete pampering is assured by your own personal executive chef, as well as a waiter and private butler in constant attendance.

The properties of BLE are scattered among its privately-operated 14,000 acre Boden Creek Nature Reserve. The reserve is ideally situated within a 600,000 acre protected area and National Park system. Nowhere else in Belize is the primitive and unfettered natural beauty of the country, better situated to remain intact for future generations.

"We will always preserve the integrity of the experience sur-



Xupi, one of Ballum Na's resident male jaguars.

rounded by these protected areas," says Karas. His past experience as a world-class nature film maker helped direct him to pursue rescuing this idyllic natural space and taking the ideals of good corporate citizenry a step farther.

"By employing indigenous peoples in our company, we are helping to create local jobs and protect some of the local Mayan culture," he says. "We offer a place for local people to use their inherent knowledge of nature and wildlife in a way that preserves the culture."

Belize is regarded as an adventure paradise with one of the finest array of marine and outdoor offerings available for adventure travelers. The location of BLE's lodges allow visitors to experience southern Belize in comfort and style within one of the last wild and remote regions of Central America.

Belize Lodge & Excursions four exclusive and distinctive lodges, offer three to nine night all-inclusive packages that include local ground and marinetransfers; luxury lodging at any of four locations: Indian Creek Lodge, Ballum Na Suites, Jungle Camp and Moho Cay Lodge; all meals; excursions; entrance fees; local taxes; and guides.

The company also offers carefully selected and designed all-inclusive Overland Tour Packages to many other destinations in Belize that can be combined or taken separately with a trip to their southern group of lodges.

Belize Lodge and Excursions, www.belize lodge.com