

The Toledo Howler

Newspaper of the Toledo Chapter of the Belize Tourism Industry Association

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FREE

Belize Media Visit Toledo

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Toledo welcomed visitors from the Belize media on the weekend of July 18 and 19. The trip was organized by the Belize Tourism Board and included TV reporters from Channels 5 & 7 and radio presenters from Love FM, Wave Radio and Krem Radio. There were also print journalists from national papers The Guardian and Amandala and The Placencia Breeze, San Pedro Sun and Ambergris Today represented the regional press.

The group sampled both reef and rainforest. Bruno Kupinger organized the inland sector. They visited Blue Creek Cave, Lubaantun Mayan site and a Cacao trail tour in San Pedro Columbia. Dennis Garbutt, current chair of Toledo BTIA took everyone to West Snake Caye on Sunday morning.

The group was escorted by Lorraine Herrera, Product Development

Officer at the BTB and her colleague Kenisha Stephen. Lorraine said that although she has traveled widely in Belize through her work with BTB she felt that Toledo is somehow special. She was amazed by the color of the waters at West Snake Caye and found the cacao trail visit very educational. Back home in Belize city she was trying to persuade her neighbour who had plans to travel to Miami that she should think about coming down here where many properties such as the Lodge at Big Falls offer 50% discounts on published rates for Belizeans, making a visit down here affordable for many.

At West Snake Caye Dennis Garbutt, chair of the Toledo BTIA Chapter commented on Toledo's advantages. "It's unique, you can do all these activities here in the marine area and then there are the foothills of the

Mayan mountains so you go up the river, we doing some lovely river tours where you can see the monkeys, the crocodile on the river side and also kayaking down the river and this is one of the places that you can actually be at a Mayan temple in the next half hour or hour. And so it is a unique spot in Belize."

Dorian Nunez of "Ambergris Today" was visiting Toledo for the first time. He says it surpassed his expectations and he was amazed at the beauty of the area with the highlight of the trip being swimming in Blue Creek Cave.

The group was accommodated at The Lodge at Big Falls and Sun Creek Lodge. Dinners were hosted by Coleman's Café in Big Falls and Marian's Bay View Restaurant in Punta Gorda.



New artifact: this elegant figurine head has a bizarre hair style never seen before. Her hairdresser could make a fortune today.

Digging Deeper

A new dig began this year at the Lubaantun Mayan site led by Geoffrey Braswell of the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, San Diego.

Full story on page 4



New BTL Services

"Allo, Allo!" Inland Toledo moves into the modern age with new telecommunications services. See page 2 for full story.

New Features in this Issue

Birding Hotspots: Lee Jones on where to go birding in Toledo on page

Toledo Voices: A series of interviews with Toledo residents. This issue the Howler speaks to Senator Pulcheria Teul.



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

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

Join BTIA and make a difference.

Contact Toledo BTIA at the Tourism Information Center, Front St., Punta Gorda Tel. 722-2531 E-mail btiatoledo@bti.net
Chair: Dennis Garbutt, **Secretary:** Karel Kuran, **Treasurer:** Dona Scafe

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TIDE WEEKEND



Climate Change Art Show

Friday, 9th October 2009 7:00pm

3rd Annual

Miss Conservation Competition The Theme is "Climate Change"

Saturday, 10th October 2009 7:00pm

7th Annual

TIDE Fish Fest

Sunday, 11th October 2009 Starting at 10:00am

Main activities/Competitions include:

Fishing - Paddling Dory & Outboard Engine

Kayaking - on the Rio Grande River

Cast Net Throwing, Coconut Husking, Punta Contest, Tug o War, Greasy Pole and Children's Activities

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call 501 722-2431 / 2274

E-mail: awilliams@tidebelize.org

rdawson@tidebelize.org



Fish Fest Special

Snorkeling Trip to Snake Cayes

Saturday 10th October 2009

BZ\$ 75.00 per person



Come and cool off in the beautiful waters surrounding the Snake Cayes in Port Honduras Marine Reserve. Departing at 9am from Joe Taylor Creek, a 40-minute boat ride will take you

to the beautiful island of West Snake Caye.

Rio Blanco + Blue Creek Cave

Monday 12th October 2009

BZ\$ 85.00 per person



Join us for a fun-packed day trip to the beautiful Rio Blanco waterfalls and Blue Creek Cave, formed around 200 million years ago.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

41 Front Street, Punta Gorda, Belize

Tel: 501 722-2129 E-mail:

info@tidetours.org Web: www.tidetours.org

New BTL Tower on Lindo Hill

Driving along the highway between Big Falls and the Dump area, you can't miss BTL's new 300 foot tower on Lindo Hill which has been under construction for the last few months.

BTL has told The Howler this new telecommunications tower will allow all their wireless services for residents within a ten mile radius. These services will include 'home' fixed cell lines, digicell mobile phones and wireless internet.

Wireless services have been promised to inland Toledo for many years so this is very good news. Given the hilly terrain of the district, it is difficult to predict exactly how many households will be able to receive the signal. However, villages which should have no trouble accessing these services include Big Falls, Hicatee, San Miguel, Silver Creek, San Pedro Columbia, Dump, San Marcos, Mafredi, Indian Creek and parts of San Antonio. Communities from the Dump area to Punta Gorda, which lie between the new tower and the one in PG, should also be able to receive the signal. BTL says their new wireless services will be available by the end of September 2009 and they will begin advertising for new subscribers soon.

Reliable telecommunications are an integral part of development and these services will give many more Belizeans the opportunity to participate in the wider economy. Tour operators visiting the area with guests will also be able to keep in touch with their home base.



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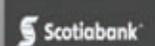
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belize.scotiabank.com/smallbusiness

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Small Business Banking



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Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Venue / Time	Other Info
24th–26th Aug.	Deer Dance San Antonio Village	San Antonio Church. In the yard between the primary school and church / Starts 9am	
9th Oct	TIDE WEEKEND Climate Change Art Show	Parish Hall, PG / 7pm	
10th Oct	Miss Conservation Competition Theme: 'Climate Change'	Parish Hall, PG / 7pm	Entrance fee
11th Oct	TIDE Fish Fest	TIDE Pier, Hopeville / starts 10am	Activities & Games (see ad page 2)
14th Nov	TOLTEX A celebration of Toledo's cultural and economic diversity	Central Park, PG /	
14th Nov	Battle of the Drums	Sports Complex, PG / 7pm	General Admission: \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door
15th Nov	Paranda Top Ten on Love FM: -includes live performances from local paranderos, interviews & phone-ins	Live from Beya Suites/ starting 1pm	

The Paranda Top Ten is a live broadcast on the national radio station, Love FM. The broadcast will take place from Beya Suites and will highlight the music of paranderos in Belize and across the Garifuna Diaspora. There will also be live entertainment from local paranderos including Paul Nabor. The Broadcast will commence at 1:00 pm on Sunday, November 15, 2009. The broadcast attracts people from across Punta Gorda Town and also, via the internet, paranda lovers from all parts of the world. During the broadcast, people interviewed are normally showered with international calls as people from abroad call in to say that they are tuned in and enjoying the show.

The Battle of the Drums Competition and Show is a drumming competition and show that allows groups to compete and display their musical artistry in playing five (5) different categories of Garifuna drumming. The first event was held in Punta Gorda Town on November 17, 2006 and was well received by spectators from home and abroad. In 2008 the event evolved into an international drumming competition and show involving nine drumming groups from various parts of Belize as well as from neighbouring Guatemala and Honduras. This competition and show has the potential to become a major tourist attraction and a catalyst for significant economic activity in the Punta Gorda Area during the period when it is hosted.

TOLTEX is a celebration of the richness and diversity of tourism in Toledo which:

- ✦ Builds pride and confidence in our heritage
- ✦ Generates economic benefits for our people
- ✦ Minimizes negative effects of tourism on the environment

Featuring

- ✦ Stalls exhibiting tourism products
- ✦ local crafts
- ✦ local musicians and
- ✦ local food from our diverse ethnic communities
- ✦ competitions and prizes



For all your real estate needs contact

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Email: amonsanto@century21belize.com or
mosantony@yahoo.com



New Archaeological Dig Begins at Lubaantun

This June saw the start of a new excavation at Lubaantun archaeological site near San Pedro Columbia village (see *Toledo map on back page*).

The project is led by Geoffrey Braswell, professor of anthropology at the University of California, San Diego. Geoff has worked in Toledo since 2001, particularly at the Pusilha Mayan site. Working with Geoff on this project is Megan Pitcavage, a graduate student at UCSD. Megan has also worked at Pusilha since 2007.

The new project is called the Toledo Regional Interaction Project, or TRIPS, and is being initially funded by seed grants from The National Geographic and UCSD Faculty Senate. It is hoped the project will last for 5 years, with work continuing at Lubaantun and starting in 2010 at Nim Li Punit as well.

The aim of TRIPS is to find out more about how the various Toledo Mayan sites interacted with each other. According to Geoff, the questions they want to answer include "... were Lubaantun, Nim Li Punit, Pusilha and Uxbenka part of the same political unit or were they separate petty states? Did they share in a single unified economy or were they essentially independent? Were they settled by ethnically similar Maya peoples, or—like today—was ancient Toledo a cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic place?"

Together with eleven local men from Columbia village, the team began work on two linked structures at the western edge of Plaza VII (known as the Butterfly Plaza).

Geoff says these stone structures supported a domestic dwelling made from perishable materials. This is the first time a domestic household has been excavated at Lubaantun, rather than a temple, ball court or specialized structure. They know the structures were domestic because of the types of materials found: serving vessels, food and water storage containers and lots of "pur" shells—the common river snails

which are still eaten today. There were no incense burners or other specialized religious pottery.

The residents would have been elite members of the community, based on the dwelling's location in the centre of the city. Their status is also reflected in the sheer quantity of stone work which would have represented a considerable investment.



The TRIPS team at Lubaantun in June.

The team is gathering information to help answer their questions through the recovery of artifacts including pottery, tools, human bones and the architecture itself. They will also be studying hieroglyphic monuments, mainly from Pusilha and Nim Li Punit.

Pottery styles and designs indi-



The two stone structures which once supported an elite domestic residents. The remains of a looter's trench can be seen in the center

cate the extent to which different cities interacted with each other. Also important is the way pottery was used at different sites, including the types of foods stored in the pots. Diet is a good indicator of whether there was shared ethnicity between the cities. For example, the inhabitants of Pusilha mostly ate tortillas whereas the inhabitants of Lubaantun proba-

bly ate most of their maize in the form of tamales, atole or beer.

The study of hieroglyphic texts also indicate connections between cities, since the ancient Maya mainly recorded political events such as royal marriages, battles and ambassadorial visits between cities.

Although Lubaantun has revealed almost no texts, about 60 carved monuments have been found at other local sites. Interestingly, and despite their physical closeness, none of these texts has so far made any mention of their neighbors in the area. Geoff says this could indicate total independence or simply mean they were so closely tied that they didn't feel the need to mention each other. Geoff and his team hope to solve this mystery during the TRIPS project.

The domestic dwelling excavated this year has been dated to around 800 AD and was lived in for 100-150 years. Most of the information gleaned from the dwelling came from a very large trash dump beneath the structure. Lubaantun is famous for its figurines and the TRIPS team found many in the trash under the structure. However none were found on top or around the house platform which could mean they were from an earlier era.

Next year, the team plan to extend their excavation to the main plaza at Lubaantun. Some of the oldest structures in the site are here, though deeply buried beneath the present ground level. They hope to get a better idea of when Lubaantun was first inhabited. The current theory says the site was founded in the 8th century, which is oddly late for a Maya city. It may be that a much earlier foundation will be discovered. The team will also start excavating at Nim Li Punit. Geoff and Megan believe Nim Li Punit is likely to be the major site of Toledo with the greatest number of secrets to reveal. We wish the team happy digging and promise to keep our readers updated on this exciting project.

Restaurant Guide

Name	Address	Cuisine	Phone	Opening Hours
Coleman's Cafe	Big Falls Village, near the rice mill	Belizean	720-2017	Daily: 11:30- 4pm & 6- 9pm [Reservations Preferred]
Earth Runnins' Café and Bukut Bar	Main Middle Street, PG	Belizean/ International	702-2007 600-9026	Wed-Sun: 7am-2pm & 5-11pm
Gomier's Restaurant and Soy Centre	Alejandro Vernon St, near PG welcome sign	Vegetarian / Seafood	722-2929	Mon-Sat: 8am-2pm & 6-9pm. Closed Sundays
Grace's Restaurant	Main St. PG	Belizean/ International	702-2414	Daily: 6am-10pm, including holidays
Hang Cheong Restaurant	Main St, PG	Chinese	722-2064	Daily: 10am-2pm & 5pm-midnight
The Lodge at Big Falls	Big Falls Village, near the rice mill	International/ Belizean/ Middle Eastern	671-7172 614-2888	Daily: 11:30am - 2pm & 6:30 - 9pm [Reservations Required]
Mangrove Restaurant	Cattle Landing, by the curve	Belizean / International	722-2270	Daily: 5pm-10pm. [Reservations preferred]
Marenco's Restaurant & Ice Cream Parlor	57 Main St, PG	Belizean/Seafood/ Ice Cream/ Snacks & pastries	702-2572	Mon-Sat: 9am-2pm & 5-10pm. Sundays: 5-10pm
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
Martina's Kitchen	BTL parking lot, PG	Belizean	623-3330	Mon-Sat: 7am-3pm. Closed on Sundays
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
Rainforest Cafe	Big Falls Village, just south of the bridge	Belizean	669-0080	Daily: 10am-10pm
Reef Bar & Restaurant	Front St, upstairs by the market	International/ Belizean	625-8652	Daily: 10am-2pm & 4pm-midnight. Closed on Tuesdays
Sho's Local Restaurant & Grocery Shop	Entrance to Blue Creek Village	Belizean/ Catering	603-3081 668-0119	Mon-Sat: 7am-8pm. Closed Sundays. Group reservations required
The Snack Shack	BTL parking lot, PG	Breakfast & lunch/ Snacks, shakes, juices & pasties	702-0020	Mon-Sat: 7am - 4pm. Closed Sundays
Waluco's	Opposite TIDE pier in Hopeville	Belizean/East Indian/Seafood/ Catering	670-3672	Mon-Thurs: 7am-2pm & 5-10pm. Weekends: 7am-late

All restaurants in Toledo district are welcome to appear in the Restaurant Guide. There is a BZ\$5 charge for each listing or BZ\$15 for advance payment for one year (4 listings). Please contact the BTIA Tourist Information Center in PG for more information. Phone: 722-2531

Craft Focus: Micaela Wewe, Much Nalil Women's Group



Micaela Wewe (left) displays pottery and basket work and models traditionally woven Mopan Maya blouses

Micaela Wewe of San Antonio village was a founder of what must be one of the earliest women's co-operative craft groups in Toledo. It was established twenty years ago under the auspices of the Belize Rural Women's Association which operated in those days from Belmopan.

Micaela originally joined up with three other women who produced clay bowls, pots, earrings, bracelets, beads and whistles. They then diversified into production of jippi jappa baskets and embroidery.

Ten years ago the group became the

years. Like so many people attempting similar enterprises the group has been held back by their remoteness and the lack of telecommunications in the rural areas. Nowadays the group will make crafts to order and Mrs Wewe can be contacted through her daughter Luisa.

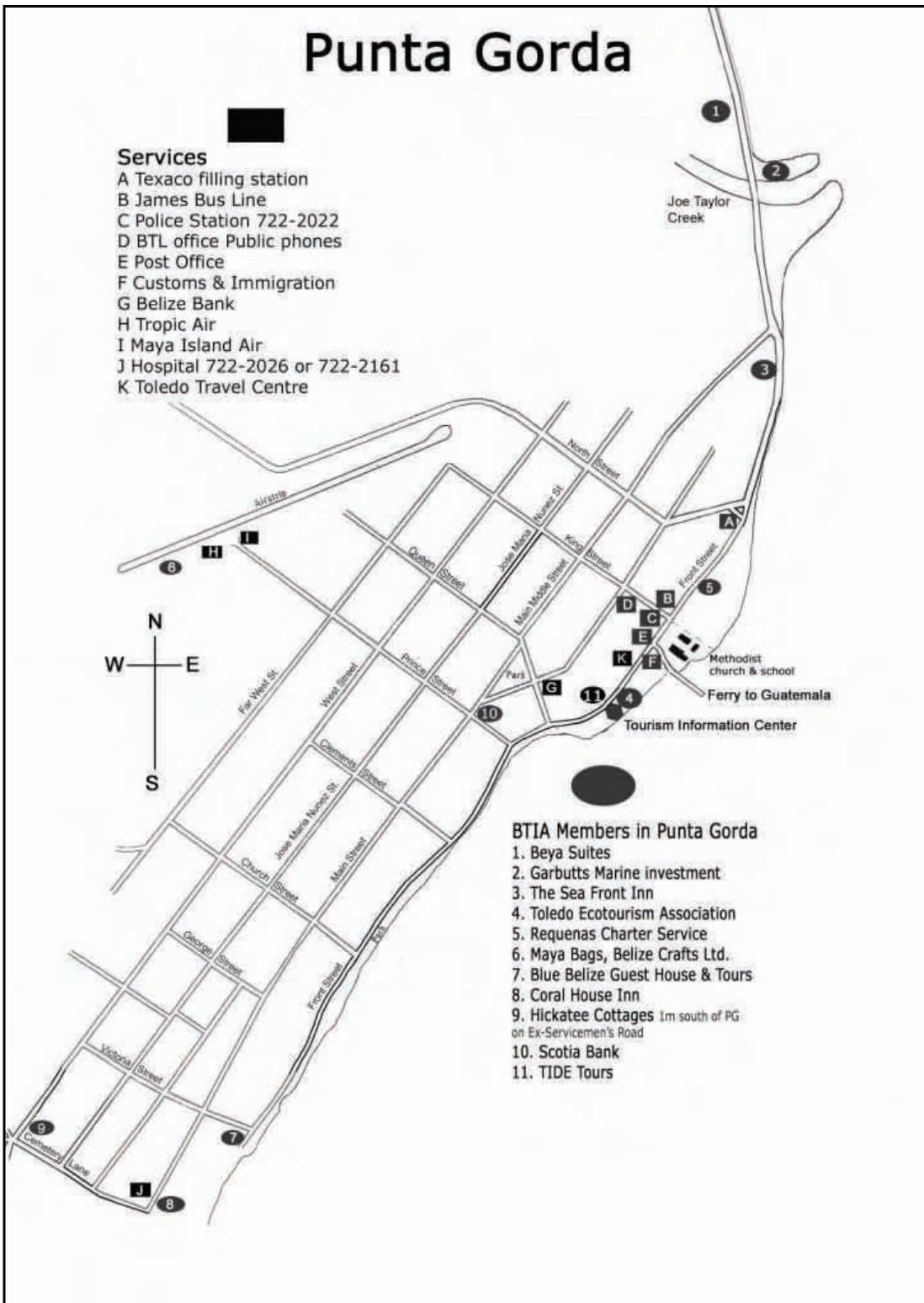
The clay pottery making process is long and labor intensive. Once the clay has been dug it is wetted and pushed through a sieve and then combined with lime produced from the shells of the *jute*, a freshwater snail. The snails are boiled and eaten and the shells saved. They are then burnt in a fire until they turn white when they are ground into a

Much Nalil Women's Group which brought together crafts women from a number of smaller groups. The name itself means a "coming together". The group survives until today but has many ups and downs over the

fine powder. This is combined little by little with the clay until the clay no longer sticks to the hand. The clay is then ready to mould. Without the addition of lime the finished products would break easily. The moulded clay is then set aside and every three days over a period of a month the clay is scraped inside and out and smoothed with a piece of calabash shell and other fine abrasives. At the end of the month the clay is placed inside a fire of dried corn cobs and fired until the corn cobs turn to powder around the finished piece.

San Antonio is the largest Mopan Maya village in Toledo and the Mopan women wear traditional blouses with black and white embroidered borders (see picture). The embroidery incorporates traditional designs and representations of birds such as the great curassow. The curassow is a bird of the high bush which normally avoids inhabited areas but it is said that these birds, along with the crested guan and animals such as the warrie (a kind of wild boar), will approach villages at the feasts of Christmas and Easter. Mrs Wewe herself testifies to having been visited by a curassow in her garden in the middle of the village on one of these occasions.

Contact: Order products from the Much Nalil womens' group by calling Luisa Wewe 660-4105



Join BTIA and Put Your Business on the Map

BTIA is businesses working together to promote Toledo district as a tourism destination. Join now and get a **FREE** blank copy of the PG town map. Use the map to produce your own promotional literature for your business.

The BTIA membership year runs from January to December so apply now to put your business on the map from the beginning of 2010.

How Do I Join BTIA?

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

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.

West Snake Caye: Better Than Ever

West Snake Caye is truly a gem of a destination. With its crystal clear turquoise bay, coral gardens and white sand beach, this two acre island is one of the most visited destinations in Toledo. And being only ten miles from PG, the island is an easy day trip from any part of the district.

Recent improvements have made the island even better. TIDE (Toledo Institute for Development and the Environment) manages the Port Honduras Marine Reserve of which West Snake Caye is a part. TIDE's current park manager is Seleem Chan. Mr Chan told the Howler they now have a ranger sub-station on the island along with a 40 foot ob-

serva-tion tower which is just visible above the tree line. Both are open



The new observation tower at West Snake Caye

to visitors. They have also built a large palapa and are constructing

picnic tables. A toilet and changing room are also in the planning stage.

The cleanliness of the beach has sometimes been an issue in the past. Mr Chan tells us that the rangers are now cleaning both the beach and interior of the island every week. This should add to the delightful feeling of being on an idyllic Caribbean hideaway.

West Snake Caye is a must for any visitor to the district and the Howler team supports TIDE's efforts to keep this jewel pristine for the future of eco-tourism in Toledo. Talk to your hotel or contact the BTIA office in PG for more information about visiting West Snake Caye.

BTIA TOLEDO MEMBERS 2009

Business Name	Email	Phone	Contact Person
Belize Crafts Ltd, Maya Bags	belizeexecutivedirector@mayabags.org	722-2175	Desiree Arnold
Beya Suites	info@beyasuites.com	722-2188	Lisa Avila
Blue Belize Guest House & Tours	info@bluebelize.com	722-2678	Dan Castellanos & Rachel Graham
Carlo Wagner	stcharlespg@btl.net	722-0193	Carlo Wagner
Coral House Inn	coralhousebelize@yahoo.com	722-2878	Rick & Darla Mallory
Cotton Tree Lodge	chris@cottontreelodge.com	670-0557	Chris Crowell
Cuxlin Ha Retirement Village	cuxlinha@hotmail.com	501-614-2518	Dona Lee Scafe
Dem Dats Doin	demdatsdoin@btl.net	501-722-2470	Yvonne Villoria
Garbutt's Marine Investment Co.	garbuttsmarine@yahoo.com	604-3548	Dennis Garbutt
Hickatee Cottages	cottages@hickatee.com	662-4475	Ian & Kate Morton
The Lodge at Big Falls	info@thelodgeatbigfalls.com	671-7172 / 614-2888	Marta & Rob Hirons
Machaca Hill Lodge	info@machacahill.com	722-0050	Brian Gardiner
Maya Ant and Bee Group	Loctn. Indianville, Punta Gorda		Agapito Shal
Requena's Charter Service	watertaxi@btl.net	722-2070	Julio Requena
Romero's Charter Service	rcharters@btl.net	722-2625/2924	Frances Romero
Scotia Bank	elvis.perez@scotiabank.com	722-0098/0099	Elvis Perez
The Sea Front Inn	larry@seafrontinn.com	722-2300	Larry & Carol Smith
Sun Creek Lodge	suncreek@hughes.net	600-8773/614-2080	Bruno & Melissa Kuppinger
TIDE Tours	info@tidetour.org	722-2129	Karel Kuran
Toledo Eco-Tourism Association	teabelize@yahoo.com	722-2531	Vicente Sackul / Reyes Chun
Toledo Tour Guides Association	info@toledotourguides.org	665-6778	Bruno Kuppinger
Tranquility Lodge	info@tranquility-lodge.com	677-9921	Sheila & Rusty Nale
Tumul K'in Center of Learning	tumulkindevelopment@yahoo.com	608-1070	Esther Sanchez Sho

We can take you there



Reservations: 226-2012

reservations@tropicair.com www.tropicair.com

Where to get your copy of The Toledo Howler:

- ◆ BTIA Tourist Information Center, Front St in Punta Gorda
- ◆ Tropic Air and Maya Island Air terminals throughout Belize
- ◆ Business premises of BTIA members in Toledo (see list above).
- ◆ Tropic Air office in Puerto Barrios, Guatemala.
- ◆ Requena's Charters office in Puerto Barrios, Guatemala.
- ◆ Placencia Tourist information Center, Placencia Village
- ◆ Gas stations on Southern and Western Highway
- ◆ Online at
www.belizefirst.com;
www.ecoclub.com;
www.ambergriscaye.com and
www.expatsbelize.com

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
4:00am	10:00am	James Bus Line	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
5:00pm	To Dangriga	El Buen Pastor	Daily

Boats To Puerto Barrios and Livingston, Guatemala

Service Provider	Dep. Punta Gorda	Arrive In Puerto Barrios	Dep. Puerto Barrios	Arrive In Punta Gorda
Requena's Charter Service	9:30am	10:30am	2:00pm	3:00pm
Pichilingo	2:00pm	3:00pm	10:00am	11:00am
Marisol	4:00pm	5:00pm	1:00pm	3:00pm

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

Coral House Inn

BED, BREAKFAST AND BICYCLES

Step off of Main Street in Punta Gorda and experience the intimate atmosphere of the Coral House Inn, with spacious verandas overlooking the Caribbean Sea.

Amenities include – Swimming pool, continental breakfast, wireless internet, poolside bar and use of bicycles.

www.coralhouseinn.net 722-2878



Accommodation: Cotton Tree Lodge

Cotton Tree Lodge opened its doors on the 1st of January 2007. Chris Crowell, who manages the lodge, bought the land with his partner, Jeff Pzena and several other investors in 1991. The grounds are comprised of 100 acres along the Moho River, with about 1500 yards of river frontage (or 3 football fields as Chris puts it). Access to the lodge is via the San Felipe Road. There is a sign on the highway at the turning, near the village of Jacintoville (see *Toledo map on back page*).

The reason for the name becomes obvious as you reach the car park and see a magnificent cotton tree (also known as ceiba) towering in front of you. Chris figures the tree is over 100 years old.

Chris, originally from the U.S., is a long time resident of Toledo. Before going into the lodging business, he owned a charter boat company which operated out of PG.



Raised walkways at Cotton Tree Lodge

Given their riverside location and Toledo's annual rainfall, Cotton Tree Lodge wisely built raised walkways between all buildings, most of which are also on raised platforms.

The main lodge building, the heart of the property, is a spectacular 16-

sided structure with a high, rounded thatched roof. Inside, guests enter a large dining area with locally made wood furniture and decor. The bar, gift shop and tour desk are also here.

Cotton Tree Lodge has 11 cabanas. Deluxe cabanas have private verandahs and riverfront view. Most standard cabanas also have river views but no verandah. Family ca-



Enjoy the wildlife from your private verandah

banas are delightfully laid out with a mezzanine bedroom for the kids above and parent's bedroom below. There is also a honeymoon cabana which boasts its own jacuzzi looking down on the river. It's inviting enough to make you want to get married again! Cotton Tree has also added a jungle cabana, which is off down a short trail into the forest. The more rustic jungle cabana sits high off the ground and feels like a tree house — a must for more adventurous visitors who don't mind being woken up by howler monkeys outside their windows in the morning. Each cabana is beautifully decorated with polished tropical hardwoods and ethnic design details and each bed has a hanging mosquito net draped above it.



Luxurious riverside jacuzzi in the Honeymoon suite.

Cotton Tree's restaurant is full service and uses mostly local, fresh ingredients. In fact, they have their own organic vegetable garden on the property which guests can visit. The lodge also has fresh eggs for breakfast each morning from their own chickens.

Onsite activities include horseback riding, river swimming & kayaking. This year, the lodge purchased a Mennonite style cart pulled by a horse which Chris says is a big hit with visitors.

Cotton Tree chocolate was the brain child of Chris's US-based partner, Jeff Pzena, and is now manufactured in PG and sold throughout the district. The lodge encourages guests to plant a cacao seed during their visit, which will then be cared for and planted out when ready. Guests are kept updated on their tree's progress.

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Arzu on Medicinal Plants: Soursop, Graviola, Guanabana

Graviola produces a large, heart-shaped, edible fruit, yellow-green in color, with a white tasty flesh inside. This small evergreen tree with large, glossy, dark green leaves has a long and rich history of use in traditional medicine. Graviola, more commonly known as soursop, is indigenous to Central America and grows easily in the warm tropical climate of southern Belize. Though Graviola's claim to fame comes from making delicious drinks, shakes, sherbets, and ice creams, this oddly shaped, prickly faced, strange looking fruit has many known medicinal uses.

Traditional medicine people utilize every part of the graviola tree. The fruit and fruit juice are more commonly used for de-worming, and for getting rid of intestinal parasites. Among the Garifuna people, the fruit juice is used as a lactagogue, to increase mother's milk after childbirth, (we really believe it makes the milk taste better). My grandmother used a pulpy unstrained version of soursop juice to treat dysentery and other digestive maladies. The crushed seeds are used to treat internal and external parasites, head lice, and ringworms.

The tea made from the leaves of this tree is not only delicious and nutritious, but is most effective for soothing the nerves and related nervous conditions. For blood sugar imbalances like diabetes, the bark,



Fruit of the graviola (*Annona muricata*)

roots, and leaves can be taken daily in the form of a strong tea decoction, without any threat of toxicity, contraindications, or side effects.

Native medicine traditions have been using graviola for centuries, and continue to use it with positive results. Science has only recently become aware of this powerful me-

dicinal plant. Many of its traditional medicinal uses have been verified since 1940. Several scientific studies have found the graviola leaf, bark, root, stem and seed to contain natural antibiotics against many pathogens. The bark was found to contain antifungal properties.

A National Cancer Institute sponsored study in 1976 found that the leaves and stems of the graviola tree contained cancer-killing properties targeting specific types of cancer cells. The plant appears to have a higher intelligence where it targets only the cancer cells and leaves healthy cells alone.

A more recent study found graviola leaf extract to be an effective remedy against malaria. As scientific studies continue, more uses for the powerful medicine contained in this tree become manifest, further deepening our appreciation for yet another medicinal plant growing in our midst.

Listen to Arzu Mountain Spirit on Wamalali Radio on 106.3FM Tuesdays at 6:30 pm



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Southern Voices

Ms Pulcheria Teul was a founding member of the Toledo Mayan Women's Council which exists to promote leadership and community development. She is presently the Senator for Toledo appointed by the UDP government



How long have you or your ancestors lived in Belize?

I'm from the Aleman family who were the pioneers who founded Big Falls village

more than 60 years ago. They arrived from Honduras.

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

The highway and better road accessibility is a major change along with worldwide communication through the internet.

Is there anything that makes you optimistic about the development of tourism in Toledo?

I'm very optimistic about our ability to develop sustainable tourism but we need a strategic plan for tourism. People know how to manage resources sustainably.

What is the single most important thing the government could do to promote tourism in Toledo?

We need the government to adopt and support a strategy but of course BTIA and other organizations would have to play a role.

If the Town Council had the resources to improve one thing for tourism development in Punta Gorda town what would it be?

The Council needs to put in infrastructure like signage and docks and piers...But there is not one thing. They need to do a lot of things and start working with the people who know what tourism is all about.

If a tourist had time to visit one place only, where would you recommend they go?

Lubaantun, It has a unique history and it is also a place where people can relax and play. It is a wonderful place to host a wedding.

Reef or rainforest? Which do you prefer?

It's rainforest for me. The forest is full of energy. Nature itself is healing for the mind and body and walking in the rainforest is all we need if we are looking to balance ourselves and find energy.

What is your favorite season or month of the year?



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Birding Hotspots with Lee Jones

Cattle Landing

One of my favorite spots for observing migrants is Cattle Landing, only one mile from my house in Punta Gorda. Migrants tend to concentrate along the immediate coast and offshore cayes. Remarkably, most migrate at night and use the stars in the northern sky to navigate. While these nocturnal migrants cannot easily be observed in the “act” of migrating, diurnal migrants can. These include hawks, swifts, swallows, martins, and kingbirds. The football field at “Cat” Landing is right on the coast and offers a 360° view of the sky, an ideal setting for observing birds as they migrate past in fall on their way south.

The first migrants to arrive at Cattle Landing are Purple Martins in early July on their way to South America from breeding grounds in the United States and southern Canada. Along with their close cousin, the locally breeding Gray-breasted Martin, they are the earliest fall migrants in Be-



Purple Martin at Cattle Landing Dark glossy blue black body

elize. By early August, both species have begun congregating in huge flocks, wheeling about low overhead while fattening up on insects, and resting on power lines and dead tree limbs as they pause during their long southward journey. By late July the

martins are joined by southbound swallows. First are the Barn Swallows, followed by Cliff Swallows and Bank Swallows. Their numbers build up gradually, and by September hundreds of Cliff and Barn and dozens of Bank Swallows can be counted streaming past every hour, flying low to the ground, constantly hawking insects as they go. By the end of September most of the martins are gone, but the ragged lines of migrating swallows continue well into October. In early November, Tree Swallows, Belize’s latest fall migrant, begin showing up, often in very impressive numbers.

Eastern Kingbirds begin arriving in mid-August, and by the third week of September as many as 1,000 an hour can be observed passing overhead. As the numbers of kingbirds, martins, and most swallows subside, another phenomenon begins to unfold. Much higher up, sometimes above the clouds, several species of hawks slip by largely unnoticed.

(Continued bottom page 14)

Butterflies Galore

Summer and early autumn are the high season for these brightly colored insects and Toledo offers visitors a mind-boggling array of colors, sizes and shapes. From the large and flashy Blue Morpho moving ma-



Is that a dry leaf or *Historis Odius*?

gestically along a riverside to the ‘clouds’ of pastel-colored Phoebis

along dirt roads, there is something almost magical about these creatures.

Few humans have any fear of butterflies because they are harmless, non-threatening and at the same time exquisitely beautiful. However being harmless can be a problem for butterflies — after all, it’s a jungle out there! Each species has had to evolve some way of avoiding predators, and these techniques are fascinating to observe. The two main types of self-preservation used are protective resemblance and mimicry. Protective resemblance simply means a form of camouflage which allows the butterfly to blend in with its surroundings when at rest. Many species in Toledo are masters of disguise. For example, the intricately detailed Hamadryas which will come to rest on a tree trunk with its wings open and immediately disappear as it blends into the bark.

Mimicry is another clever method of avoiding being eaten in which the butterfly has evolved to look like another creature which is poisonous or bad tasting. Birds and other preda-



Heliconius hecale zuleika

tors will remember those insects they should not eat and thus avoid the otherwise harmless (and probably tasty) butterfly.

Mid morning is often the best time of day to observe active butterflies though you can see them any time while the sun is hot.

This is also the best time of year for moths, most of which are nocturnal. A bright outdoor light will attract an enormous selection of weird and wonderful varieties over the course of one night. And moths are often accommodating enough to stay in the same spot through the next day so they can be observed in daylight.

Tour operator: Machaca Hill Lodge

Brian and Jane Gardiner the co-managers at Machaca Hill Lodge brought with them a wealth of experience from twelve years managing lodges and safari camps in Botswana, Kenya and Tanzania for world renowned travel company Abercrombie and Kent. Brian says that they are “enjoying the challenge of creating and developing a new product and attempting to combine the best elements of the safari industry with all the things that Belize has to offer”.



Picnic laid out with Polaris ATV in background

The Machaca Hill property now includes the original 350 acres of Big Hill Farm as well as a further 12,000 acres to the north of the Rio Grande. That property embraces all of the Seven Hills near the coast, abuts the Mennonite land at Pine Hill and extends westward to include the citrus plantation along the Southern Highway at Big Falls. Within that broad area is land owned and managed by TIDE with whom they maintain positive working relationships and a shared interest in conservation and biodiversity. In addition the company also owns Nicholas Caye on the Sapodillas and Man o' War Caye closer to the coast.



Machaca's landing pier and lounge area on the Rio Grande

Since Brian and Jane's arrival they have put a lot of resources into re-vamping the tours on offer, trying as Brian says to “think outside the box” to create new offerings.

Visitors and residents in Toledo may have spotted their two Toyota Land Cruisers which have been converted

as open-sided tour vehicles (see picture). They employ their own full-time guides and when the guides take guests on tours they are accompa-

nied by an assistant who will be there to set up picnics etc and leave the guides free to do what they do best. In addition to the Toyotas they have brought in three Polaris ATVs

(All Terrain Vehicles). These are used to explore the new trail system that meanders through the extensive coastal forest on the north bank.

Guests can take a night time safari trip up the Rio Grande. The boat has been converted so that guests dine on board and, equipped with night

vision goggles and spotlights with red filters to avoid disturbing the animal life, guests have seen jaguar, margay, tapir, peccary and deer drinking at the river bank.

While the lodge finds out as much as possible about guests' interests and needs before their arrival they can still tailor their adventures upon arrival in consultation with the guides who also act as evening hosts. Activities include talks by local snake doctors and healers, archaeological visits to Wild Cane Caye and to the rusting remains of the old sugar mill on the Seven Hills. Guests have been able to visit the Mennonite community at Pine Hill and see their cheese production, wood working facilities and lumber mill powered by teams of horses. Future plans on the Machaca hill property itself include coffee and chocolate production for demonstration purposes as well as small scale production of goat's cheese.

While these tours are only available to guests at Machaca Hill their diverse offering presents a challenge to all tour operators. The challenge being to look at ways in which they can use their ingenuity and the enormous human and natural resources in Toledo to create a tourism product that will make the district stand out and attract more visitors.

Birding Hotspots *(continued from page 13)*

They congregate in kettles, using the rising thermals for lift. These circling hawks, sometimes numbering well over a hundred birds per kettle, gradually drift to the south, following the coast.

From mid-October to mid-November, several thousand Hook-billed Kites pass through Punta Gorda. Where they are coming from and where they

are going is anybody's guess. This species is not even supposed to migrate! Solving this uniquely Belizean mystery of bird migration would be an ideal topic of some future Master's thesis. Occasionally, maybe only once or twice a season, the diligent observer may spot a small group of Mississippi Kites, Broad-winged Hawks or Swainson's Hawks, or even a stray Sharp-shinned or Cooper's Hawk. Until a few years ago these were thought to bypass Belize en-

tirely as they migrated by the tens of thousands down the spine of Central America. Most records have come from our tiny little corner of southern Belize, especially in the skies above Cat Landing.

H. Lee Jones is an experienced environmental consultant and research biologist based in Punta Gorda, Toledo. He is the author of "Birds of Belize" the definitive guide to birding in Belize and the Annotated checklist of the birds of Belize.

Wat's Cookin ?

Plantain Soup with Tamarind

This recipe makes a wonderful thick soup using ripe plantains flavored with tamarind and cilantro

Ingredients

Sesame oil	1 tablespoon
Garlic	4 cloves
Finely chopped chili pepper/habanero	1
Ground cumin seeds	2 teaspoon
Coriander (cilantro) seeds (optional)	1 teaspoon
Brown or red onion sliced	2 medium
Ripe plantains	2 large
Chicken or vegetable stock	28 fl.oz.
Coconut milk	1 pint
Tamarind paste or juice	9 fl. oz.
Salt	
Fresh cilantro leaves	1 cup
Fresh mint leaves (optional) add to your taste	

Method

Heat the sesame oil and fry the onions, chili pepper, seeds and garlic for a few minutes on a low flame in large deep pan. Stir and check regularly to avoid burning. Slice the plantain and add to the fried onion mixture. Add the stock and simmer over the flame until the plantains are soft enough to put in a blender or food processor. Add the coconut milk. Add the tamarind juice and other ingredients a little at a time tasting regularly until you get the flavor you want. Blend the mixture in a food processor. Return to the heat to warm before serving but do not bring back to the boil. Serve with hot buttered toast, rolls or garlic bread.

This recipe was kindly donated by Anne Holland who with her husband Brian has managed the Belize Minerals Ltd in Forest Home since their arrival in January 1992.



GOSS CHOCOLATE PRESENTS



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Southern Voices (Continued from page 12)

August because I get to spend more time with my children who are on vacation and we can travel and do things together. (Continued on page 15)

What is your favorite village or town in Toledo?

Big Falls because I have my navel string (umbilical cord) buried there.

What was your most memorable encounter with wild animals?

Catching a gibbon many years ago way down the Rio Grande. The gibbon burrow has two holes. One to enter and another to escape. You have to cover one hole and then prod or smoke out the gibbon and catch it in a champa (string bag). Half way home the gibbon escaped through a hole in the bag.

What herbal medicines do you use?

Noni. It is a fruit that heals almost any ailment.. It has a strong unpleasant smell. A man in San Ignacio makes a drink from the pulp of the fruit that keeps for six months so that it is like an aged wine.

What is your favorite local food?

Flour tortillas and beans flavored with cilantro, garlic, onions and habaneros when I feel I can take the heat.

Is Toledo still the "Forgotten" district or just unforgettable?

It's unforgettable. Everybody who comes here always wants to return and Toledo sells itself. When you are marketing Toledo there is no need to exaggerate.

Thanks, senator

*Noni *Morinda citrifolia*, commonly known as great morinda, Indian mulberry, beach mulberry, Tahitian noni, cheese fruit or noni (from Hawaiian) is a tree in the coffee family*

Discover !

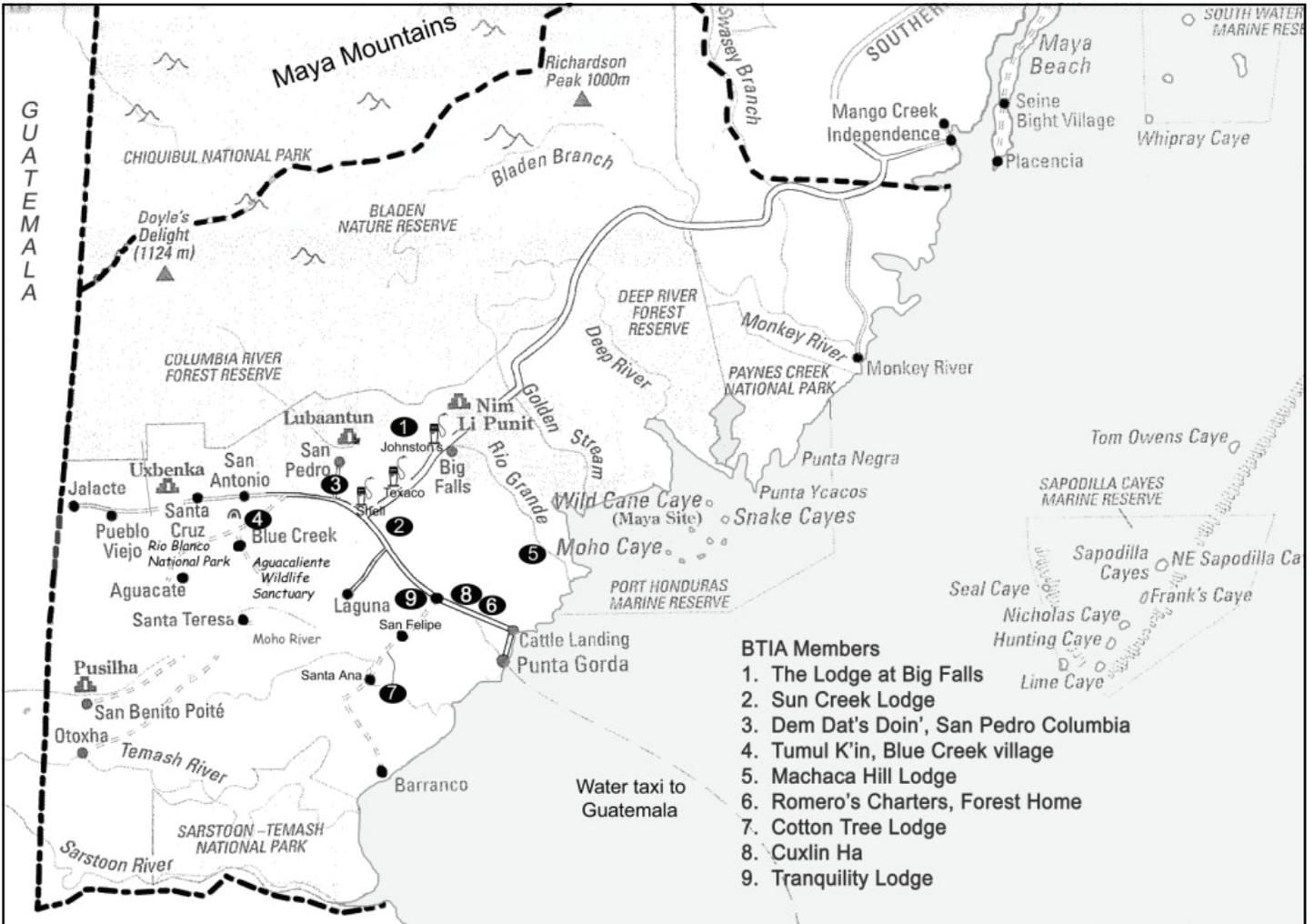
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