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Ka'ana Boutique Resort and Spa—Cayo District, Belize

Mile 69 1/4, Benque Viejo Road, San Ignacio, Belize

Located just outside of San Ignacio in Belize's Cayo District, the Ka'ana Boutique Resort and Spa embodies the spirit of its name: Ka'ana means "Heavenly Place" in Mayan.



Although the forested property of Cayo's Ka'ana Boutique Resort and Spa isn't vast like that of nearby **Chaa Creek Lodge**, the Belize hotel still makes the most of its scenic jungle setting. Ka'ana's charming white casitas back into vibrantly landscaped grounds. Basilisk lizards skitter across flower-strewn walkways, and grackles trill in the treetops overhead. A shady stroll from the lobby results in instant relaxation. Guests are even invited to add to the scenery by planting ginger trees upon departure.

But despite its nature-based exterior, the Ka'ana Boutique Resort's air-conditioned rooms are securely locked in the 21st century. Flat-screen TVs, iPod docking stations, minibars, and espresso makers are standard amenities, not to mention what are undoubtedly some of Central America's most comfortable beds.

One of Ka'ana Resort's most significant features is its dedication to service. The staff members don't duck their heads and slip away; they grin



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and shake your hand and show you around. You just might find yourself talking Belizean and American politics with your server. For first-night orientation, guests gather in Ka'ana's unique wine cellar, well-stocked with international wines, and sample local beverages, such as liquor made from the Nance fruit, with the lodge's affable staff.

The menu at Ka'ana's restaurant La Ceiba focuses on seasonal dishes made with typical Belizean ingredients and produce from the on-site organic garden. Savor dishes such as Mennonite pork sausage with chipotle and guava tomato chutney served over dukunu, (a roasted corn and coconut milk tamale), or spicy jerk chicken with stewed coconut curry, pumpkin and callaloo (a leafy green vegetable). The dining room is welcoming, with high ceilings, bright wooden beams and colorful artwork. Eat here for breakfast, lunch and dinner, or order off the same menus around the infinity-edge pool.



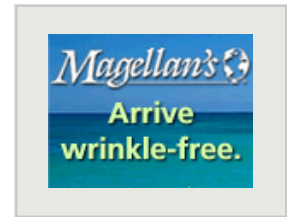
In the separate cocktail lounge, Ka'ana's bartender specializes in traditional Belizean concoctions, like the non-alcoholic Horchata rice drink or rum-laced Sweetcorn Colada served with a cinnamon stick. But the best nightcap comes when you arrive at your room. Turn-down service comes with a "night-time treat": a cookie, pastry, or some other bite-sized dessert.

It's hard to find fault with Ka'ana, but its proximity to the road is notable. The frequent whoosh of cars can disturb the peace of what otherwise is an idyllic setting. But still, proximity to the Xunantunich ruins, Mountain Pine Ridge, Caracol, and the Caves River Branch make Ka'ana ideal for outdoor enthusiasts. At about twenty minutes to Benque Viejo and the Guatemala border, a day trip to the Tikal ruins is possible. Even if you spend your time at the resort lounging instead of trekking, make sure to stop by the Ka'ana Spa for a muscle-soothing massage beside the pool. We won't tell.

Web Address: www.kaanabelize.com
Total Number of Rooms: 15
Published rates: Seasonal; \$250 to \$450

Review and photos by **Kirsten Hubbard**, updates by Kara Williams.

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