



The Toledo Howler

Newspaper of the Toledo Chapter of the Belize Tourism Industry Association

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FREE

Boost to Cultural Tourism

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The intention behind Belize's Sustainable Tourism Program is to strengthen the tourism sector's contribution to the national economy while trying to ensure that the growth is sustainable in that it enhances conservation of natural resources and of cultures. There are four infrastructure projects in San Ignacio, Placencia, Belize City and Ambergris Caye aimed at enhancing the tourists' experience by improving the Fort George area around the tourism village in Belize City, building a pier in Placencia, a long boardwalk on the lagoon side in Ambergris and paving and improving the centre of San Ignacio.

Another strand in the program is to diversify cultural tourism products in emerging destinations. The STP also has resources for the development of cultural tourism businesses that showcase the Creole, Garifuna and Mayan cultures. After training workshops facilitated by Canadian consultants with experience in developing cultural tourism among the first nation peoples of Canada applications for development grants were invited.



Dancers in Punta Gorda's carnival parade celebrating Belize's independence

Successful applications from Toledo include two drummers: Ray McDonald's Warasa Garifuna Drum School (see the article on page 9) and Emmeth Young, a Creole drummer with a business on Front Street. The "WE" art gallery in Punta Gorda run by Dr Ludwig Palacio and situated near the airstrip was another successful applicant for a development grant.

Outside town, grants were awarded to the Mayan Home Stay Program in Aguacate village, the Toledo Eco-tourism Association guest house in San Miguel and Cyrila's chocolate in San Felipe. The last award went to the Living Maya Experience in Big Falls, a group of three families offering distinctive cultural home visits but marketing themselves jointly.

Toledo wins Whitley Award again!

Last year we were proud to feature Rachel Graham's Whitley award and this year we are equally pleased to tell Howler readers about the same award won this year by the Hon. Lisel Alamilla, the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development for her work to protect the Maya Golden Landscape in her previous position as Executive Director of the Ya'axché Conservation Trust.

For Belize to win once was a credit to the country, to win twice was quite re-

markable and for both awards to come for work done in Toledo, inland and offshore, is a mark of the quality of scientific research and conservation efforts in Belize's southernmost district.

The honour recognizes the Minister's work to unite and equip the people who live in the Golden Stream Corridor Preserve to match development pressures, including population growth, agricultural change and increased demand for natu-



Whitley Award Ceremony

ral resources, with protection for the area's world-class scenery, wildlife and traditions.



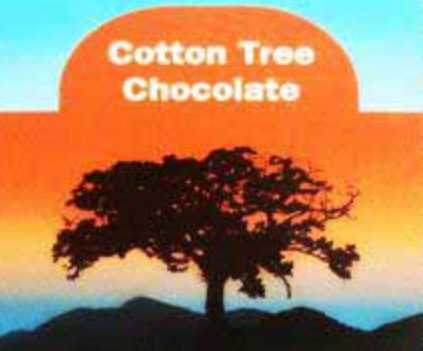
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Coleman’s Café in Big Falls

They say of restaurants that it is always a good sign when they are popular with the locals, and Coleman’s is both popular with locals and visitors from overseas. It is a favourite stop for Belizean commercial travellers who make regular trips to supply the south with meat, dairy products and groceries and much else besides. And many of these Belizeans make a point of stopping at Coleman’s, seduced by the generous lunchtime hot buffet with a range of their special dishes.

Pearleen and Tom Coleman started cooking when an Englishman, with a crew of workers who were building the bridge over the Rio Grande at Big Falls, asked Pearleen to cook for the gang while they were in the village. Pretty soon archaeologists digging at Nim Li Punit and Lubaantun asked Tom and Pearleen to help them out. So then they began cooking for them and their student helpers who were also in the village for a few months. And, in this way, one of the best local restaurants in southern Belize was born in 2001.

At that time Tom was still working in the dusty environment that is the Rice Mill just a hundred yards further in from the southern highway in Big Falls village. He welcomed the opportunity to make a complete switch of careers. They were soon found by some tour operators visiting Toledo from Placencia. The first was Basilio Mes of Exotic Belize Tours. Now tour operators arrive during the season from Dangriga, Hopkins and Placencia on



Family style lunch buffet

their way to Blue Creek cave fifteen miles south or Lubaantun just seven miles west through the villages of Silver Creek and San Miguel.

The restaurant is run by Tom and Pearleen, Tom Jr. and his partner Adelita who has been learning to cook under Pearleen’s supervision. At lunchtime you can find rice and beans or white rice and stewed beans along with baked chicken and stewed beef and pork. Pearleen does not neglect the vegetables and other dishes include cohune cabbage and calaloo and Pearleen’s home-made chutney. When available you can also find game meat such as gibbon and venison and all this comes for just \$15 including a juice or soft drink.

Over the years they have added more capacity and can now seat fifty in an open area surrounded by the garden which is a riot of colour during much of the year. They also do outside catering for organizations such as NGOs, the Rice Mill itself, and the local hospital - just call them for a quotation!

Their opening hours are from 10am until 4pm and then from 6-9pm. They would prefer reservations for the evening session and can be contacted at the numbers below.

They recognize their close connection to the tourism industry and have cemented that relationship by becoming one of BTIA’s newest members in Toledo. As Pearleen says, “Every year it seems to be getting better and better,” with more visitors arriving.




Tom & Pearleen Coleman

How to find Coleman’s:


Head north from PG Town on the Southern Highway towards the village of Big Falls. Cross the bridge over the Rio Grande river, and you’ll see the sign for Coleman’s Café on the left-hand side of the highway.

Contact:


Tel: 630-4432 or 630-4069
<https://www.facebook.com/colemanscafe>
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Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Venue/Time	Other Info
12 - 14 Oct	TIDE FISH FESTIVAL, including Seafood Gala, Youth Conservation Competition, and Fishing competition (Festival held annually, Pan-American Day weekend)	TIDE Compound, PG Town	www.facebook.com/tide.toledo for full details
13 Oct	Maya Concert	Central Park, PG, 08:00-12:00	
26 - 27 Oct	SUSTAINABLE HARVEST INTERNATIONAL ORGANIC FAIR including tour to organic farm in San Pedro Columbia, and cookery classes at Gomier’s Vegetarian Restaurant	Punta Gorda Town, and San Pedro Columbia	nana@sustainableharvest.org, or call722-2010 for more details
1 Nov	Drumming	Central Park 19:00-22:00	
7 Nov	Drumming and video showing the journey of the Garinagu	Central Park 19:00-22:00	
9 Nov	Cook out display, hudut making Cassava baking, sahou making Wanaragua Contest	Central Park 09:00-14:00	
10 Nov	Miss Yurumein Contest	Parish Hall, 19:00	
16 Nov	Battle of the Drums Food and Fete	To be announced	
17 Nov	Battle of the Drums 2012	Sports Complex, 19:30	
17 Nov	TOLTEX, showcasing sustainable tourism	Central Park, PG, 09:00	BTIAtoledo@btl.net for details
18 Nov	Paranda Top 10	Beya Suites 14:00	
19 Nov	Yurumein: Re-enactment Ceremony of the Garifuna	Fisherman’s Co-op Wharf, 06:30	
15 Dec	Rotary Club raffle draw, with music and BBQ	Central Park, PG	Lisa Avila, info@beyasuites.com
19 -21 Dec	Deer Dance	Crique Jute Village	Contributions requested
20 Dec	BTIA Dinner & Show Gala		Bringing in the new Baktun
5 Jan	Christmas Bird Count	Toledo District	See page 12 for more details
29 Mar - 1 Apr 13	EASTER ACTIVITIES throughout the District - mark your calendars now, and check the next edition of The Howler for details!		
24 - 26 May	TOLEDO’S ANNUAL CACAOFEST, for a celebration of cacao, culture and the rich flavours of the Toledo District! Check the next edition of The Howler for details!		
Oct 2013	TIDE Annual Fish Festival - mark your calendars now (Pan American Day holiday weekend)		
Spread the word and publicize your event! Email details to the Toledo Howler Team for inclusion in our calendar of events (BTIAtoledo@btl.net)			

Call 722-2531 for details or email BT IA toledo@btl.net


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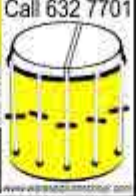


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Welcome to... Bienvenido a...TOLEDO!

Allow me to introduce myself! My name is Dilma Yolanda Cano, but just call me Yoli. I am the Tourism Marketing Officer for the BTIA chapter in Toledo.



"Just call me Yoli"

At first glance you would think right away that I am a gringa. But, I am just a wonderful blend of Mopan, Kekchi, Yucatec and Spanish. I am 100% Belizean Mestizo, 100% "bushy", and I love village life. After many years of living in a couple of cities, I prefer the country or the bush as we Belizeans like to call it.

I grew up with awesome grandparents who taught me to respect your neighbour and most importantly, nature. I am a strong advocate for

my favourite trees – mangroves. But when I die I would like to be buried under my much loved ceiba tree.

I have had the privilege of working with my parents in the tourism industry since I was nine years old. I have seen the up and downs of this fragile industry. Belize is fortunate to have many niches in the tourism market to sell. There is something for everybody, from sun, sand and sea destinations to jungle, culture and adventures experiences. And, you can experience both at the same time. Bottom line, Belize is blessed in many ways but it will only last as long as all Belizeans work together (that includes you too, Government), to preserving what is ours, keeping it close to our hearts and fighting with all our passion and fury to keep it safe.

Tourism is a beautiful industry to work in. It is never boring or predictable. Expect the unexpected. During my studying Tourism Management, in Austria, I realized that I will never in my whole life finish understanding or learning all that there is to the tourism industry. Every single day you go home with one more grain of wisdom and knowledge.

And I am here to share that knowledge with you, to help make your visit to Toledo and unforgettable experience. Please visit the Tourism Information Centre in Punta Gorda Town, or telephone or

email me with any questions you have about Toledo.

To you dear traveler, I say thank you for visiting my beautiful country. May you take home many wonderful memories and spread the word. To you my beloved fellow Belizeans, it's a pleasure to continue working with you in this beautiful industry.




Toledo Tourism Information Centre
Front Street, Punta Gorda Town
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The Farm Inn, at San Antonio

If you had invested in property between San Antonio and the border at Jalacte five years ago people might have raised an eyebrow at the idea of establishing a business in such an out of the way remote spot. Now in 2012 as the paving of the road between Big Falls and Jalacte proceeds apace that investment makes far more sense and even looks far-sighted.

That is what Kevin and Renee Brown did when they began the development that is now The Farm Inn two miles west of San Antonio. Driving west it is located a mile after the waterfall on the right hand side.

One day in the not too distant future the road will be complete, a new southern border will be opened, and then the Farm Inn will be the first accommodation that visitors pass as they drive into Toledo from Guatemala.

The Farm Inn is situated on fifty-two acres of land including several limestone hills and year round creeks that meander across the land over small rocky falls and provide constant background music for guests in their accommodation.



Kevin and Renee are keen to maintain the property as a haven for all wildlife and so for every tree that has had to be sacrificed for building they have planted at least ten more. The Inn is now managed by Renee’s brother-in-law Pieter Steunenberg who moved to Belize from South Africa a few years ago.

The farm itself is a very important part of the business and they have planted coffee trees, pineapple, vanilla, teak, all spice and, of course, cacao. They have three thousand cacao trees, some of which have produced their first crop this year. As members of the Toledo Cacao Growers’ Association their crop will finally end up in Green and Black’s Maya Gold organic dark chocolate.

They also keep guinea hens, turkeys, chickens and ducks, and children staying at the farm can help collecting eggs in the morning and putting the birds away in their coops at night. Of course, they love this and for many young visitors it may be their first time so close to animals and nature.

The Farm Inn opened this year and all their guest accommodation is contained within a single two-storey house built on a steep bank overlooking the creek. There is a mix of accommodation with all but one room having their own en-suite bathroom facilities and one being set up for a family of four with a queen and two bunks. There is a communal sitting area on the upper floor with an outside verandah area looking down to the stream and across into the treetops. This makes it a wonderful spot for a lazy birdwatcher in the early morning and late afternoon and evening. The present capacity is fourteen guests but a new facility with an additional two en-suite rooms is nearing completion.



The Farm Inn’s home-built oven and fireplace and iron cooking pots

Their South African background has led them to introduce African style cooking methods using large iron three-legged cooking pots to produce delicious stews. These are cooked for hours over an open fire. They also have an African style open oven for roasts and other baking.

The restaurant is open to the public for breakfast and lunch from Wednesday to Sunday. Their menu for these meals extends from simple burgers and fries to extended buffets with a variety of meats, with salads and other side dishes. And they pride themselves on their baked goods including their cheesecake that has received rave reviews from a guest claiming some expertise in eating cheesecake if not making it.

They are also able to host weddings and seminar

workshops. Like most places it is a work in progress . The Howler welcomes this newest addition to Toledo accommodation.

Contact:

Telephone 732-4781 or 604-4918
info@thefarminnbelize.com
www.thefarminnbelize.com

Bug corner - orchid bees

So, as well as the “*wettest district*” (read “*most lush*”) the bug question often occurs when talking about Toledo. The reality is that we do have some mosquitoes (although fewer than some other areas in Belize), but also a whole host of weird and wonderful creatures.

Orchid bees are, by and large, solitary bees which come in a rainbow range of colours and sizes and in many cases they are the sole pollinator for various orchids. They tend not to cross larger open areas, and few species of orchid bees have survived the ‘agriculturation’ of the tropics and habitat loss. We are fortunate in Toledo that orchid bees appear to be surviving, if not thriving – a local annual census reveals higher numbers

year on year, as well as a previously unidentified species.

The males have specially adapted “pouches” in their hind legs in which they gather and store essential oils from the various orchids (as well as some other flowers), using their bespoke cologne to attract females.

Vanilla (*vanilla planifolia*) can often be found growing wild in Toledo, and the beautiful metallic green *Euglossa Tridentata* (pictured right) is the only known natural pollinator of this orchid.

Don’t forget to check out our article on the Belize Spice Farm and their vanilla production in the next edition of The Howler.



Sketch map of PG Town



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Joe Taylor Creek
Punta Gorda Town
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Belize C. A.

Southern Voices: Wil Maheia



Wil Maheia is pure Toledo - born and raised in Forest Home and Punta Gorda Town, and leaving Belize only to complete his university education in the US.

Wil is the founder and former executive director of TIDE, Toledo’s largest conservation NGO, and was instrumental in having the Port Honduras Marine Reserve declared a protected area. Wil now spearheads the People’s National Party of Belize, and hosts a public-interest programme on PG-TV News network.

Family history in Toledo?

I’m Toledo born and bred, and proud of it! I was born and raised in Forest Home, and then moved to PG. My mum was born here, although my father’s family was split between Double Head Cabbage, Belize City, and St George’s Caye. You’ll find the Maheia name in Belize City and the Mullins River area, and you’ll also see a Spanish spelling, Majea, in some Spanish and Garifuna families.

What are the most significant changes you have seen in Toledo in your lifetime?

I think it would have to be improved infrastructure: electricity, water supply, and roads and transportation. As a child we used to take old paint tins and stand in line to fill them up at the standpipe, and we didn’t have electricity in the village. Even moving to PG the power used to get shut off at 9pm, when the generator was turned off. The building of the Southern Highway made a big difference and, along with many other kids from Forest Home, I worked on James Bus line which was owned by my Uncle James – James Bus line is a whole other story in itself!

Are you optimistic about the development of tourism in Toledo?

Toledo is beautiful, we’re so rich in so many ways, and we have such a lot to offer visitors that it would be difficult to imagine tourism wouldn’t develop. But, we need proper planning, a strategic plan, to determine what could and should happen, and when. We need improved border facilities, not necessarily 24/7, but certainly we need to make it easier for boat owners to visit Belize from Guatemala, streamlining the entry process and making it affordable for them. There are a lot of boats in the Rio Dulce, and I’m pretty sure that they present a tourism opportunity, especially if

facilities at Joe Taylor Creek could be made bigger.

What could Government do to promote tourism to Toledo?

Well, Toledo’s still thought of as one of the more difficult destinations to reach. Lower airfares would certainly help, but helping establish a regular water taxi between PG and Placencia – and maybe points in between – and even extending it to Belize City could be a great way for visitors to travel south.

Costs in Toledo are high compared with the rest of the country, and have countrywide rates for fixed price goods could give us a more level playing field. What’s the point of having, for example, fixed gas prices if Toledo has to pay a higher fixed-price than the rest of the country?

How can we improve tourism in Toledo?

Well, first, together is always stronger, and we need to work as a team – the public and private sectors, the tour guides, accommodation, restaurants, and all the groups that make up the tourism product.

Some more coordination for bus routes could help make it easier for tourists to visit inland destinations, and I’d like to see people being more creative, and looking longer-term. Our trips can be expensive, so we need to offer more affordable activities to attract tourists, and to be constantly thinking about new possibilities. I took a trip up to Boom Creek village recently, and kayaking on the Moho (River) into the Amado lagoon was fantastic.

Reef or rainforest?

That’s an unfair question – how can I choose between the jungle and all the amazing wildlife, and the offshore cayes.

Name one “can’t miss” place or activity in Toledo

19th November! I love the sound of the drums, and growing up I remember hearing drumming all over town. Drumming seemed to be dying out, but Battle of the Drums and Warasa, to name a couple, are doing a lot to help renew interest, with kids learning the skill. November 19th in PG is very special, and I love seeing people coming together to have fun and celebrate the Garifuna culture.

Most memorable encounter with a wild animal?

Hiking in the Golden Stream Corridor – it was a really hot day and we stopped for a quick rest. “Look at that”, and I turned round to see a jaguar only 50 feet yonder.

What’s your favourite time of year?

Easter time – the weather is nice and dry, and it’s the time when Belizeans come together to celebrate friends and family. (But, I also love the thunderstorms in Toledo). Every month has something good to offer us.

What’s your favourite Belizean dish?

As a child, definitely hicatee and white rice. We all know how scarce the hicatee is these days, so I now have to say cohune cabbage. My mum would make cohune cabbage for us all, and she taught my wife how to make it.


Red beans or black?

Black beans, cooked as rice and beans. But I do like white rice and stew beans also!




Any future plans you’d like to share with us?

I’m going to continue to lobby for sustainable development in Toledo, including tourism. I’d also like to see more agricultural micro-enterprises – cacao is a really good opportunity for Toledo, spices, and coffee – anyone who’s tasted Toledo coffee knows you don’t necessarily need high land to produce good coffee, just good processing and roasting.

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Warasa Drum School - paint, plywood, and vision!

Drumming is just one of the tangible elements of the Garifuna culture, and Warasa Drum school is aptly named – “warasa” meaning “our culture” in the Garifuna language.

Warasa Drum School was founded in 2010 by Ronald Raymond McDonald, and his wife, Ruth. Ruth originally hails from Scotland, and she reminisces that a few weeks after they first met Ray shared his dream with her of opening a Garifuna drumming centre – not only to teach drumming, but also how to make drums, and to share the Garifuna culture with others. With both of them working and saving hard to build their house at the Garifuna reserve they struggled to see how this vision could become a reality but, deciding they had to start somewhere, spent a weekend designing a sign, putting paint to plywood, and erecting the finished product outside their rented house.

The sign did its job, piquing interest, and Ray began teaching four local children. He was also engaged by a PG guesthouse to provide weekly drumming lessons for their guests, and interest quickly spread to include performances and lessons at a number of lodges throughout the District.

Ray is an engaging character and a very patient and skilled teacher. Being fiercely proud of the Garifuna culture, lessons are filled with anecdotes which provide extra insight into the Garifuna culture – a culture which was little known outside of the region until recently, but one which is now recognized by UNESCO as a “masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity”.

Ray claims that he can teach even the most non-musical to master at least one of the six traditional Garifuna rhythms, and I was curious as to whether he lived up to his reputation. I wondered how I would fare at my first lesson (especially being ‘kack-handed’ which had previously led to some interesting experiments with stringed instruments), but Ray broke down the simplest Paranda rhythm into easy stages – the heavy beat from the lead hand, inter-

persed with a half beat. Within a few minutes we were rocking – my providing the lead beat on the larger segunda drum, with Ray dazzling us with complex rhythms on his smaller primero drum, hands moving seemingly at the speed of light, before breaking into song in his rich, mellow voice.

Although my technique could have done with quite some improvement, we then moved on to the Gunjei rhythm. Oh my, not only was a lot more beating involved, but suddenly your hands need to move position on the drum. It looked amazingly complex but, again, Ray broke it down into small parts and a few minutes later the “one two-and three-and four-and” (coupled with a back and forth from the centre to the edge of the drum) was starting to become more fluid.

The drums themselves are a labour of love, hollowed out from cedar, mahogany or yemeri logs,



topped with deer skin held in place by vines, and a wire or string snare to intensify the sound. (Note to ladies: you should dress suitably so as to preserve your modesty – a large drum and short skirt can make for some pretty revealing photographs, so short or long pants are a good idea).

Each Garifuna rhythm is usually accompanied by a different style of singing and dancing, with the

Punta probably being the most popular style in Belize, and as close to a national dance as you can get. Visitors are often mystified how Belizeans are seemingly able to move their butts independently of their body, and there’s a widespread myth that Belizeans have developed special muscles. Ray disputes that, and also teaches Garifuna Dance – the secret, he says, is all in shifting your knees! Ruth agrees, and she has now mastered both the Punta and Paranda dance, but I decided to leave those lessons for another day.

Warasa has grown from strength to strength, and they are helping to raise awareness of Toledo and our rich cultural heritage. This edition of the Howler coincides with their move from West Street to their new home at the Garifuna Reserve on New Road, around a 10 minute walk from the airstrip in PG Town.

To learn more about Warasa, visit their website at www.warasadrumschool.com, and their Facebook page www.facebook.com/WarasaDrumSchool



Battle of the Drums

Over the past seven years The Battle of the Drums has become an integral part of the Garifuna celebrations that culminate with Yurumein, the re-enactment of the arrival of the Garifuna on the shores of Belize on 19 November.

On the evening of Friday 16 November the Battle of the Drums “Food & Fete” brings people together from all walks of life to socialize, network and enjoy an evening of good food and great Garifuna music. It will showcase Garifuna Cuisine fused with contemporary cooking styles, dishes and menus prepared by chefs from the Radisson Fort George in Belize City, Laru Beya in Placencia and Belcampo Lodge of Punta Gorda. It will also fea-

ture local and national Garifuna musical performers performing great paranda and other Garifuna music. Performers will include Paul Nabor, Mario and the Umalali Group, Godfrey Sho and the Culture Dynamics and Lascelle Martinez and the PG Vibes.

The Battle of the Drums Competition on Saturday 17 November is a drumming competition and show that allows groups to compete and display their musical artistry in playing five different categories of Garifuna drumming. The first Battle of the Drums was held in Punta Gorda Town on November 17, 2006 and was well received by spectators from home and abroad. In 2007, there was

even a bigger audience and greater enthusiasm. In 2008 the event evolved into an international drumming competition and show involving drumming groups from various parts of Belize as well as from neighbouring Guatemala and Honduras.

The Yurumein Ceremony takes place at 06:30. at the Punta Gorda Cooperative wharf area and presents a dramatization that depicts the first arrival of the Garinagu to the shores of Belize. After the re-enactment ceremony there is a parade through the principal streets of Punta Gorda Town followed by a church service.

T O L E D O V I L L A G E B U S S E S					
<i>Service</i>	<i>Depart PG</i>	<i>Destination</i>	<i>Calling at...</i>	<i>Days</i>	<i>Return to PG</i>
Pop	10:30	Golden Stream	Dump, Big Falls, Indian Creek	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	06:45
Garcia	11:00	Big Falls	Dump, Jacintoville,	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	08:00
Chub	11:30	Crique Sarco	San Felipe, Santa Ana, Midway, Conejo, Sunday Wood	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	05:15
Kan	11:30	Aguacate	Dump, Mafredi, Blue Creek	Mon to Sat	05:20
Chen	11:30	San Vicente	Dump, Mafredi, San Antonio, Santa Cruz <i>(for Rio Blanco)</i> , Santa Elena, Pueblo Viejo, Jalacte	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	02:00
Chunny	11:30	Jalacte	Dump, Mafredi, San Antonio, Santa Cruz <i>(for Rio Blanco)</i> , Santa Elena, Pueblo Viejo, Jalacte	Mon to Sat	03:00
Chunny	11:30	San Antonio	Dump, Mafredi	Mon to Sat	06:00
Sho	11:30	San Jose	Yemeri Grove, Dump, Mafredi, Crique Jute, Nah Lum Ca	Wed/Sat	04:00
Cukul	11:30	Silver Creek	Dump, San Pedro Columbia <i>(for Lubaantun)</i> , San Miguel	Mon to Sat	06:00
Pop	11:30	Medina Bank	Dump, Big Falls, Hicatee, Indian Creek <i>(for Nim Li Punit)</i>	Mon to Sat	05:30
Bobby	11:00	Santa Ana	San Felipe <i>(for Cyrila’s Chocolate)</i>	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	07:15
Cal	11:00	Silver Creek	Dump, San Pedro Columbia <i>(for Lubaantun)</i> , San Miguel	Mon to Sat	07:00
J ‘n’ L	12:00	Barranco	San Felipe <i>(for Cyrila’s Chocolate)</i> , Santa Ana, Midway	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	06:00
Ack	12:00	Dolores	Dump, Mafredi, Jordon, Santa Teresa, Mabilha, San Lucas, Corazon Creek, Otoxha	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	03:00
Teck	12:00	San Benito Poite	Dump, Mafredi, Blue Creek <i>(for Hokeb Ha)</i> , Santa Teresa	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	04:30
Coc	12:00	San Antonio	Dump, Mafredi	Mon to Sat	06:30
Coc	12:00	San Antonio	Dump, Mafredi	Mon to Sat	13:30
Choc	12:00	San Jose	Dump, Mafredi, Crique Jute, Nah Lum Cah	Mon/Fri	05:00
Shol	12:00	Laguna	Elridgeville	Wed/Fri/Sat	
Pop	13:00	Golden Stream	Dump, Big Falls, Hicatee, Indian Creek <i>(for Nim Li Punit)</i>	Mon to Sat	07:30
Cal	04:30	Silver Creek	Dump, San Pedro Columbia, San Miguel	Mon to Sat	13:00
Bol	16:00	Jalacte	Dump, Mafredi, San Antonio, Santa Cruz <i>(for Rio Blanco)</i> , Santa Elena, Pueblo Viejo, Jalacte	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	15:00
Cukul	16:00	Silver Creek	Dump, San Pedro Columbia, San Miguel	Mon to Sat	12:30
Chen	05:30	San Vicente	Dump, Mafredi, San Antonio, Santa Cruz, Santa Elena, Pueblo Viejo, Jalacte	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	14:00
Pop	17:00	Indian Creek	Dump, Big Falls, Hicatee	Mon to Sat	12:00
Bol	06:00	Jalacte	Dump, Mafredi, San Antonio, Santa Cruz, Santa Elena, Pueblo Viejo	Mon to Sun	05:00
Cukul	21:00	Silver Creek	San Pedro Columbia, San Miguel	Mon to Thurs	16:00
Pop	21:00	Indian Creek	Dump, Big Falls, Hicatee	Mon to Thurs	15:30

Slow travel - how to get around by bus

One of the defining elements of slow travel is the opportunity to become part of local life and to connect to a place and its people. Slow travel is about connection to culture, and what better way than taking a local village bus!

But, with such a complex network of village busses it can sometimes be difficult for visitors to figure out how they can get to various sites. We’ve included our full list of the village busses, so work through it and you’ll see that you are able to visit many inland destinations on these retired US school busses.

For example, if you wanted to visit Lubaantun then you could take a late morning bus to Silver Creek

from PG Town (busses leave from Jose Maria Nunez Street, near Tate’s Guest House), ask the driver to drop you at the driveway to Lubaantun. The Silver Creek bus then returns to PG Town at 4pm, passing the Lubaantun driveway around 4.20pm.

Nim Li Punit, Golden Stream Spice Farm, and Golden Stream Corridor Preserve (for Ya’axche’s “Ranger for a Day” patrol hike) are all easy to reach by both village bus, or James Bus.

There are many busses which head towards the Guatemalan border which stop in Santa Cruz to allow you to visit Rio Blanco National Park.

It’s a great way to travel, seeing a real slice of local life, and the fares cannot be beaten!



The Deer Dance will be performed in Crique Jute from 19 to 21 December. Visit Crique Jute by bus!

The Choc bus and Sho bus pass through Crique Jute on their way to and from San Jose

TRANSPORT SCHEDULES					
Flights					
Depart Punta Gorda	Arrives Belize City	Service Provider	Depart Belize Intl.	Arrive In Punta Gorda	Service Provider
06:45	07:55	Maya Island Air	08:10	09:15	Maya Island Air
06:30	07:30	Tropic Air	07:50	09:00	Tropic Air
09:30	10:35	Maya Island Air	10:10	11:15	Maya Island Air
09:20	10:20	Tropic Air	10:20	11:30	Tropic Air
11:30	12:35	Maya Island Air	12:20	13:30	Tropic Air
11:35	12:35	Tropic Air	14:20	15:30	Tropic Air
13:35	14:35	Tropic Air	14:40	15:45	Maya Island Air
16:00	17:05	Maya Island Air	16:40	17:45	Maya Island Air
16:00	17:10	Tropic Air	16:40	17:40	Tropic Air
James Bus Line Schedule					
Departs P.G.		Arrives Belize City	Departs Belize City	Arrives P.G.	
03:50		10:30	05:15 Express (except Sun)	10:30	
04:50		11:30	06:15	12:45	
05:50		12:30	07:15	13:45	
06:00 Express		10:45	08:15	14:45	
07:50		14:30	09:15	15:45	
09:50		16:30	10:15	16:45	
11:50		18:30	12:15	18:45	
13:50		20:30	13:45	19:45	
14:50		21:30	15:15	21:45	
15:50 (except Sat)		21:15	15:45 Express	20:30	
Boats To & From Puerto Barrios , Guatemala					
Service Provider	Dep Punta Gorda	Arrive Puerto Barrios	Depart Puerto Barrios	Arrive Punta Gorda	
Requena’s Charter Service	09:30	10:30	14:00	15:00	
Pichilingo	14:00	15:00	10:00	11:00	
Marisol	16:00	17:00	13:00	15:00	
Memo’s	13:00	14:00	15:00	16:00	
Boats to Livingston depart on Tuesdays and Fridays at 10 a.m.					



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- ◆ BTIA Toledo members
- ◆ Requena’s Charters, Puerto Barrios
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As well as a wide online presence in electronic format

Please contact the Toledo Howler team at 722-2531 if you would like to become a distributor for the voice of tourism development in Belize’s deep south!





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Backyard Birding for Science and Recreation

In 1987, researchers at Cornell University in New York started a program for “backyard” birders called Citizen Science. The purpose of this program is to encourage non-scientists to participate in nation-wide programs to help scientists learn more about avian distribution, seasonality, behavior, and long-term population trends, simply by observing the birds in their yard, i.e. birding with a purpose.

These are the sorts of things ornithologists study. But there are only so many ornithologists to go around. Imagine hundreds, or even thousands, of ordinary people gathering small bits of data on these four parameters simply by becoming more aware of the birds in their own yard.



To a scientist, every yard represents a small sample plot from which much valuable information can be collected. If you consider yourself a casual birder, you can contribute to large-scale studies like these by keeping records on the common birds in your yard. How many Kiskadees reside in your yard? Does this number change over time? Is there a seasonal pattern? A long-term decline or increase? Random fluctuations? A steady number of birds throughout the year? What about other species in your yard that you can identify? Do you see the same patterns or different patterns? You may recognize that a few species are not present year round but are migratory . Those that are not here year round include Yellow Warbler, American Redstart, Gray Catbird, Wood Thrush, and Summer Tanager. All of these birds have specific times that they arrive in fall and leave in spring.

In North America, ornithologists are learning that many species are arriving earlier in spring than formerly and leaving later in fall, one indicator that the planet is gradually warming. Presumably the reverse of this is true in Central America. These same species that spend the winter in Belize should be arriving in fall on average a little bit later each year and leaving a little bit later each spring. But if data on redstarts from hundreds of birders, each keeping track of the birds in their own yard, shows that on average redstarts are arriving later in fall than they did ten or twenty years ago, then we would have a much stronger case for concluding that redstarts are migrating south later in the fall than they did a decade or two ago.

August is the month that many of the North American warblers begin arriving in Belize. By mid-September fall migration is in full swing. In early March, species like Swallow-tailed Kite, Yellow-green Vireo, and Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher return from wintering grounds in South America to nest in Belize. And so on. After a year or two, new species may be harder to add, but you will never reach the end of the list. There will always be new species to add.

But more importantly, you will begin to see trends. You will learn that different species have different patterns of occurrence. The Louisiana Waterthrush arrives like clockwork every July, but its close cousin, the Northern Waterthrush, does not arrive until a full month later. Yellow Warblers arrive in August, Summer Tanagers in September, Gray Catbirds in October. September is also the month that Eastern Kingbirds can be seen passing overhead by the hundreds, following the coastline as they head to South America for the winter. In October, it will be Hook-billed Kites. In November, Tree Swallows. October and April are the months to look for Scarlet Tanagers as they head south, then north, commuting to and from wintering grounds in South America and breeding grounds in North America. In addition to these predictable annual events are a seemingly endless number of rarer species that might turn up only a few times in a decade – or once in a lifetime.

I know someone in Belize who has amassed 247 species on his *yard* list. Granted, he lives in a very birdy area and has lived in the same house for almost 20 years, but that is still quite an accomplishment. What is even more impressive to me is that 20 years ago he wasn’t even a birder. Now he is an expert, and much of that learning curve was accomplished within the confines of his own yard. But the most impressive thing of all? He has kept daily notes on the birds in his yard and now has an invaluable set of data on – you guessed it– distribution, seasonality, behavior, and long-term population trends that could not have been achieved



White-collared Seedeater



Black-cowled Oriole

otherwise.

The Citizen Science program begun by Cornell University 25 years ago now has more than 15,000 people participating annually the United States and Canada. We could do the same thing here in Belize, albeit on a smaller scale.

If you are interested in keeping tabs on the birds that reside in your yard, drop by for an occasional visit, or use the aerial skyways above your yard, contact me at bzbirdman@gmail.com and I will help you get started.

H. Lee Jones

Belize Christmas Bird Count

Each year Lee Jones organizes a Christmas bird count in different areas of Belize. **This year’s bird count in Toledo will take place on Saturday 5th January.** During the day we count the number of species as well as counting or estimating the number of individuals of each species. You don’t have to be an advanced birder to join in although each group will be led by an expert. If you are interested then get in touch with Lee at his e-mail address above. The area of our count is within a radius of 19 miles from Punta Gorda.

Record Your Sightings at eBird.org

A real-time, online checklist program, eBird has revolutionized the way that the birding community reports and accesses information about birds. Launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, eBird provides rich data sources for basic information on bird abundance and distribution at a variety of spatial and temporal scales.

eBird’s goal is to maximize the utility and accessibility of the vast numbers of bird observations made each year by recreational and professional bird watchers. It is amassing one of the largest and fastest growing biodiversity data resources in existence. For example, in March 2012, participants reported more than 3.1 million bird observations across North America!



Wat dat smell? Wat’s Cookin? I hungry...

Lionfish Ceviche

- 2 large lionfish, cleaned and filleted and diced into small pieces
- 3 limes
- 1 bunch of cilantro, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, diced
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 3 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
- 1 habanero pepper, de-seeded and finely chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste

Put the lionfish in a mixing bowl & squeeze the juice from the limes until all the fish is covered. While the lionfish is marinating, chop the rest of the vegetables. Mix the onion, garlic, tomatoes, habanero & cilantro (coriander) together.

Stir all the ingredients into the lionfish and lime juice. Season with salt & pepper to taste.

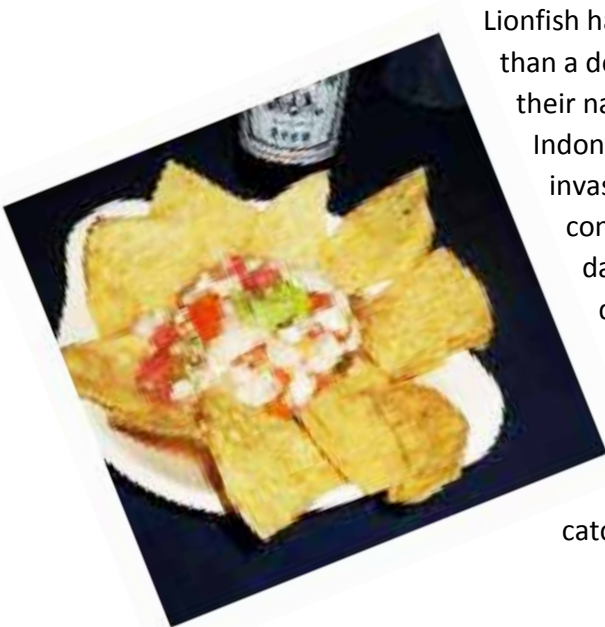
Put into a refrigerator for about 4 hours.

Serve with tortilla chips.

Thanks to ReefCI for their lionfish ceviche recipe!

ReefCI offers volunteer dive conservation trips to the Sapodilla Cayes. You can read more about the Sapodilla Cayes and whale sharks in the next edition of the Toledo Howler published in February 2013, and visit www.ReefCI.com to learn more about their conservation work.

Eat ‘em to beat ‘em!



Lionfish have been multiplying in the Caribbean for more than a decade, and have few natural predators outside their native habitat in the Pacific around Australia and Indonesia. Belize has never seen a mass marine invasion of this kind before, and many people are concerned that it will set off a cascade of ecological damage to native fish, coral reefs, and their delicate habitat, as well as threatening our fisheries industry.

Belize has declared war on lionfish, and is making a concerted effort to rid our waters of these invaders. What better way than to catch them and eat them!

Restaurant Guide

Name	Address	Cuisine	Phone	Opening Hours
Asha’s Culture Kitchen	80 Front Street, south of market, only building over the sea	Creole/Seafood/BBQ	632-8025	Daily from 11:00-14:00 (lunch only during high season) 16:00-24:00 (dinner/bar year-round), closed on Thursdays.
Coleman’s Cafe	Big Falls Village, near the rice mill	Belizean	720-2017	Daily: 11:30-16:00 & 18:00-21:00 (Reservations Preferred)
Earth Runnins’ Café and Bukut Bar	Main Middle Street, PG	Belizean/International	702-2007 600-9026	Wed-Sun: 07:00- 14:00 & 17:00-23:00
Fajina Firehearth Food	Front St, PG	Local Mayan Food	666-6144	Mon-Sat: 07:00-19:30. Closed on Sundays
Gomier’s Restaurant and Soy Centre	Alejandro Vernon St, near PG Wel-come sign	Local & international vegetar-ian / Seafood	722-2929	Mon-Sat: 08:00-14:00 & 18:00-21:00. Closed Sundays
Grace’s Restaurant	Main St. PG	Belizean/ International	702-2414	Daily: 06:00-22:00, including holidays
Hang Cheong Restaurant	Main St, PG	Chinese	722-2064	Daily: 10:00-14:00 & 17:00 -midnight
The Lodge at Big Falls	Big Falls Village, near the rice mill	International/ Belizean/ Mid-dle Eastern	732-4444	Daily: 11:30–14:00 & 18:30–21:00 (Reservations Required)
Machaca Hill Lodge	Wilson’s Road	Pan Central American and International	722-0050	Lunch: noon-14:30. Dinner: 19:30-22:00. (Reservations preferred)
Mangrove Restaurant	Cattle Landing, by the curve	Belizean / International	722-2270	Daily: 17:00-22:00. (Reservations preferred)
Marian’s Bay View Restaurant	Front St, south of the market by the sea	East Indian/ Belizean	722-0129	Mon-Sat: 11:00-14:00 & 18:00-22:00 Sun & Hols: noon – 14:00 & 19:00-21:00
Martina’s Kitchen	BTL parking lot, PG	Belizean	623-3330	Mon-Sat: 07:00-15:00. Closed on Sundays
Mom’s Restaurant	Queen St, PG, by the park	Belizean	620-1607 661-1359	Mon-Sat: 06:00-14:00 & 16:00-21:00 Closed Sundays
Rainbow Cafe	Queen St, PG, by the park	Belizean	631-2309	Mon-Sat: 70:00-14:00. Closed on Sundays
Rainforest Cafe	Big Falls Village, just south of the bridge	Belizean	669-0080	Daily: 10:00-22:00
Reef Bar & Restaurant	Front St, upstairs by the market	International/Belizean	625-8652	Daily: 10:00-14:00 & 16:00-midnight. Closed on Tuesdays
Sho’s Local Restaurant	Entrance to Blue Creek Village	Belizean/ Catering	668-6540	Mon-Sat: 07:00–20:00. Closed Sundays. Group reservations required
The Snack Shack	BTL parking lot, PG	Breakfast & lunch/ Snacks, shakes, juices & pastries	702-0020	Mon-Sat: 07:00–15:00. Closed Sundays
Waluco’s	Opposite TIDE pier in Hopeville	Belizean/East Indian/ Seafood/Catering	670-3672	Mon-Thurs: 07:00-14:00 & 17:00-22. Weekends: 07:00-late

The Living Maya Experience

The Living Maya Experience is a set of three distinct cultural home visits in Big Falls and Hicatee that market themselves co-operatively but operate independently.

The Chiac family have made their living from selling crafts to other villagers and until now have not realized the potential for sale of their crafts to international visitors. Juan Chiac makes large baskets, hammocks, shoulder bags, palm fans and small rosewood carvings. His wife Hilaria weaves cuxtal bags.

It is only when you visit the family that you realize the amount of work that goes into making a basket from the taitai vine. First Juan must hike into the forest to collect the vines. He then strips the bark from the vine on the spot and packs the rolls of vine into his sack to bring home. Back home the vines are stretched out and dried before use. To make hammocks he collects the long leaves of the “henequen” plant. Henequen is a member of the Agave family and its leaves which may be six or seven feet long are packed with strong fibers. He manually spins the fibres into a strong thread from



Mrs Basilia Cal grinding cocoa beans.

which he makes hammocks and bags. This already sounds like a whole lot of work, and remember that he has yet to make anything!

Visitors to the Chiac’s can all have a go at making these crafts under the tutelage of Juan, Hilaria and their daughter Marta. The visit lasts a couple of hours. The time really flies by and guests leave with their face muscles aching from all the laughing they have done; mainly at themselves.

Cristobal Cal and his wife Anita have often talked about the loss of traditional ways and knowledge as the elders in the community pass on one by one. In order to stem this loss and give the younger generation pride in their past he and Anita have created a Mayan home as it would have looked before the advent of electricity, plastic and packaging and other aspects of the modern world. They have a bed in which the mattress is made from the rolled out bark of the macapal or moho tree and a bench seat made from a balsa trunk. They grow four different kinds of corn, white, yellow, red and black, have a mangle press for extracting the sugar from the raw cane and a sack of berries from the soapberry tree for guests to use to wash their hands before eating. Yes, they also prepare meals for their guests who can roll up their sleeves and get involved in the preparation with Anita and her daughters. Their guests also roast and grind cacao beans to make cocoa drunk from a calabash bowl.

Pablo Rash is a farmer living close to the junction at Hickatee just north of Big Falls. He is also a Mayan healer and uses a variety of herbs and plants in his treatments. He is developing a herbal medicine garden around his house set on the top of a hill. In this way he will be able to show visitors which plants he uses for different ailments and



Young Alva gives Judy a lesson in tortilla making



Craft making at the Chiac’s.

treatments and the garden will also aid his own practice since he will have more of the important plants close at hand.

Together these three home visits give guests a fascinating insight into the Mayan way of life. Each visit takes a couple of hours and visitors decide which they would like to experience or they can if they wish plan the time to visit all three.

How to book your Living Maya experience:

livingmayaexperience@gmail.com

Anita Cal 627-7408

Marta Chiac 632-4585

Pablo Rash 636-5227

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Big Falls Extreme Adventures

The biggest surprise to me, my first time on the zip-line, was the high pitched zinging sound as the metal trolleys glide over the steel cables.

The second was that I managed to overcome my fear of heights and get to quite enjoy the feeling of launching myself off a wooden platform high above the forest floor and glide effortlessly to the next landing platform. A bit like Tarzan without the liana vines to swing on, and no Jane either.

The zip-line has six rides. That is six sections between landing platforms either up in the trees or down on the ground with four crossings of the Rio Grande along the way. The different sections range from 350-450 feet. At the end of each ride is a landing platform and take-off platform for the next ride. As soon as you arrive at each platform the guides hook guests to fixed points so that everyone is well-anchored to the platform.

Safety of guests is the number one priority for Andrew Caliz, David Franco his partner and their staff. David said, "Everyday we are looking for things to improve." The line was designed with safety in mind. For this reason they have a double cable, double carabiners and double trolleys with the rider harnessed at three points. And proper briefing and orientation are all part of the emphasis on the enjoyment of guests in a safe environment. Rigorous staff training and certification as guides is also part of their professional approach as well as their use of the highest quality equipment from North America and Europe.

As well as the zip-line they offer river tubing on a route that goes about a mile from just north

of Big Falls village back down stream to disembark under the bridge. On the way guests can make a stop at the creek that enters the Rio Grande from a hot spring on the hillside half a mile away. While not hot, the water is still warm and getting back into the main river after a rest stop here is a chilly surprise.

They use Canadian TubePro tubes which have the option of lashing a seat into the hole although most visitors prefer to float with their derriere in the water. The whole tube trip takes around an hour with a twenty minute stop to wallow in the creek.

The seasonality of the tourism business in Belize affects Big Falls Extreme Adventures just like any other. Andrew says, "There are days when it is tough but most days I totally enjoy what I'm doing and I have a feeling that we will have a better season this year.

And they have not finished developing. Andrew and David have plans to put in faster runs as well as a longer ride of 1200-1500 hundred feet. As David commented, "Everyday we are looking for things to improve." Next year they will be photo-



Gliding sixty feet over the river!

graphing guests on the line and printing photos for guests to take away with them and their restaurant that offers Belizean food will be extending their menu.

This is a great day out for a reasonable price. You can find details on their web site and a great video of the experience on YouTube. It combines easily with a visit to the Living Maya Experience just across the river.



Getting ready, last minute checks.



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Facebook "Big Falls Extreme Adventures"

You Tube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnT973Adlis> Zip Line and River Tubing n Southern Belize 4:23 minute video

Trip Advisor http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g2507140-d2484439-Reviews-Big_Falls_Extreme_Adventures-Big_Fall_Toledo.html

<http://www.bigfallsextremeadventures.com/>

Arzu Mountain Spirit on Medicinal Plants: Piss-a-Bed

Piss-a-bed (*Senna Alata*) is a large evergreen leaf senna plant known also as candle bush, senna, candle stick, and ringworm bush. It is a beautiful wild flowering bush with a generous bright yellow bloom. This Belize rain forest native grows up to ten feet in height and is loved by bees, butterflies, birds, and native healers.

Everybody in Belize knows of Piss-a-bed use in purge and piss, but we have paid little homage to the other healing marvels this aptly named plant is capable of.

I first became interested in the Piss-a-bed when my uncle gave an account of having used the juice and pulp of this plant to heal a skin discoloration disorder that affected his legs. The Piss-a-bed leaf juice treatment completely cleared the condition and it has never returned.

Science finally lent credence to my uncle’s healing when, in 1994, after a ten-year human study in India, research found Piss-a-bed leaf juice indeed to be a reliable herbal treatment for skin discoloration. Findings revealed that Piss-a-bed leaf juice kills the fungus that prevents skin cells from producing color.

The Garifuna name for Piss-a-bed is Ganibisi, and every Garifuna community has a revered Ganibisi bush somewhere in their lot. Medicinal tradition prescribes Ganibisi leaf tea for intestinal purging, blood cleansing, and for lowering blood sugar. The tea is also used to improve digestion, and can be doubled in strength to reduce excess water in the body, alleviate swelling, and relieve pain.

Piss-a-bed is recognized by science to contain a group of chemicals that are known laxatives. In 2003 scientists produced evidence that Piss-a-bed leaves are not only anti-inflammatory, but also have pain relieving, and hypoglycemic (lowering blood sugar) properties.

More recent studies revealed that Piss-a-bed leaves also contain a chemical with the ability to reduce sticky blood and dissolve arterial plaque (as in cholesterol). It is treasured by farmers who save on veterinary expenses by using the leaf pulp on their animals to treat skin afflictions like mange, fungus, removing ticks, mites, and other external parasites. As a topical treatment, it



Senna Alota, a Belizean rainforest native plant

works for those who use it. Healers and non-healers alike can mash the leaves of this plant into an all-purpose skin salve and use it to treat insect bites, ringworm, syphilis sores, herpes ulcers, scabies, shingles, eczema, skin sores, ripen boils, even out skin tone/color, relieve itching, and any type of rash.

Although this plant is an intelligent healer by design, it is not advisable to try internal Piss-a-bed treatment without consulting a qualified herbalist. It is used by healers to treat incontinence and prevent bed wetting. Drinking Piss-a-bed tea increases urination and, (hence the name) will make you piss any bed.

It will also make you sweat. It is an excellent herbal remedy for detoxification as it helps clean, strengthen and tone the organs of both the urinary and digestive system. Piss-a-bed is not taken for more than seven consecutive days. And it is NOT to be taken along with any diuretic medication or pharmaceuticals.

Piss-a-bed is an easy to propagate low maintenance plant. It grows from seeds, root balls, and cuttings. Allow for the pods to dry on the plants and break them open to collect the seeds. The seeds last a long time, can be stored, and can

keep for up to a year. Once planted, it will self-sow freely as long as it has full sun. It begins flowering from 4 feet and continues to do so every year. Piss-a-bed makes a gorgeous addition to any garden.

Contributed by

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How Do I Join BTIA?

Visit www.btia.org to read about BTIA and all the membership benefits and to download an application form. Complete the form and hand it in at the Tourism Information Center on Front St.



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Port Honduras Marine Reserve

Mention “Toledo” to some people and you still run a small risk of their conjuring up an image of “the wettest district”, and “Maya villages”. Of course we get significant rainfall (most of it at night), and we have a sizeable Kek’chi and Mopan Maya population (alongside many other cultures), but don’t forget our rainforest to reef reputation, with two marine reserves – the Sapodilla Cayes around 35 miles offshore, and Port Honduras just a few miles north of Punta Gorda town.

The Port Honduras Marine Reserve was declared a protected area in 2000 – an area of over 160 square miles of high biodiversity, which provides a critical link between terrestrial and marine ecosystems. That all sounds very commendable, but what does it mean for the visitor? The reality is that stringent management of the reserve, coupled with the many small cayes dotted throughout the Reserve, provides a great habitat not only for marine life, but also a great marine experience for tourists.

The Reserve is a favourite area for world-class fly fishermen, many of whom return year after year to attempt their grand slam catch of snook, tarpon, and permit, as well as bonefish, and PG boasts some extremely talented fly-fishing guides.

Snorkellers love the tranquility of West Snake Caye - a two-acre palm covered gem, boasting sandy beaches and the occasional red boa snake in the interior – and that they are often the only people in the area. A recent addition to the Toledo Tourism portfolio are the introductory SCUBA diving courses – taking advantage of the shallow waters around the Caye for diving instruction, leading to diving amongst the coral formations surrounding the island.

It’s obviously not guaranteed, but visitors often see pods of dolphins on their way out or back from Port Honduras, and manatees can be sighted near Deep River.

The Marine Reserve is co-managed by TIDE (www.TIDEbelize.org) and the Fisheries Department, who have introduced strict “no-take” zones in nursery areas, and who patrol the waters to ensure compliance with the regulations in force to



protect the various ecosystems. Tours will usually involve a visit to the TIDE Ranger Station at Abalone Caye to pay the US\$10 Reserve entrance fee, but also to learn from the Rangers about TIDE’s work. You are also welcome to climb the observation tower for some great 360 degree views of Port Honduras or, if you’re not a fan of heights, one of the Rangers is usually happy to take photos on your behalf.

Lesser known parts of the Reserve include Wild Cane Caye, an important Maya archeological site. It’s natural harbor and proximity to Deep River made it a natural ancient trading post that re-emerged in recent history in a different form as a port-of-call for the ‘Heron H’ (the passenger, mail and freight boat which acted as the main source of transportation between PG and Belize City until the mid-70s)

Archaeologist, Dr Heather McKillop conducted in-depth research at Wild Cane Caye, but has more recently been working at Paynes Creek National Park, which lies to the north and east of Port Honduras. Call in at the BTIA Toledo Tourism Information Centre to view the exhibit!

How to get there? Snorkelling and fishing trips are offered by TIDE Tours, Garbutts Marine, and Tiburon Tours. Introductory SCUBA courses are available through Garbutts Marine.

Contact details:
TIDE Tours (www.tidetours.org)
tel 722-2129, email info@TIDEtours.org

Garbutts Marine (www.garbuttsfishinglodge.com)
tel 722-0070, email garbuttsmarine@yahoo.com

Tiburon Tours
tel 602-2483, email dancastellanosbz@gmail.com



Paynes Creek National Park and the ancient Maya

Paynes Creek National Park is home to the only known Classic Maya wooden structures – whilst wood and other organic materials don’t usually survive, the waterlogged environment at Paynes Creek created unique preservation conditions, giving a rare glimpse of how the ancient Maya used timber.

A three-year project, led by Louisiana State University Professor, Heather McKillop, will see the construction of an observational platform in Paynes Creek National Park. Visitors will be able to observe the underwater archaeological site through a window in the platform without any risk of damaging the remains.

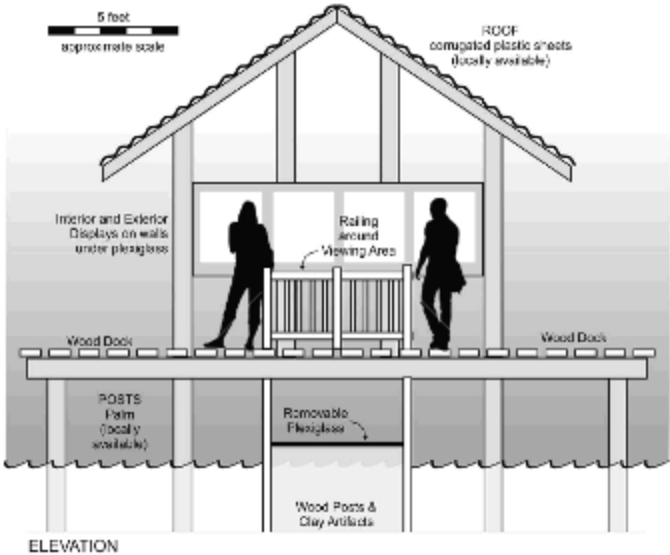
As part of the project two exhibits were opened – one at the Tourism Information Centre on Front

Street, which includes a Maya canoe paddle, and the second at the TIDE Ranger Station in Paynes Creek.


These exhibits, in conjunction with a series of workshops and talks, are designed to raise awareness of this unique Maya site, and will be expanded periodically. A website for archaeological tourism is also planned.

When and where?

Visit the exhibit at the Toledo Tourism Information Centre during opening hours, Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm, or visit Paynes Creek National Park through www.TIDEtours.org, email info@TIDEtours.org or call 722-2129



Sketch plan of the proposed Underwater Maya observation platform in Paynes Creek National Park

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