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*Sequel P* at anchor off Hatchet Caye. **OPPOSITE:** Helicopter tours, such as the one arranged for us by *Sequel P*'s captain and owner, are a breathtaking way to experience the other-worldliness of Belize by air. Pictured is the famous Blue Hole. On the bucket list of nearly every avid dive enthusiast, the geographic oddity is an underwater sinkhole nearly 1,000 feet wide and more than 400 feet deep.

The southern waters of Belize  
are a pristine playground for guests  
aboard 179-foot *Sequel P*.

**BY ANDREW PARKINSON**

# UN CHARTERED WATERS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID POLLARD

No other boats were in sight as we motored through a cut in the reef and anchored in the lee of a remote cay, miles from the mainland. The only sign of human life was the faint strobe from an airplane in the distance. A shroud of darkness advanced from the east like a smooth jib unfurling over the diamond-speckled water. To the west, the mountaintops of southern Belize squeezed the last droplets from a drenching sunset. Water gently licking the indigo-blue hull sides of our yacht was the only sound to be heard.

An hour later, dinner embodied the height of civilization—a five-course meal prepared by a four-star chef on a superyacht with an all-star crew of 13. It was perhaps the quintessential paradigm of indulgence, and yet, there we were, bobbing at Mother Nature's mercy in a place so hauntingly rugged it could pass as the end of the earth. During the week I spent on 179-foot (54.7-meter) Proteksan Turquoise *Sequel P*, this mesmerizing dichotomy would play out again and again, exposing beauty of all kinds, and somehow, all at once.

Awakening in *Sequel P*'s on-deck master suite the first morning came with a few surprises. For one, we were underway, which was intriguing since I hadn't heard or felt the engines kick on. Second, the full-height windows had full-height electric blackout curtains, and I was utterly dense as to how to open them—no fault of the crew's, mind you, rather, my own penance for too much distracted oohing and ahing through the introductory tour. (Note: They're controlled with an iPad, not the "crew call" button, as a merciful stewardess quickly reminded me.)

Built in 2009, *Sequel P* has cruised extensively to accommodate both



The waters of Belize are protected by the world's second largest barrier reef. **LEFT:** Chief Stewardess Nicole Haw mixes up a libation at the sky-lounge bar. **OPPOSITE, TOP TO BOTTOM:** Inventive table settings characterize the unique experience of dining aboard *Sequel P*; Chef Jerome Tricoche's zeal for fresh, local ingredients is reflected in his versatile culinary repertoire; *Sequel P* and her tender, a 36-foot Intrepid, heading south in Belizean waters.

## SAMPLE 7-DAY BELIZE ITINERARY ABOARD SEQUEL P

**DAY 1** Pick up from airport. Drive to Cucumber Marina for embarkation and cruise to Goff's Caye. Arrive at sunset for evening cocktails and dinner on the sundeck.

**DAY 2** Early cruise to Turneffe Atoll for breakfast. Diving or snorkeling around The Elbow. In the afternoon, enjoy water sports and explore the island by tender or PWC.

**DAY 3** Early cruise to Lighthouse Reef Atoll. Dive off Half Moon Caye or tender to the Blue Hole. Dive or swim over the 407-foot (124-meter) deep sinkhole. Lunch underway to Gladden Entrance and anchor near Hatchet Caye for the night.

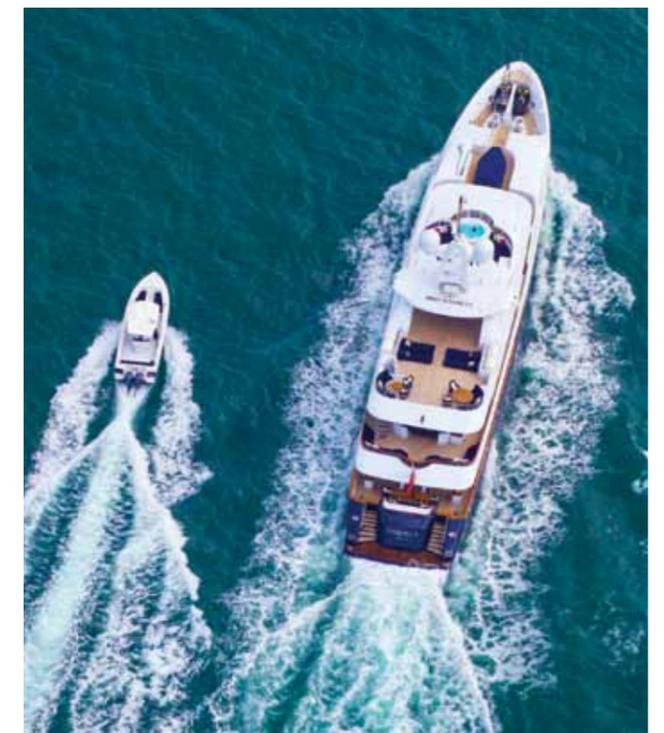
**DAY 4** Spend the day enjoying *Sequel P*'s toys: PWC, water skis, wakeboards, kayaks, paddleboards and inflatables. Dive or snorkel off Hatchet Caye and visit Hatchet Caye Resort.



**DAY 5** Early move south to Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve. Visit Lime Caye and dive a shipwreck with fish and coral in crystal-clear water. Sundowners on Ranguana Caye.

**DAY 6** Cruise to Coco Plum Caye. Dive or snorkel off South Water Caye. Adults relax on board while the crew looks after the children.

**DAY 7** Cruise to Cucumber Marina and taxi to the airport.



The essence of the southern out islands of Belize—a panorama of jewel-tone waters dotted by secluded sand spits, cayes and atolls with lazily swaying palms. **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** The décor aboard *Sequel P* includes a contemporary cache of conversation pieces selected by the owner; The crystalline Belizean waters are home to one of the most vibrant coral reefs in the Caribbean; As evidenced in the main-deck salon, *Sequel P*'s handsome interior sports an elegant blend of rich woods, leathers and marble.



private use by her original American owner and a vigorous Mediterranean-Caribbean charter schedule. You'd never know it, since the yacht (which charters from \$296,000 per week) is kept in Bristol condition. Enticing exterior deck spaces adjoin handsome interior areas furnished with rich sycamore and makore woods, leathers and marble. The décor also includes a contemporary cache of conversation pieces selected by the owner. In the sky lounge, a bar area to port makes a lovely gathering area for cocktail hour, or anytime really, while to starboard is a gym with a full entertainment system and large windows overlooking the water, offering a spectacular view from the treadmill, which I found quite agreeable for working off the previous night's culinary splurge.

With cappuccino in hand, I headed to the bridge. The open side doors yielded a pleasant cross breeze as we steamed southward at 12 knots. U2's "Beautiful Day" streamed in stereo as a pod of dolphins flanked us to starboard. Bosun Marten Van Suylekom hunched over the chart table, verifying our course toward the less-traveled waters of Belize. I chatted with Capt. Robert Verity, who has more than 30 years in the industry, and learned about the region's blue holes and barrier reefs. These remote waters, he explained, are as uncharted as they are unchartered. Navigation can be precarious, requiring extreme caution near certain shallows, even while trying to follow paper charts.

"Because they're out of date?" I asked.

"Because they don't exist," he answered.

**A TINY ISLAND** in the distance had beckoned to the guests all morning, and a drive-by on the tender—a 36-foot (11-meter) Intrepid—treated us to a closer look. An old wooden skiff lay beached. Beyond it were a few coconut trees, what appeared to be a decrepit hut, the embers of a fire and a clothesline with a hodgepodge of sundries swaying in the breeze.

The scene was the essence of the southern out islands of Belize—a panorama of jewel-tone waters dotted by secluded sand spits, cays and atolls with lazily swaying palms and sandy white beaches, all protected by the world's second-largest barrier reef (first is the Great Barrier Reef in Australia). There are no throngs of cruise-ship passengers vying for the best camera angle—only solitude in its purest form. The isolation and feeling of vastness can be difficult for mainlanders to comprehend.

The luxury back aboard *Sequel P* can be equally mind-blowing. Lunch was served, and Chef Jerome Tricoche, a Frenchman with a penchant for using fresh, local ingredients in his diverse culinary creations, had prepared succulent Caribbean lobster tail—negotiated by our deckhands from a local fisherman—which was served with a crisp rosé. I riffed with our chief stewardess, Nicole Haw, in a jam session of sorts on underrated rosés from the South of France. Her familiarity on the subject was impressive, and I appreciated her recommendations to try back home.

After lunch, it was time for play. *Sequel P* had an arsenal of toys including Laser sailing dinghies, PWC, kayaks, water skis, wakeboards, paddleboards, inflatable tow toys and a windsurfing board. At the end of the day, there wasn't a dry toy in the garage—which stowed it all, keeping the decks clear for some well-earned relaxation.

**"WE'RE HERE,"** Jay, our hired local guide, told the skipper. "This is it."

No landmarks or buoys were in sight, but like many native Belizeans, Jay knew these waters like a chief stewardess knows her rosé. After instruction from *Sequel P*'s onboard dive master, Mariana Leal, I back-rolled off the RIB into the turquoise and emerald waters off South Water Caye and found myself above one of the richest coral reefs in the Caribbean. The water was crystalline, and the local inhabitants ranged from inquisitive rays

and skittish sea turtles to fiery sea fans and colossal coral heads.

A patrol boat approached—an understated, single-engine aluminum skiff sporting about 15 casually attired "patrolmen." Pleasantries were exchanged before the skiff tore off toward the horizon. "Rare," Jay said. "Way out here, you only see that [patrol boat] about once a year, checking lights and buoys."

**THE STARRY SKY WAS BRILLIANT** on my last night aboard *Sequel P*. Gazing from the sundeck after an evening feast of *foie gras*, lamb chops and a velvety cabernet, I again struggled to achieve a sense of balance

between the extravagance aboard *Sequel P* and the ruggedness just beyond her swim platform. The contrast evoked a surreal sense of total detachment from the outside world. It was only then that I realized I'd achieved what some of the savviest charter guests seek out—the feeling of having it all, blissfully in the middle of nowhere. For my money, if real escape is the ultimate prize, then who *wouldn't* thirst for this rare dichotomy and venture to such remote waters on such a luxurious yacht? **Y**

**For more information:** 310 424 5112, +377 97 97 81 21, burgessyachts.com

**SEE** the complete photo gallery and video from *Sequel P*'s adventures in Belize at [yachtsinternational.com](http://yachtsinternational.com)