



The Toledo Howler

Newspaper of the Toledo Chapter of the Belize Tourism Industry Association

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FREE

Uxbenka Unfolding Mysteries

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Uxbenka lies about 22 miles west of Punta Gorda, deep in the Maya Mountains. The entrance to the site is just outside the village of Santa Cruz. There is now a small sign on the right hand side as you approach the village from the east.

The turnoff only goes a short distance before you must park next to a small hill. This is the Stelae Plaza (or A Group). A short clamber up the side of this hill, brings you out onto an ancient plaza, encircled by small ruined structures and a central, larger structure.

As the name implies, many stelae were found here and pieces lie scattered around the plaza floor. There is little left of the pictures and glyphs which faced these stelae, though teasingly, bits of detail can still be seen here and there. In 2009, there are plans to construct a staircase from the parking area up to the plaza for visitors.

The Howler staff caught up with Keith Prufer, director of the Uxbenka Archaeological Project, at the end of the 2008 digging season in June. When not at Uxbenka, Keith teaches in the Department of Anthropology at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. This was Keith's fourth year at the site. He works each season with a group consisting of colleagues and graduate students



Above: startling sharp lines appear amongst the rubble on top of B Group ridge. Below: a beautiful stone floor is uncovered on another hilltop, probably the home of a wealthy family.



from the U.S. plus a revolving group of local workers from nearby Santa Cruz village.

I asked Keith for a brief history of the site, given what they know so far.

He said the earliest remains found show there was an agricultural

community living here from at least 250 AD, with agricultural terracing on the hillsides appearing by 500AD. This makes the original site the oldest known in southern Belize!

Although the archaeologists do not know why terracing was used, they do know the Maya here were farming cacao intensively as a commercial crop.

Keith said they have found proof that stratification of this farming community developed between 250-500AD. By "stratification", he means that society became more structured and

diversified with differences of wealth becoming apparent from the remains found of domestic dwellings. Kingship would also have emerged during this period.

The 2008 digging season concentrated on what the project calls "B Group". This is a high, narrow ridge crowned with structures, plazas, ball courts and other fascinating details. The views from this ridge are magnificent. In good weather, you can apparently see into

the Peten in Guatemala and as far as the sea and Honduras to the southeast. These ancient Maya must have felt they were on top of the world. The landscape in every direction is filled with steep green hillocks and narrow, jungle filled gullies.

(continued on page 10)



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

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THE TOLEDO ECOTOURISM ASSOCIATION

One of the most unique cultural experiences available to the traveler (especially the budget conscious) in Toledo is a stay at one of the Toledo Ecotourism Association's ten guest houses in villages throughout the district. The guest house in Barranco village, on the coast a few miles south of Punta Gorda, is unique as it is the only guest house in a Garifuna village. All the other nine are in predominantly Kek'chi or Mopan Maya communities.

The TEA was formed in 1991 but began operating in 1994. In the early days there were just five villages involved. These were Barranco, San Pedro Columbia, San Antonio, the largest Mopan village in the country, San Jose in the west near the Guatemalan border and Laguna village on the edge of the Aguacaliente Wildlife Sanctuary.

Since that time new guest houses have opened in Medina Bank, San Miguel, Pueblo Viejo and Santa Elena.

The Howler spoke to Vicente Sackul the present chairperson of the association who lives in Laguna village. He explains that the association hosts several hundred visitors each year in the different villages. If the guest expresses no particular preference for a village then the association will rotate visitors between the guest houses.

Advanced bookings are not necessary and visitors arriving in Punta Gorda can go straight to the BTIA Information Center on Front Street where they can get directions and times of the buses to the villages.

Once the visitor arrives in the village they just ask for the TEA guest house and will soon be safely installed in their accommodation. The guest houses offer clean and simple accommodation in traditional wooden-sided thatched cottages and bathrooms which were recently upgraded through a



grant from the Inter-American Development Bank.

Once the guest have settled in a variety of activities are available. The women of the village offer tours of the village and lessons in basket making or weaving. The men will offer a guided jungle tour. The guest house at Santa Elena has the Rio Blanco National Park nearby, the one in Barranco offers

guests the opportunity to sample and enjoy Garifuna culture and in Blue Creek guests can enjoy a guided swim inside Hokeb Ha cave where the Rio Blanco emerges from the mountainside as Blue Creek. Laguna village is close to the lagoons of the Aguacaliente Wildlife Sanctuary. Harp playing, dancing and storytelling may form part of an evening's entertainment.

Meals are taken in different houses in the village so that a number of households may benefit from the TEA's activities.

This is a wonderful window into a traditional culture and the fact that the villagers are English speakers makes for a genuine shared cultural interaction between visitors and hosts. Don't miss it!

Prices

Pricing Per Person in US dollars

Accommodation \$11

Breakfast \$3.25

Dinner \$3.25

Lunch \$4.00

Tours \$3.50 per person per hour

How to Book

E-mail vinsackul@hotmail.com or teabe-lize@yahoo.com

Visit the BTIA information Center on Front Street.

Find out More

The TEA web site is hosted by the NGO Plenty International which also operates in Belize.

<http://www.plenty.org/mayan-ecotours/index.html>

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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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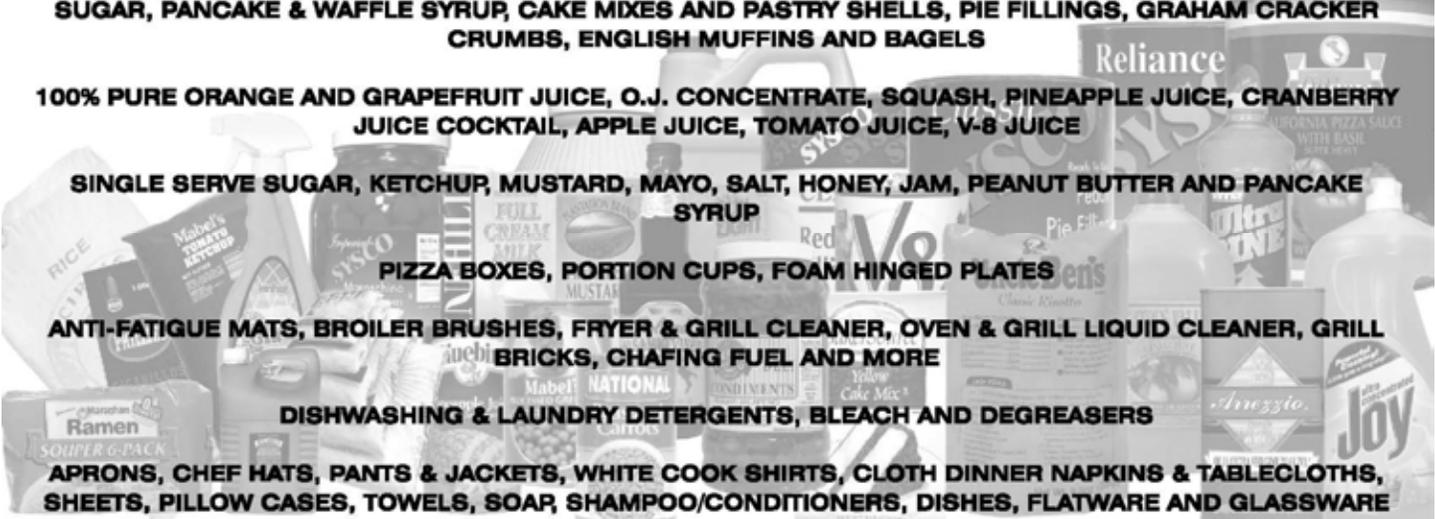
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SPOTLIGHT ON MEDICINAL PLANTS:

JACKASS BITTERS

Many modern medicines, such as aspirin, have been derived from naturally occurring compounds and the rainforests of the world, while they survive, remain a treasure trove of potential medicines on which our own survival could at some time depend.

In this issue we highlight Jackass Bitters (*Neurolaena lobata*) which grows abundantly on disturbed agricultural areas in the neo-tropics. The plant grows from 1-2m tall, has yellow flowers and tri-lobed leaves. Hence its Spanish name of Tres Puntas.

Jackass Bitters has been used as a treatment for many parasitic ailments such as malaria, ringworm, amoebas and intestinal parasites. It has also been used in the treatment of cancer and diabetes. A tea made from the bitters is used to wash hair infested with head lice and treat other skin ailments.

The leaves of the plant have high concentrations of neurolenins, one of the active ingredients said to give the plant such widespread healing powers. Neurolenins are also extremely bitter so drinking a tonic made from Jackass Bitters takes some courage.

Visitors who want to find out more about traditional medicine can visit BITI (The Belize Indigenous Training Institute) based near Golden Stream. Look out for more about BITI in the next edition.

The Toledo Howler and BTIA make no claims or recommendations regarding the use of plants normally employed by trained shamans and other practitioners of traditional medicine.



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San Antonio Deer Dance

The villagers of San Antonio and other surrounding communities maintained their own traditions with their annual performance of the Deer Dance which spanned a five-day period with its grand finale on Monday 25 August. This culminated in the raising of the greasy pole. In the picture (right) Mopan Maya women carrying censers burning copal lead a group of dancers to the football field at San Antonio where the performance took place.

The dance itself was preceded hours of ceremony in front of the statue of San Luis on whose feast day the dance is held. The tradi-

tions include the erection of a sixty foot ceiba trunk which may represent the walking stick or sword with which San Luis is traditionally depicted. The pole is raised by six teams hauling on ropes with others supporting and helping to raise the base. At the top of the pole a "flower" contains money and rum and other rewards which are available to the first team to successfully climb the pole which is thickly covered with lard, grease and soap and anything else to make scaling the pole extremely difficult. The contents are shared among the first team to reach the flower. See also picture on page 11



Florencio Mes: Preserving Mayan Music

Florencio Mes has been keeping the musical traditions of the Maya alive for the past fifty years or more. Now seventy years old, he was born in 1938 close to the village of Santa Cruz on the road to San Jose. Tragically his father died when he was one year old and his mother when he was four so Florencio was brought up by his brother Bartolo who is ten years older and even today Florencio refers to Bartolo as "my father brother". He had very little schooling and cannot read or write but has risen above these disadvantages to become a great ambassador for Mayan culture and music.

It was not until the age of sixteen that he began to practice and play Maya instruments and between then and the age of twenty-two he went and studied with Chalio Mes in Guatemala and with Jose Che a harp master from Cotton Creek. In Guatemala he learned more of the legends behind the music. None of the music Florencio plays with other musicians from San Miguel and San Pedro Columbia has lyrics but there is always a story behind each piece.

Florencio Mes and his Kek'chi Maya Strings have been recorded by Stone-tree Records and have performed around the world at music festivals. In 1992 he played in the Metropolitan Cathedral in Mexico City along with musicians from eighty-six other nations and the year 2000 found him and his group in Venice, Italy which he

remembers as "twice more hot than Belize because there are no more tall trees". Florencio's most recent overseas adventure was when he attended the Rainforest World Music Festival in Sarawak, Malaysia in July 2005. This event brought together musicians



from every continent to share their music, with representatives from Australia to Algeria and Peru to Pakistan.

Fernando Ash of San Pedro Columbia taught Florencio how to make Mayan harps, violins and guitars and he often has some works in progress to show visitors to his home, near Queso Creek (on the right hand side if you are traveling from San Miguel to San Pedro Columbia village). All the instruments are made from tropical cedar (cedrela mexicana) which is strong, light and

has good acoustic properties. He now uses nylon strings which have advantage of being durable but do not have the same sound quality as the cow gut and cohune fibers which were traditionally used.

Florencio enjoys receiving guests at his home and during a visit of an hour or more will play his harp for guests, demonstrate his instrument making techniques and give them a tour of his kitchen garden where they can touch, taste and smell a variety of plants and fruit which are grown either for food or medicine. It is a fascinating experience giving a glimpse into a vanishing world. A world whose disappearance is still being hastened by the interference of outsiders. Florencio is aware of the need to keep his cultural traditions alive. He lost some promising pupils when their parents were converted by missionaries who preached that the music was evil and he now has no students to pass on his skills and learning.

So if you want to learn to play the Mayan harp then Mr Mes would be a willing and able teacher and if you want to buy a Mayan instrument then he is the man to see. If you want to hire Mayan musicians for a special event then Florencio Mes is the man to talk to. And if you just want to meet and talk and find out a little about the world of the Kek'chi Maya you can hardly do better than call by and introduce yourself. You cannot make an appointment but if he is there visitors will be made welcome. His house is on the road between San Miguel and San Pedro Columbia villages. Ask a local for directions.

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 as well as other shops, restaurants and places of business of BTIA members in Toledo (see list on Page 7). 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.

BTIA TOLEDO MEMBERS 2008

Business Name	Email	Phone	Contact Person
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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
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Tranquility Lodge	mspenny@yahoo.com		Penny Leonard
Tumul Kin Center of Learning	Tumulkin_tourism@yahoo.com	608-1070	Rosemary Salam

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/ Seafood	722-2317	Daily: 8am - 10:30pm
Gomier's Restaurant and Soy Centre	Alejandro Vernon St, near PG welcome sign	Vegetarian / Seafood	722-2929	Tues-Sat: 8 am-2pm & 6 -9 pm
Grace's Restaurant	Main St. PG	Belizean/ International	702-2414	Daily: 8am - 1pm
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/ Belizean	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	1100am
Marisol	4:00pm	5:00pm	1:00pm	3:00pm

Boats to Livingston depart on Tuesdays and Fridays at 10 a.m.

Did you know how Mafredi got its name?

According to Bismarck Ranguy Sr, " in the early 1900s, they were cutting mahogany along the banks of a nearby river. The tractor driver got sick and died on the banks of the river where they were camping. His name was Mafre. That is why they call the place Mafredi."

See "Tales from A Forgotten Place" reviewed on page 9.



Using Tour Guides

Always use licensed tour guides. Licensing of guides is intended to protect the visitor.

Before hiring a guide, ask to see his or her license and check that it is valid. Why use only licensed tour guides? Here's a few reasons:

Licensed tour guides have had up to date first aid and safety training and will know what to do in the case of an emergency. They have also undergone a training program designed by the Belize Tourism Board which develops their guiding skills and trains them in the history, geography and cultures of Belize. A tour with a licensed guide will greatly enrich your experience. Some guides will have knowledge in particular areas like birding, medicinal plants, archaeology or marine life. Ask about these areas of expertise before you choose a guide.

We can take you there



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BTIA welcomes Shieba Chun as our new Tourism Information Officer. Shieba is 21 years old and hails from the village of Crique Jute on the road to San Jose. She says she comes from a "small" family since she has "only" seven brothers and sisters.

Graduating in business studies from Julian Cho Technical High School in 2004, Shieba went on to work at Mel's Mart and then did an internship at the Teacher's Credit Union in Punta Gorda. Shieba says she enjoys "meeting new people and telling them what we have to offer in Toledo". Many of them pass by the office a second time on their departure from Belize and Shieba receives a great deal of positive feedback from visitors about their time spent here. She also receives a few moans about the high prices here compared with our Central American neighbors.

We hope she will stick around to promote the attractions of Toledo for some time to come.

Doyle's Delight

There are only two places in Belize with an elevation over 1000 metres, Victoria Peak and Doyle's Delight. Victoria Peak can be seen from the coast in clear weather and is, as its name implies, a peak.

Doyle's Delight, on the other hand, is more of a high, rounded area without a dramatic peak and with relatively deep topsoil. And at 1124m, it beat Victoria Peak by 4 metres!

Doyle's Delight was named for its resemblance to the prehistoric setting of Arthur Conan Doyle's novel "The Lost World."

Towering palms and strangler figs, their trunks wrapped in a green shag of ferns and mosses, rise and converge in a leafy canopy that keeps the moist forest floor in perpetual dusk.

The ridge is so remote that the British Army's jungle training unit, scientists and other researchers will often drop their members in by helicopter.

In June this year, a keen group of local and Guatemalan tour guides, organized a 6 day expedition to Doyle's Delight from San Jose village.

Their aim was to re-discover the existing trail system, clean up the camps along the way for future use and generally increase knowledge of the area.



The group discovered many unexplored caves

As Bruno Kuppinger, one of the participants, says, "For some of us, it was the hardest six days of our lives!"

"There was no beer, no nothing, except what we carried on our backs. This was another world – a green, dripping, dark tapestry where rivers disappear underground, howler monkeys roar from the treetops, thousand-year-old Mayan temples await discovery – and ticks, chig-

gers and flesh-boring flies buzz and bite."

The southern Maya Mountains are largely unexplored, and for good reason. The limestone topography is extremely rugged; overland travel requires carrying heavy packs over rough terrain with no established trails; daytime temperatures often reach 100 degrees, with humidity to match.

This may be why the southern Maya Mountains are thought to have some of the greatest diversity of flora and fauna in the world.

The group reached the top on June 24th and managed to find the marker which has been covered over with

bush and soil.

For more information about one of the world's most punishing jungle adventures, contact: Bruno Kuppinger, J.P., Sun Creek Lodge & Tours, 12 Miles San Antonio Road, Toledo, +501-614-2080 or +501-668-8811, via e-mail:

suncreek@hughes.net or ibt@gmx.net

PHOTO OP: THE 4 FACES OF OUR CLOCK TOWER



The well known clock tower in the center of Punta Gorda has had a remarkable facelift. After years of being a rather shabby landmark, the clock tower is now a work of art!

The original idea came from Larry Smith, owner of the Seafront Inn, who was also involved in the creation of the Welcome To Punta Gorda sign.

If the artwork reminds you of the Welcome to Punta Gorda sign, that is because both designs sprang from the fertile imagination of Dale Langfoss, retired American architect and painter. Dale and his assistant, local artist Nicomedes Gomez (better known as Bigga), spent six weeks sitting on scaffolding in the hot sun to finish the sides before the Cacao Fest in mid May.

Funding for the project came jointly from donations raised by the Toledo Cacao Festival committee and the Punta Gorda Town Council.

The Howler staff gives a resounding thumbs up for this uniquely beautiful landmark.

Now if only we could get the clock working so it is correct more than twice a day....



Book Review

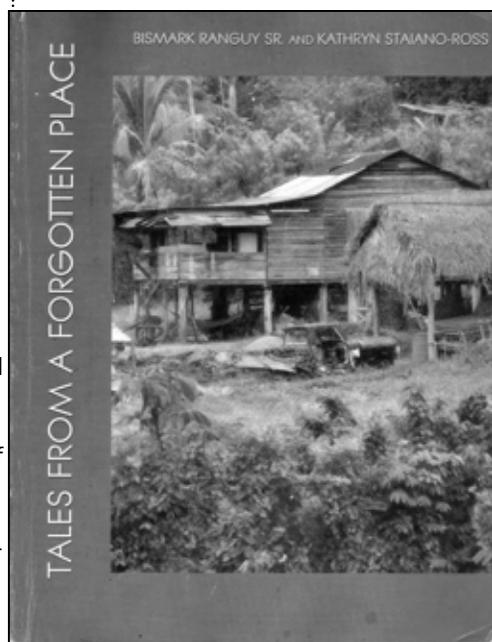
"Tales from a Forgotten Place" by Bismarck Ranguy Sr. and Katharine Staiano-Ross ISBN 0-938332-23-6 *University of Kansas Publications in Anthropology #23, 2003*

Some readers may be familiar with the self-published version of Bismarck Ranguy's memoirs of his life and times in Toledo from his birth in 1920. Katharine Ross an anthropologist at the University of Kansas has taken it a step further by retaining the memoir and wrapping around it her own history of the East Indian community in Toledo from their arrival in the latter half of the nineteenth century to the present. She draws on a variety of secondary published sources as well as local records and family letters and brings it all together in what amounts to the first substantial history of the East Indian community in Toledo.

Bismarck Ranguy brings it all to life and local residents will enjoy reading about families and people who are still around and of the struggles that the East Indians and American settlers underwent to develop Toledo and the realization of how little has really changed.

Ranguy's memoirs are full of tales of traveling magicians and charlatans, law and disorder, the folk superstitions of the East Indians and of the life and loves of himself and the other colorful characters and cast that fill these pages. He tells of how on pay day hawkers, vendors and prostitutes would gather at the gates of the Seven Hills Estate where the estate itself would be selling its own rum so that by the end of a riotous evening many workers would have been relieved of much of what they had earned. It is fun and fascinating and Ms Ross' work ensures that the

East Indians of Toledo will no longer be just a footnote in the history books. Available from the University of Kansas.



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Uxbenka *(continued from page 1)*

Almost every hill you can see has remains of Mayan settlements on top. An ancient trade route came from Guatemala through a pass in the nearby mountains on its way to the sea and big cities like Tikal. The inhabitants of Uxbenka were well placed to take advantage of these trade links with the outside world. Keith estimates the settled area in 700AD as 100 square kilometers with maybe 15,000 inhabitants.

Keith says there is ample evidence of things falling apart quickly after 800AD and by 900AD it was gone. The reasons for this rapid decline are not known for certain though the phenomenon is common to most of the lowland Mayan sites. Keith says the project has obtained new grant funding to study the impact of climate change on the inhabitants. The numerous human bones that have been found will allow them also to study diet, disease and general health of the Maya, searching for clues to their sudden decline.

One of the most fascinating structures on the B Group ridge, is a pyramid shaped building with what appear to be beautifully angled, buttress columns along the front with deeply indented niches between them. How dazzling this building must have looked when brand new and covered with smooth plaster and paint, as it surely would have been. There are plans to excavate this structure next year.

Another structure has a clear cut, though ruined, staircase rising up the front of it. Even though it appears that every stone on this staircase has moved from its original position, you eye can easily see what it should look like. Next season, the project group hope to reconstruct the staircase to its former glory.

I asked Keith to name his favorite discovery at the site this year. Without pause, he said it would



View from the top: you can see where the Rio Blanco disappears into the ground; Blue Creek Cave is on the far side.

have to be the incensario (incense burner) they found under one structure on B Group. This is about 10" high and depicts a man sitting cross-legged on a throne. The unbroken piece would have been several feet high and used to burn copal incense for special ceremonies. Although no king's names have been found at Uxbenka, this may have been one of them!

The team's best known find to date was made in 2006, inside a cave 90 feet up a cliff face near Uxbenka. Here they found a tomb with part of an ancient wooden dory on top. Although looters had been there, the dory was a very exciting find – the first dory ever found from the ancient Maya world! The dory has been carbon dated to about 800AD.

Keith and his crew will be back in March 2009 for another exciting season of discovery at Uxbenka.

Getting there: If you don't have your own ride, there are buses from PG which will drop you in Santa Cruz village. Check schedule for times. On arrival, find the home of Raymundo Sho, who is on the village committee looking after the site. He will welcome you, ask for a BZ\$5 donation for each tourist and, if available, will be happy to act as site guide. The donations are used to help offset the cost of maintaining access trails at the site. Raymundo and several other villagers have not only worked at the site with the archaeologists but have trained as site guides and are very keen to show visitors around. To ensure that Raymundo will be available to guide you, call the village phone before you go and leave a message for Raymundo letting him know when you plan to arrive. Phone: 609-0592



What lies beneath? This jungle-covered hilltop will be explored in 2009 when the project resumes.



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The Fajina Craft Center

Located on Front Street in front of the immigration office, painted with traditional Mayan symbols, Fajina Craft Center is a crafts collective of women's groups from 10 different villages around the Toledo District.

The word "Fajina" used by Mopan /Kekchi Maya people means to come together in one place to work for the good of the community. The Craft Center is run by the chairladies of each women's group. They work together to improve the production, marketing and sales of their traditional crafts and local foods for the purpose of income generation; working towards sustainable livelihoods.

The Fajina Craft Center was opened in October 1995 by the Chairladies' Fajina Association which was started to address the economic problems of poor rural women living in the Mayan villages of the Toledo District. The FCC provided them with a retail outlet for their craft work and allowed

easy access to the tourist market. Sales increased significantly compared with the time when the women were dependent on individual sales to the small number of random tour-



ists who visited the villages. The original facilitators were Leeann Iwamoto and Karly Nelson (both Peace Corps volunteers), Billie Johnson, and Yvonne Villoria. After 6 months of meetings, chairladies, representing about twenty groups of village women, registered their business as the Fajina Craft Center of Belize. The Craft Center has continued its uninterrupted operation as a retail outlet

for Toledo District handcrafts over the years, run entirely by the Chairladies, with the assistance of additional voluntary help. Currently, Peace Corps volunteer, Cheryl Frances and JICA (Japanese International Co-operation Agency) volunteer, Noriko Shimizu, are working to support the ladies in achieving their goals, with business and marketing assistance, as well as creative product development.

The Craft Center is open during market hours, 8:00-11:00 Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. The Center sells a variety of Jipi Japa products such as baskets, earrings, bracelets, and coasters, slate/calabash carvings, embroideries, cuxtal bags, Maya dolls, local coffee and cacao, a traditional Maya food cookbook, and many other traditional items. The Fajina members are always seeking to improve and control the production of items in order to ensure they only sell high quality crafts and also as a way of introducing the Maya culture to the tourists and local people of Belize.

E-mail fajina.craft.center@gmail.com



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Wat's Cookin ?

Peanut Butter Cookies

Ingredients

2/3 cup peanut butter, smooth or crunchy
 1 cup butter at room temperature
 1 cup sugar
 1 cup dark brown sugar
 1/2 cup molasses
 2 eggs
 2 teaspoons vanilla
 3 1/2 cups white flour
 2 teaspoons baking soda
 1 teaspoon salt
 2 bags Hershey Kisses (optional)

What to Do

Blend the flour, salt and baking soda in a bowl. In a separate bowl, cream together the butter, peanut butter, sugars, corn syrup, eggs and vanilla. Gradually stir in the flour mixture until it is all incorporated.

Use a spoon to drop the batter in spoon sized drops on an ungreased cookie sheet and bake in a preheated oven at 375 degree for 10-13 minutes.

Optional Hershey Kisses method: Form the dough into small spoon sized balls and roll them in some extra white sugar. Bake them in a 375 degree oven for 8 minutes, remove them, and push one Hershey Kiss into the middle of each forming cookie. Then bake for 5 minutes more, checking often to see that they are not too done. These are great with coffee or tea.

Recipe donated by: Shieba Chun, Tourism Information Officer.

Crocodile Sanctuary to Open in September

ACES (The American Crocodile Educational Sanctuary) along Waterhole Road in Forest Home announced that it has received permission to allow visitors to view rescued crocodiles for educational purposes in order to provide self-sustainable research and aid for other crocodilians in need of rescue. The sanctuary opens in September.

ACES presently houses three large American Crocodiles in a half acre secure natural habitat, two medium sized Morelet's crocodiles and a small American crocodile in individual rehabilitation pens, and a wild, approximately ten foot, American saltwater crocodile that is seen daily. ACES's hours reflect times crocodile viewings are most probable.

Bush trails are currently being cleared for adventurers who like to explore off the beaten path.

Visitors are advised that ACES is a "green" facility running entirely on solar and has no amenities.

The entrance fee is a hefty BZ\$40 per person which should keep the crowds away.

Opening Times: Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 9-11am and 3-5pm.

Guides: Only guides who have received additional training by ACES can escort groups. The guides presently being trained are Fidel Sho, Isidoro Sho, Rosalio Sho and Terrence Woodye.

For more information contact Cherie and Vince Rose at acesnpo@hughes.net.

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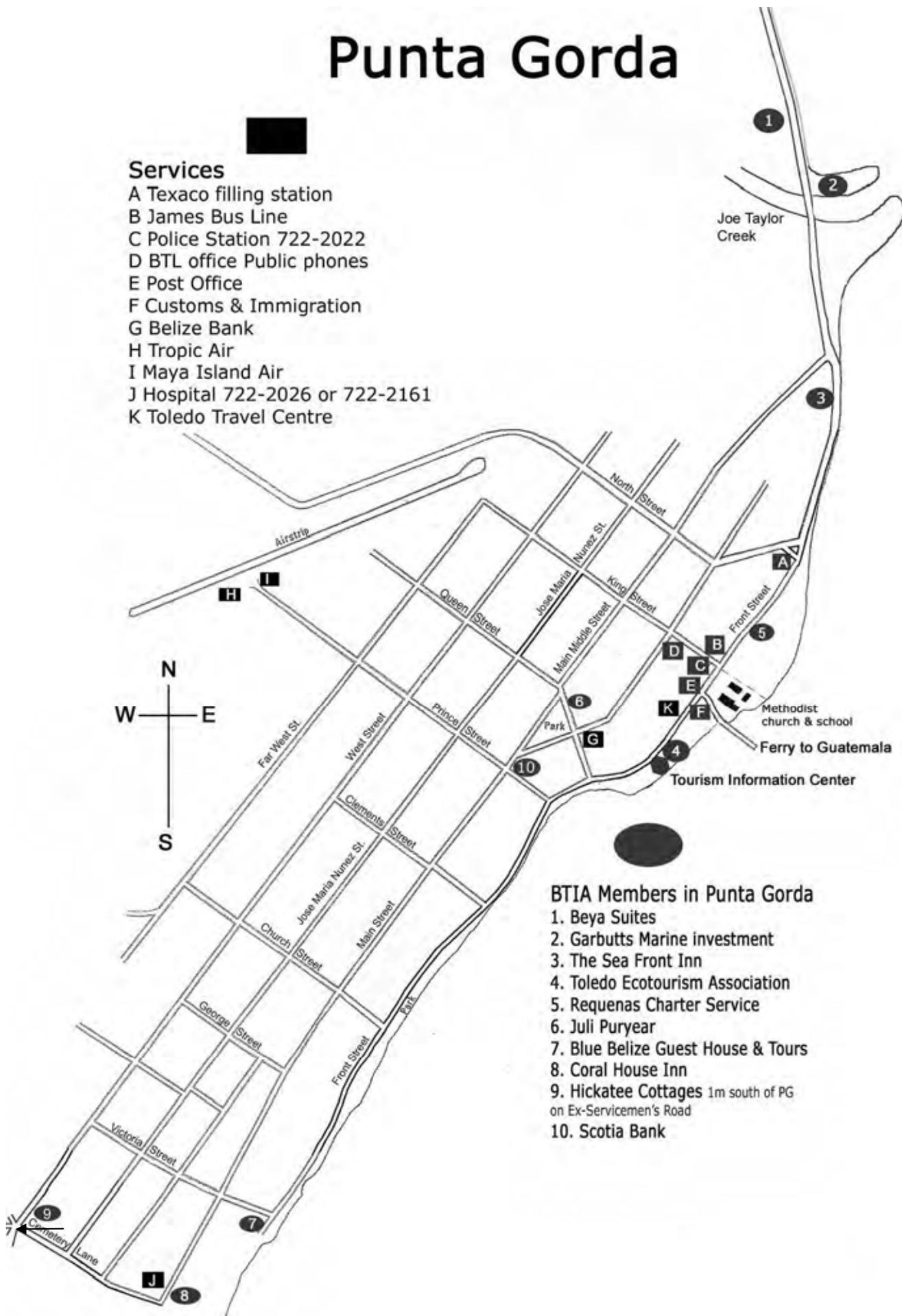
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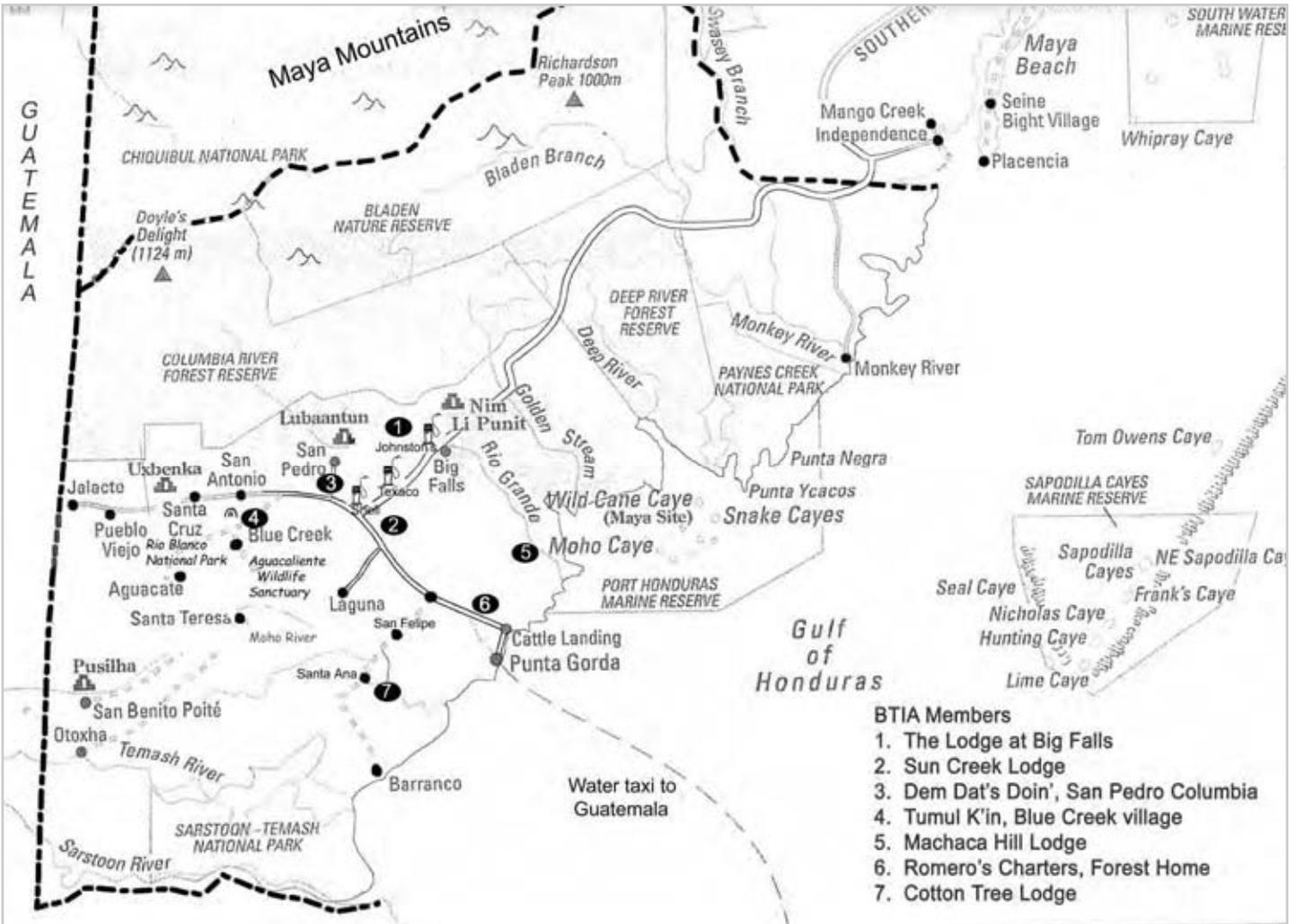
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BTIA meets monthly on Wednesdays at the Tourism Information Center on Front Street. Be a part of BTIA and make a practical contribution to the economic development of Toledo District.

TOLEDO DISTRICT



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

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The ladies of San Antonio anoint the pole with copal incense while the men dig the post hole (see article on page 5)

Aguacaliente Wildlife Sanctuary announces the launch of their web site at <http://aguacaliente.bz> See the site for everything you need to know about visiting the sanctuary, one of the jewels of Toledo.

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