

**SPECIAL REPORT: TOXIC FITNESS SUPPLEMENTS**

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# ADVENTURE CENTRAL

The ideal low-cost getaway awaits in Central America — book it before you get left in the cold.



## JUNGLE TREKKING

### BEST PLACE TO DO IT

#### COCKSCOMB BASIN WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, BELIZE

For most people, Belize conjures images of tropical reefs. But that's just scratching the surface; because Belize's colonists settled on the coasts, its interior is thick with great expanses of untouched jungle, much of which can be hiked.

The country's best trek is in the 128,000-acre **Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary** and **jaguar preserve**, which was the world's first such reserve, founded in 1986 after zoologist **Alan Rabinowitz** convinced the Belizean government to protect the 60 jaguars concentrated in the area. Within the park towers **Victoria Peak**, Belize's second tallest mountain and the destination of a four-day hike through land teeming with otter, puma, ocelot, more than 375 types of bird, and, of course, jaguar. Spend the night in one of the park's campsites or cabins (*from \$10*), and at first light, head out on the 30-mile round-trip trail (open February through April). The highlight is a section of rock scrambling that requires the help of a rope. The trail ends with you above the treeline,



Ben's Bluff waterfall is one of many beautiful places to swim in Belize's Cockscomb refuge.

taking in views of the Caribbean Sea from the 3,675-foot summit. Because the terrain is so rough, you're required to hire a guide for the trek before

entering the preserve at nearby **Maya Center** (*\$5.50 park entrance fee, \$200 for guide; belize audubon.org*).

### BEYOND THE JUNGLE

For something more luxurious, stay at **Ka'ana Resort and Spa** in Belize's **Cayo** district, an outpost for basically any adventure — from zip-lining and canoeing to Mayan archaeological sites and horseback riding. The resort offers five-star dining in the heart of the jungle (*from \$250; kaana belize.com*). —NICOLE CUSICK

### MORE PLACES TO TREK

#### MONTEVERDE CLOUD FOREST, COSTA RICA

Ideal for wildlife lovers, the family-friendly Sky Walk lets visitors trek for two hours high up in the jungle canopy, crossing five man-made suspension bridges. There you'll spot some of the thousands of species here, including the stunning quetzal bird (*\$30; anywherecostarica.com*).

#### EL MIRADOR RUINS, GUATEMALA

To reach these massive Mayan ruins, you have to machete through the jungle for two days. But the 15-square-mile site, where an entire civilization once lived, is the most extensive and uncrowded in the Mayan world. Ni'tun offers weeklong excursions (*\$1,540; nitun.com*).



## MOUNTAIN BIKING

### BEST PLACE TO DO IT

#### ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA

Guatemala's dirt paths, rolling hills, towering volcanoes, and rambling back roads make it a paradise for bikers. **Antigua**, a well-preserved colonial town amid three volcanoes (**Agua, Fuego, and Acatenango**), offers some of the country's most jaw-dropping terrain. Bunk at **Hotel Quinta de las Flores**, where you can take in views of

**TIP:** For the jungles of western Belize, you can save \$300 or more by flying to Guatemala City, Guatemala, instead of Belize City — which also allows you to see the famous Mayan ruins at Tikal before crossing the border.