

The Toledo Howler

Newspaper of the Toledo Chapter of the Belize Tourism Industry Association

OCTOBER 2008

YEAR 2, ISSUE 2

FREE

Big November Down South

Toledo Tourism Expo 8 Nov

Battle of the Drums 15 Nov

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November promises to be a big month down south with TOLTEX all day on Saturday 8 November and the Battle of the Drums the following weekend and both of these tying in with the events surrounding the Garifuna Settlement Day celebrations.

More than thirty businesses and organizations have already signed up as exhibitors at TOLTEX.

These range from the resorts and hotels to NGOs and organizations supporting crafts and "agro-eco-tourism". DJ Fresh and Shuba City are booked to provide music and **Leila Vernon** is topping the bill.

There will be half a dozen food stalls of-

side Meats of Belize City has donated a whole ham while Slingshot Advertising and Signs have donated a cash prize of \$200. Lola Delgado of Lola's Art in Seine bight village has donated a beautiful painting titled "Citrus". The Pickled Parrot is offering a 2-night stay in Placencia.

The Battle of the Drums will take place for the third year running on Saturday 15 November at the multi-purpose sports complex in Punta Gorda town. The doors will open at 7pm and the performances will begin at 8pm. This year's competition promises to be the best so far emerging as an inter-

raises to support cultural projects including a summer camp for young Garifuna kids where they learn the Garifuna language, culture, history and rituals. It also helps fund the Libanya Chango (Chango's Grandchildren) group for children between the ages of nine and fourteen as well as other projects designed to keep the Garifuna culture alive and flourishing.

This is one event you will not want to miss! If you only go to one thing on that weekend make sure it is the Battle of the Drums.

Entrance: Tickets can be purchased in ad-

vance for \$10 per person or \$7 for high school students. Ticket outlets: Beya Suites in Hopeville, Raju's Store on Main St in PG or the offices of Business Information Systems (BIS) on Main St next to Peter Claver School. Tickets at the door will be \$15 per person.

19 November

See Calendar of Events on page 3



Visitors to the TOLTEX exhibition in November 2007

TOLTEX celebrates World Responsible Tourism Day. The principles of responsible tourism include minimizing negative social and environmental impacts of tourism and generating economic benefits for local people. We hope that the broad range of participants will demonstrate this more inclusive approach to tourism.

national drumming competition. There will be ten competing groups, eight Belizean and one each from Guatemala and Honduras.

The Battle of the Drums committee will have a booth at TOLTEX on the Saturday before the event. Members of the public can buy tickets and find out more about how the committee uses the money it



fering a variety of ethnic foods to suit all tastes and the curious palate that simply wants to try them all. A grand raffle has received generous support from all over the country. South-



BTIA's distinctive octagonal Information Center on Front street in Punta Gorda. All you need to know about Toledo is inside

Join BTIA and display your promotional materials in the information center.

Join BTIA and make a difference.

Contact Toledo BTIA at the Tourism Information Center, Front St., Punta Gorda Tel. 722-2531 E-mail btiatoledo@btl.net
Chair: Bruno Kuppinger, **Secretary:** Yvonne Villoria, **Treasurer:** Leonie Requena

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TOLEDO TOURISM EXPO (TOLTEX)

BTIA would like to thank these organizations for their generous support of TOLTEX 2008



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Email: demdatsdoin@btl.net

TOLTEX Grand Raffle Prizes

Prizes range in value from \$150-\$500

Prize	Donor
Painting "Citrus"	Lola's Art, Seine Bight 523-3342
2 nights' accomm. + \$50 restaurant certificate	The Pickled Parrot, Placencia 604-0278
2 nights B&B	Coral House Inn, PG 722-2878
1 nights' B&B	The Lodge at Big Falls 671-7172
Lunch & swim for 4 guests	The Lodge at Big Falls
Crocodile Experience & Jungle Walk for 4 people	American Crocodile Education Sanctuary 665-CROC (2672)
2 nights' B&B	Sun Creek Lodge
1 whole ham	Southside Meats, Belize City 227-3622
\$200 cash prize	Slingshot Advertising & Signs, Belize City 223-6348
2 return tickets to Puerto Barrios	Requena's charters and Water-
2 nights' accommodation	The Bonefish Hotel, Dangriga
Round trip flight to Belize Municipal	Tropic Air
Honey & other Tumulkin products	Tumulkin

Raffle tickets will be available on the day at the BTIA booth at TOLTEX and in advance from Requena's Charters and the Tourism Information Center on Front St. and King's Texaco
The painting "Citrus" can be viewed at the Tourism information Center until the 8 November.

Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Time / Venue	Other Info
1 Nov	Ms Garifuna Peini Contest	7pm, Parish Hall, PG	Entrance: \$3 for children, \$5 for adults
7 Nov	Junior Battle of the Drums	7pm Parish Hall, PG	
8 Nov	Toledo Tourism Expo 2008 'TOLTEX'	10am - 5pm, Central Park, PG	Food, drinks and souvenirs on sale
15 Nov	Battle of the Drums	7pm doors open. 8pm start: Sports Auditorium, PG	Tickets \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door. \$7 for high school students.
16 Nov	Garifuna Catholic Mass	7 am, Catholic Church, PG	
17 Nov	Torchlight Parade Garifuna Cultural Fest	6:30pm 9pm Central Park, PG	
18 Nov	1st Garifuna Banquet: Garifuna cuisine, dance, song, art, Jankanoo and folklore.	7pm, Parish Hall, PG	Entrance: \$15 for a single, \$25 for a couple
19 Nov	Yurumein : Garifuna Settlement Day Reenactment Official Settlement Day ceremonies followed by parade and Jump Up all day dancing	6 am, Fish Cooperative Wharf, PG 10am, Central Park, PG	
27 Nov	Thanksgiving Dinner at Tranquility Lodge	5 - 8 pm, Tranquility Lodge, Jacintoville	BZ\$45 per person. Phone 668-0122 for reservations.

The Toledo Howler aims to print all upcoming district events in each issue but we depend on you, the organizers, to let us know what's going on. If you are planning an event and have a confirmed date and venue and welcome the general public, then please contact the Toledo Information Office on Front St in PG with details.



SPOTLIGHT ON MEDICINAL PLANTS: *Neem Azadirachta indica*

and Pakistan growing in tropical and semi-tropical regions.

Neem is a fast-growing tree that can reach a height of 15-20 m (about 50-65 feet), rarely to 35-40 m (115-131 ft.). It is evergreen but under severe drought it may shed most or nearly all of its leaves. The branches are wide spread. The fairly dense crown is roundish or oval and may reach the diameter of 15-20 m in old, free-standing specimens.

The neem is a tree noted for its drought resistance. Normally it thrives in areas

with sub-arid to sub-humid conditions, with an annual rainfall between 400 and 1200 mm.

Neem can grow in many different types of soil, but it thrives best on well drained deep and sandy soils . It is a typical tropical/subtropical tree and exists at annual mean temperatures between 21-32 °C.

In India, the tree is known as "Heal All," Products made from neem have proven medicinal properties, being antifungal, antidiabetic, antibacterial, antiviral, anti-infertility, and sedative. It is considered a major component in Ayurvedic medicine and is particularly prescribed for skin disease.

(Continued on page 8)



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Simplifying Communications...

Blue Belize Guest House

The Blue Belize Guest House is nestled comfortably on a small headland by the sea in the quieter, southern end of Punta Gorda town. If you are looking for a tranquil seaside location, Blue Belize is hard to beat. The unobstructed view of the Caribbean is wonderfully soothing.

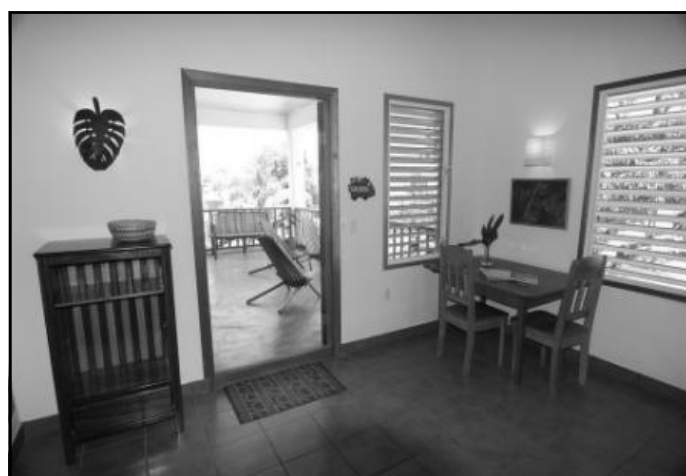
Owners, Rachel Graham and Dan Castellanos, opened their doors to guests two years ago. They are now in the process of finishing a second building next door which will open in December.

As Rachel admits, calling their business a guest house is not strictly correct since what they offer are self-catering apartments with that special mixture of local charm and creature comforts. There are two apartments upstairs in the main building. Rachel, Dan and their two children live downstairs. The new building will also have two apartments that lead out onto verandahs with sea views.

Each one or two bedroom apartment has been well designed to maximize light and ventilation. Large windows,



A view to a thrill: the Caribbean, as seen from one of the private verandahs at Blue Belize



Cool interiors and spacious verandahs at Blue Belize Guest House

white walls, high ceilings and cool tiled floors give each room an airiness reminiscent of the Mediterranean.

The bathrooms have been finished to a high standard and the open plan kitchenettes (some apartments have full kitchens) are well stocked. Add to that the private verandahs and tropical gardens and you can easily see how Blue Belize could become your home away from home.

Though the apartments are self-catering, Blue Belize does offer breakfast which can be delivered to your door for a private, seaside start to your day. As Rachel says, Blue Belize aims to offer a top quality service to their guests while also giving them a sense of privacy and independence.

Nightly, weekly and monthly rates are available. Rates include use of bicycles and internet. For more information or to make a booking, check out the website at www.bluebelize.com or phone on +501-722-2678.

Lisel Alamilla New YCT Head

Lisel Alamilla is now the Executive Director at Ya'axché Conservation Trust. She had been working in partnership with Ya'axché in her former role as the Belize Country Manager for Fauna & Flora International but will now focus exclusively on Ya'axché and champion its philosophy of integrated landscape management whereby local communities develop sustainably and in harmony with their natural and cultural environments.

The integrated landscape approach of Ya'axché calls for a business plan for the Golden Stream Watershed which will promote eco-friendly tourism as a key to sustainable development.

“We know tourism is going to be a large part of our future. We have to ensure it is done appropriately,” said Alamilla. “There is great potential for both agro and eco-tourism in Toledo. Agro-tourism not only helps support farmers, but also spreads the knowledge of environmentally friendly agricultural practices.”

"Lisel has been in conservation circles for years. She brings experience and leadership with a true sense of ownership to Ya'axché," stated Bartolo Teul, Ya'axché's Community Outreach and Livelihood Program Manager. **Contact YCT** at 722-0108



BTIA TOLEDO MEMBERS 2008

Business Name	Email	Phone	Contact Person
Beya Suites	info@beyasuites.com	722-2188	Lisa Avila
Blue Belize Guest House & Tours	info@bluebelize.com	722-2678	Dan Castellanos & Rachel Graham
Chris Crowell	chris@cottontreelodge.com	670-0557	Chris Crowell
Coral House Inn	ridarbelize@yahoo.com	722-2878	Rick & Darla Mallory
Cuxlin Ha	cuxlinha@hotmail.com	501-614-2518	Dona Lee Scafe
Dem Dats Doin	demdatsdoin@btl.net	501-722-2470	Yvonne Villoria
Dwight Woodye			Dwight Woodye
Garbutt's Marine Investment	garbuttsmarine@yahoo.com	604-3548	Dennis Garbutt
Hickatee Cottages	cottages@hickatee.com	662-4475	Ian & Kate Morton
Larry Smith	larry@seafrontinn.com	722-2300	Larry & Carol Smith
The Lodge at Big Falls	info@thelodgeatbigfalls.com	671-7172	Marta & Rob Hirons
Machaca Hill Lodge	info@machacahill.com	722-0050	Ovel Leonardo
Maya Bags	belizeexecutivedirector@mayabags.org	722-2175	Desiree Arnold
Obsession Bar & Grill	stcharlespg@btl.net	722-0193	Carlo Wagner
Requena's Charter Service	watertaxi@btl.net	722-2070	Julio Requena
Romero's Charter Service	rcharters@btl.net	722-2625/2924	Frances Romero
Scotia Bank	elvis.perez@scotiabank.com	722-0098/0099	Elvis Perez
Sun Creek Lodge	suncreek@hughes.net	600-8773/614-2080	Bruno & Melissa Kuppinger
TIDE Tours	info@tidetour.org	722-2129	Celia Mahung
Toledo Eco-Tourism Association	teabelize@yahoo.com	722-2531	Vicente Sackul
Tranquility Lodge	mspenny@yahoo.com		Penny Leonard
Tumul Kin Center of Learning	tumulkindevelopment@yahoo.com	608-1070	Esther Sanchez Sho

Restaurant Guide

Name	Address	Type of Food	Phone	Hours
Coleman's Cafe	Big Falls Village, near the rice mill	Belizean	720-2017	Daily: 7- 9am, 11:30- 4pm & 6- 9pm [Reservations Preferred]
Emery's Restaurant	Main St, PG, just behind Texaco	Belizean/ Sea-food	722-2317	Daily: 8am – 10:30pm
Gomier's Restaurant and Soy Centre	Alejandro Vernon St, near PG welcome sign	Vegetarian / Sea-food	722-2929	Tues–Sat: 8 am–2pm & 6 – 9 pm
Grace's Restaurant	Main St. PG	Belizean/ Interna-tional	702-2414	Daily: 8am – 1-pm
Hang Cheong Restaurant	Main St, PG	Chinese	722-2064	Daily: 10:30am – 2pm & 5 – 11pm
The Lodge at Big Falls	Big Falls Village, near the rice mill	International / Middle Eastern	671-7172	Daily: 11:30am – 2pm & 6:30 – 9pm [Reservations Required]
Marian's Bay View Restaurant	Front St, south of the market by the sea	East Indian/ Beliz-ean	722-0129	Mon-Sat: 11am – 2pm & 6 – 10pm Sun & Hols: noon – 2pm & 7 - 9pm
Mom's Restaurant	Queen St, PG, by the park	Belizean	620-1607 661-1359	Mon–Sat: 6 am–2 pm & 4– 9 pm Closed Sundays
The Snack Shack	BTL parking lot, PG	Breakfast & lunch/ Snacks, Shakes & Juices	702-0020	Mon – Sat: 7am – 4pm. Closed Sundays

TRANSPORT SCHEDULES

Schedule of Flights from Punta Gorda To Belize City and from Belize City To Punta Gorda					
Flights stop at Placencia & Dangriga					
Depart Punta Gorda	Arrive In Belize City	Service Provider	Depart Belize City	Arrive In Punta Gorda	Service Provider
6:45am	7:45am	Maya Island Air	8:00am	9:00am	Maya Island Air
7:00am	8:10am	Tropic Air	8:30am	9:30am	Tropic Air
9:30am	10:30am	Maya Island Air	10:00am	11:00am	Maya Island Air
9:40am	10:50am	Tropic Air	10:30am	11:30am	Tropic Air
11:30am	12:30pm	Maya Island Air	12:30pm	1:30pm	Tropic Air
11:35am	12:40pm	Tropic Air	2:30pm	3:30pm	Tropic Air
1:35pm	2:45pm	Tropic Air	2:30pm	3:50pm	Maya Island Air
4:00pm	5:00pm	Maya Island Air	4:30pm	5:30pm	Maya Island Air
4:00pm	5:00pm	Tropic Air	4:50am	6:00pm	Tropic Air
Schedule of Buses leaving Punta Gorda					
Departs from Punta Gorda	Arrives In Belize City	Service Provider	Type of Service		
3:00am	10:30am	National Transport	Regular		
4:00am	10:00am	James Bus Line	Regular		
4:30 am	9:15am	National Transport	Regular		
5:00am	11:00am	James Bus and Usher's Bus Line	Regular		
6:00am	11:00am	James Bus Line	Express		
6:00am	12:30pm	James Bus Line	Regular		
8:00am	2:30pm	James Bus Line	Regular		
10:00am	4:30pm	James Bus line	Regular		
12noon	6:30pm	James Bus Line	Regular		
1:30pm	7:30pm	Usher's Bus Line	Regular		
2:00pm	7:30pm	James Bus Line	Regular		
3:00pm	8:30pm	James Bus Line	Regular		
Boats To Puerto Barrios and Livingston, Guatemala					
Service Provider	Dep. Punta Gorda	Arrive In Puerto Barrios	Dep. Puerto Barrios	Arrive In Punta Gorda	
Requena's Charter Service	9:30am	10:30am	2:00pm	3:00pm	
Pichilingo	2:00pm	3:00pm	10:00am	11:00am	
Marisol	4:00pm	5:00pm	1:00pm	3:00pm	
Boats to Livingston depart on Tuesdays and Fridays at 10 a.m.					
<div>Did you know ?</div> <div>November is the month when the Garifuna people celebrate their arrival in Central America. This year commemorates 212 years since their arrival. Peini is the Garifuna word for Punta Gorda and Yurumein means 'land of the serene rainbow'. See Calendar of Events on Pg 3 for Garifuna celebrations.</div>		<div></div> <div></div>		<div>Did You Know ?</div> <div>A recent Nobel Prize winner, Martin Chalfie, visited Toledo District with his family earlier this year. The Chalfie family enjoyed the sights, sounds and tastes of Toledo and stayed at a local lodge during their visit. Chalfie, who is professor of biological sciences at Columbia University in New York, was recently awarded a joint Nobel Prize for Chemistry for research into green fluorescent protein (GFP). GFP is produced by the crystal jellyfish and is aiding scientists by allowing them to observe processes which were previously invisible, such as the spread of cancer cells. Two other scientists, from Japan and the U.S., shared the prize.</div>	



MACHACA HILL

at Laughing Falcon Reserve



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The Arbor Restaurant features a balanced menu of fresh, local seafood and regional cuisine with many of the herbs, vegetables and tropical fruits organically grown at Machaca Hill. All of our bread and desserts are homemade. Our bar offers a full selection of top-shelf liquors, wine and local beer.



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(Continued from page 3)

All parts of the tree (seeds, leaves, flowers and bark) are used for preparing many different medical preparations.

Neem is a source of environment-friendly bio-pesticides. The unique feature of neem products is that they do not directly kill the pests, but alter the life-processing behavior in such a manner that the insect can no longer feed, breed or undergo metamorphosis. However, this does not mean that the plant extracts are harmful to all insects. Since, to be effective, the product has to be ingested, only the insects that feed on plant tissues succumb. Those that feed on nectar or other insects such as butterflies, bees, and ladybugs hardly accumulate significant concentrations of neem products.

Neem is deemed very effective in the treatment of scabies although only preliminary scientific proof exists which still has to be corroborated, and is recommended for those who are sensitive to permethrin, a known insecticide which might be an irritant. Also, the scabies mite has yet to become resistant to neem, so in persistent cases neem has been shown to be very effective. There is also anecdotal evidence of its effectiveness in treating infestations of head lice in humans. A tea made of boiled neem leaves, sometimes combined with other herbs such as ginger, can be ingested to fight intestinal worms.

The oil is also used in sprays against fleas in cats and dogs. For information about obtaining neem seedlings call **Sustainable Harvest International** in Punta Gorda 722-2010

Adapted from the entry in Wikipedia at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neem>

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at

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The coolest jungle around!

TOUR OPERATOR: THE LODGE AT BIG FALLS

Toledo Tourism's tag line is "nature, adventure and culture" and the Lodge at Big Falls' tours offer something of each. The Lodge is strategically located in the centre of Toledo and is close to all the inland attractions.



Lubaantun Mayan Site where the crystal skull was found.

Its situation on a large bend of the Rio Grande makes it the only lodge in the district able to offer on-site river tubing for its guests and day visitors from town. Birding is one of the Lodge's strengths and it offers birding packages led by its own Steven Choco whose keen eyes and ears enrich the visitors' experience. The packages take guests to a variety of different habitats from savanna pine ridge to broadleaf forest, river banks and wetlands to meadow and orchard. All of which means that guests get to see a very wide variety of birds. One Dutch guest announced his plan to tip US\$1 per species. He was warned that that could get very expensive and so it turned out. Steven uses all his craft, learned from a lifetime growing up in the bush, to lure birds into the open for the delight of visiting birders.

The Lodge has its own fleet of sit-on-top



Kayaking on the Rio Grande

Hobie kayaks and has made the stretch of the Rio Grande from San Miguel village to Big Falls its own. The stable kayaks allow guests to take their cameras

and binoculars with them and keep them dry. This is a 3-4 hour trip depending upon the time of year and volume of water.

During the season guided groups are often on the water. Each trip promises something different whether it be a sighting of a troop of coatimundi, white-tailed deer drinking on the river banks or an Ornate Hawk Eagle guarding its iguana prey on the branch of a bribri overhanging the river. Iguanas drop from the trees into the water at the sound of approaching humans and kayakers have to be careful to steer clear of these falling dinosaurs.



Tiger Cave, near San Miguel village

Day tours include visits to the home of Florencio Mes, the Mayan harpist and instrument maker (see The Toledo Howler August 2008) who also escorts his visitors around his kitchen garden where they can taste, touch and smell the various herbs and plants he uses for food or medicine.

Miguel Choco in Silver Creek village (see article page) is always pleased to show visitors around his organic cacao plantation and farm where guests enjoy magnificent panoramic views from the Maya mountains to the west to the Gulf of Honduras to the east.

The Belize Indigenous Training Institute (BITI) is another stop on the lodge's tours. Here guests are guided around

the medicinal plant nursery tended by

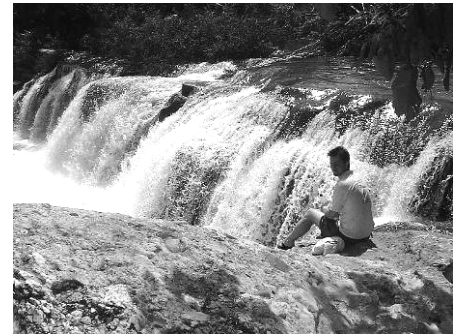


Tubing at the Lodge

local shamans who explain the various plants that are used in the treatment of snake bites and other ailments.

Tours also include what can be described as Toledo standards; the destinations that all tour operators in Toledo and many from Placencia visit. Blue Creek (Hokeb Ha) cave, Lubaantun and Nim Li Punit Mayan sites and Rio Blanco National Park. Packages also mix rivers and reef and trips to the Snake Cayes and Sapodillas are also on the menu.

And when guests return after a long day they can flop into the best riverside pool in Toledo or take a tube and float around the property. The route is about half a mile yet ends just a hundred yards from where tubers get in the river. That means enthusiasts can go round as many times as they like. Along the route



Cooling off at Rio Blanco waterfall park

a small creek enters the river fed by a hot spring on the Aleman's property half a mile up the hillside. The gravel bottomed pool near where the creek enters the river is a great place for a warm bath.

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Farmer and Cocoa Grower

Miguel Choco, Silver Creek Village

Miguel Choco of Silver Creek village is one of the increasing number of farmers in Toledo who belong to the Toledo Cacao Growers Association (TCGA) and whose cacao product eventually finds its way to Green & Blacks in the UK where it is made into the famous Mayan Gold, orange flavored chocolate.

Miguel is very happy to show visitors around his plantation which lies along the farmers' road about two miles north of Silver Creek village where he lives with his wife Florentina and their five children. Small guided groups from the Lodge at Big Falls are frequent visitors there and they are fascinated by his explanations of his farming methods and techniques.

One of the most striking things about Miguel's plantation is its magnificent location. It is a fifteen minute walk from the point on the road where visitors' vehicles must park in an area of steep hills, gullies and small creeks. The hills are covered with corn or annatto (achiote) plantations and other crops. On entering Miguel's plantation and climbing through his cacao grove the visitor arrives at the top where there are magnificent views of the Port Honduras Marine Reserve and Seven hills about fifteen miles to the east and the hills lying west of Punta Gorda town. And if



Recently harvested, colorful cacao pods

you look very carefully you can also spot the BTL tower in Punta Gorda which means that Miguel is one of the very few farmers who have cell phone service. Miguel is now 44 years old and has been farming since the age of sixteen. He grows rice, beans, corn, cassava, pumpkins and other vegetables but it was only in 2004 that he began to plant cacao trees which are now producing their first crops. Miguel is a strong supporter of organic farming. Being organic is a requirement for the farmers supplying cacao beans to TCGA but Miguel has chosen to make his entire acreage organic. TCGA extension officers make unannounced visits to

verify this about once a month.

Miguel explains that the main barrier to more farmers adopting organic methods is the extra labor required. While he believes organic food is much safer it is also much more labor intensive. Rather than use pesticides he uses a mixture of garlic and habanero peppers diluted in five gallons of water. This will often mean a twenty minute round trip to the creek six times a day to carry the water back up the hill to his fields. The good thing is it is effective. He is now about to plant a number of neem tree seedlings which will provide him with a good natural pesticide growing on his own property. (see article on Neem on page 3)

Miguel is working hard to make his farming commercially viable.

Where to get your copy of The Toledo Howler:

The Toledo Howler will normally be distributed at the Toledo Tourism Information Center on Front Street in PG as well as other shops, restaurants and places of business of BTIA members in Toledo (see list on Page 5). The paper can also be found at Maya Island Air and Tropic Air terminals throughout Belize plus Tropic Air and Requena's Charters in Puerto Barrios, Guatemala.



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Lee-Laa Vernon “Artist and Ethnic Leader”

I thought that I was going to interview a renowned Creole singer but discovered, in her own words, both “an artist and an ethnic leader”. An ethnic leader for the Creole culture and people of Belize. It’s a rich intermingling of races and cultures that finds expression in her music and her attachment to “kriol kulcha”. She celebrates everything that was mixed in the pot and her own background and origins reflect this.

She was born in Punta Gorda and still lives on the street of her childhood. Miss Lee-laa’s great-grandfather was of Italian and Spanish origin and ran the first bakery in Belize. Uncle Bertie Martinez lays claim to being the first Belizean recording artist and played flamenco guitar on BHBS (British Honduras Broadcasting Service) radio.

Her great-grandmother was an ibo from Sierra Leone in West Africa. Her maternal grandfather came from St Anne’s Bay in Jamaica and his father was Henry Genus from Ireland. She even has Mayan blood from her grandmother Secondina Jimenez. After that it became a little confusing but suffice it to say that when Lee-laa speaks about the “kriol kulcha” she speaks from her intertwined ethnic roots which are what being kriol is about.

Her first public appearance was as a seven year old with Ole Pell’s Band. This did not become a regular gig and she had to make do with the Palatine sisters church choir which was not necessarily a bad apprenticeship for her singing career which was still some years in the future. Her mother and grand-mother were very involved in Brukdown music so this was part of her upbringing and a key influence on her future musical direction.

But, married at seventeen and a widow at the tragically early age of thirty-two, Lee-laa’s musical career remained on hold while she brought up her three boys and her daughter Juliette.

After the death of her husband and with four children to support, music quickly became central again and she established the



Miss Lee-laa Vernon

“Ibolight Dance and Drama” company in Punta Gorda which has trained more than two hundred kids in Creole dance and music. Lee-laa writes most of her own songs and has now recorded four albums which she sells and markets herself. Her very first composition was the song “Kriol Kulcha” with its famous refrain “Ah wan kno, who sae Kriol no got no kulcha”. The song has since

been adopted as its anthem by the National Creole Council of Belize which itself was Lee-laa’s brainchild set in motion with the help of Juliette, Vernon Astin and a local teacher Florence Galvez.

In 1994 the dance troupe was able to send sixteen of its members to perform at the Manhattan Center in New York City resplendent in their costumes of red, green and gold or red, white and blue. At about the same time she was invited to record her music by Titiman Flores in Dangriga. She performed for Queen Elizabeth II in Central Park and has played with numerous Jamaican musicians including Byron Lee & the Dragonaires, Ken Booth and Ken Lazarus. Her usual backing group is the Baymen’s Clan led by her brother Henry Martinez.

She has received numerous awards and recognition for her music but is perhaps most proud of her MBE (Member of the British Empire) for which she was recommended by the Ministries of Culture and Education in Belize. She says that when anyone listens to her songs they are “listening to history, culture, protest and everyday life” but insists that “entertainment is a segment and promotion of Kriol culture is the rest.” and says of her work for Kriol culture “I will not stop, give up or back down for love of self and my people, this will continue”

She always writes her own music and lyrics and gets up in the quiet of the small hours of the morning to compose. She is proud of the fact that her music is used in schools and universities. We look forward to hearing more original works by this authentic Belizean voice. She has already published four albums and we await the next with great anticipation. Contact Miss Vernon (after 6pm) 702-2140

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Wat’s Cookin ?

Chilled Avocado Soup with Spicy Tomato Garnish

- 4 ripe avocado pears
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- Pinch of ground white pepper
- 1/2 cup milk (approximate)
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2-3 tomatoes, finely chopped
- Marie Sharp’s hot sauce to taste

Blend avocados in electric blender until very smooth. Add salt, pepper and garlic powder. Add milk and blend thoroughly. If soup is still quite thick, add more milk slowly until desired consistency is reached. If avocados are very bland, add a pinch of cumin powder. Refrigerate until ready to serve, at least 2 hours.

Place chopped tomatoes in blender. Add same quantity of crushed ice, a pinch of salt and about 1/2 teaspoon hot sauce. Blend only slightly—garnish should have frozen ‘slushy’ consistency and then be used immediately. Serve chilled soup in bowls and add a desert spoon of spicy tomato garnish in centre of each bowl.

~ From the kitchen of The Lodge at Big Falls ~

Recycling Comes to PG

The Belize Recycling Company based on the Western Highway outside Belize City at Mile 13 has now opened a branch in Punta Gorda close to Cattle Landing. The managers are Adriana Uribe and her husband Luis. The company collects and pays for metals, papers and old batteries and radiators. Metals they collect include iron, copper and aluminum.

They will pay people delivering to them. Batteries range from \$3-10 each depending upon size. Copper is the most valuable metal at \$2 per pound, aluminum \$0.35, stainless steel \$0.50 and paper \$0.04 per pound. The Howler wishes them success in their new venture.

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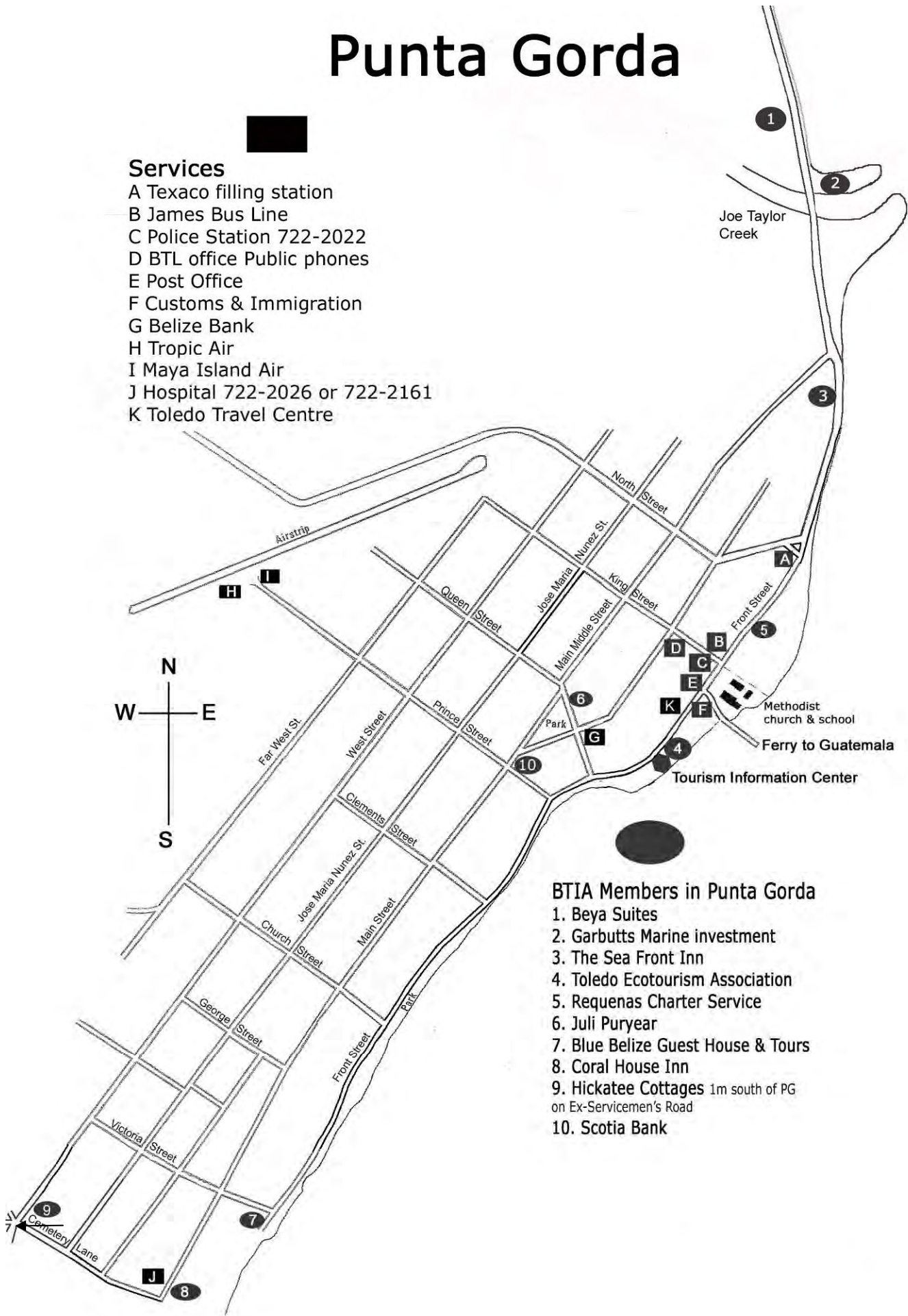
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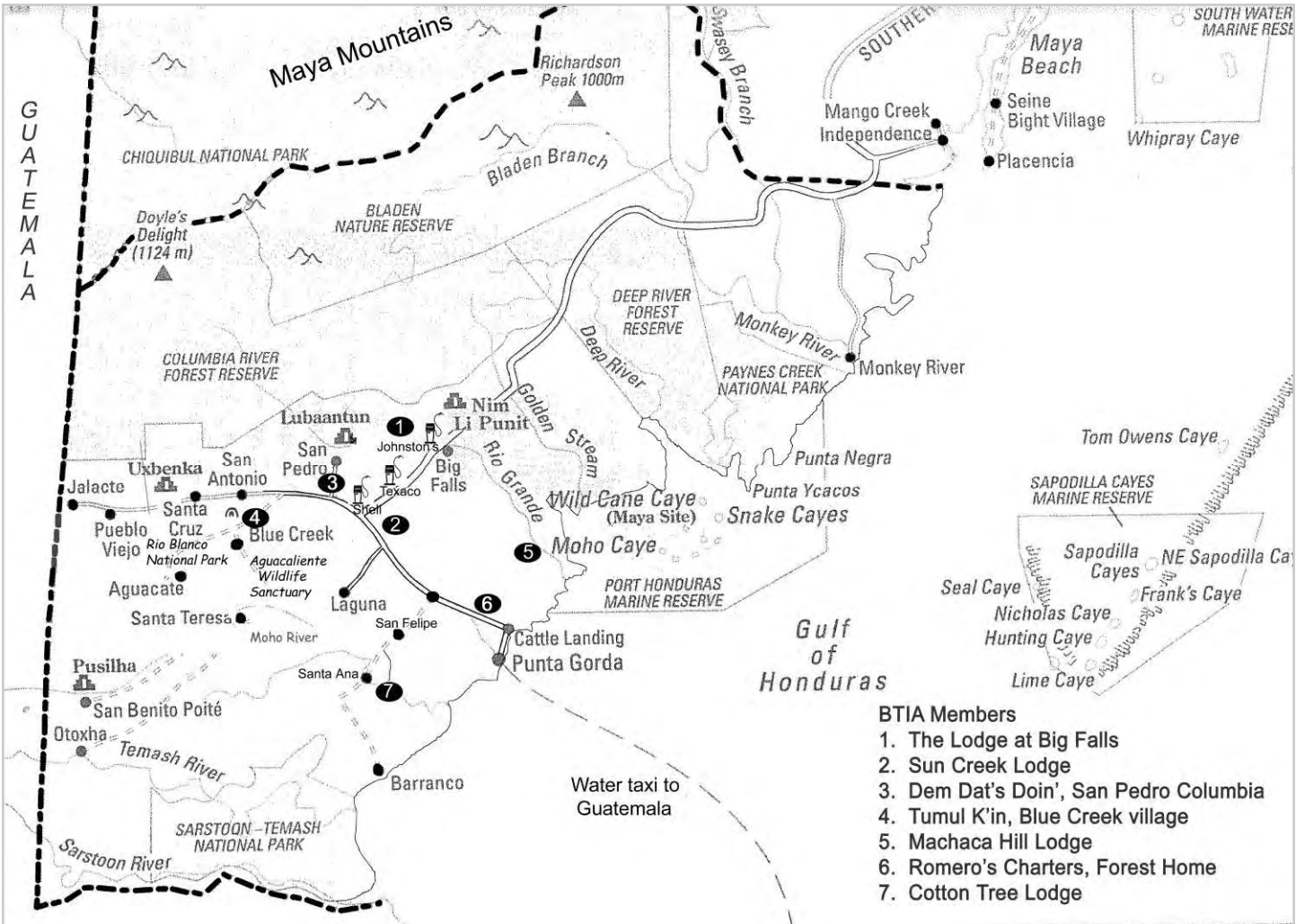
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TOLEDO DISTRICT



Original map from "The Rough Guide to Belize" by Peter Eltringham, published by Rough Guides

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