

The Toledo Howler

Newspaper of the Toledo Chapter of the Belize Tourism Industry Association

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FREE

Chocolate Festival of Belize

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Cacao is native to the Americas and the seeds, or "beans", are used to make co-coa products and, of course, chocolate. Cacao is a major export crop in Toledo - prized for its quality and distinctive flavour - and Belize produces some notable chocolate products of its own.

Every Commonwealth Day holiday weekend the Toledo District of southern Belize holds a festival to celebrate this marvellous food, and many devoted followers return each year to find out what's new in the world of chocolate making. This will be the seventh Festival, and the first in its new guise as the Chocolate Festival of Belize. The name change from Toledo CacaoFest is a reflection of growing awareness of the exceptional quality of Belizean chocolate and designed to capture a bigger international audience. Once again the festival will be organized jointly by the Toledo Cacao Growers' Association and the Toledo Chapter of the Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA) with support and sponsorship from the Belize Tourism Board and NICH.

The Festival kicks off with a glamorous gala opening night sponsored by Belikin who will be producing their unique chocolate stout for the occasion. The "Wine, Chocolate and Belikin" event will be held this year at Belcampo Lodge and Farm, several miles west of PG Town. Belcampo is well-known for its beautiful setting and upscale accommodation, and the opening night will take place in the plaza at their new purpose-built Agritourism facilities. Guests will enjoy live music, and the latest chocolate creations from the Belizean boutique chocolate makers - Kakaw from San Pedro, Goss Chocolate from Placencia, and Cotton Tree Chocolate and Ixcacao (formerly Cyrila's Chocolate) from Toledo itself. With hors d'oeuvres from Belcampo's own farm and kitchen, an array of fine wines and Belikin's specially brewed Chocolate Stout this promises to be a premier event in this exquisite jungle setting.

On Saturday the focus shifts to Punta



The Creole section of the Saturday cultural fair in PG 2012

Gorda and The Taste of Toledo street fair that will be held along Front Street. The day is exclusively sponsored by BTL and Digicell who will be promoting their 4G internet services. The day offers yet more chocolate experiences from our chocolatiers, along with an array of booths featuring chocolate-themed food and crafts. Toledo is well known for its diverse range of cultures, and cultural exhibits showcase Toledo's five largest ethnic groups: Kriol, Maya, Garifuna, Mestizo and East Indian. Each area displays art, food and music from their culture - where else can you pass from a Maya village to a Garifuna town in just a few steps?

With a Chocolate Cookery Contest (sweet and savoury categories), an archaeological display by NICH and the Department of Archaeology, local dance group performances, a Belikin bar, and live music at the stage by PG's historic courthouse there's something for everyone, and more!

As always, the Festival caters for children with special Festival events: activities include volleyball, basketball, and soccer competitions, as well as a bicycle race around PG Town, finishing at the north end of Front Street.

Toledo is well known for its strong Mayan

culture, and Lubaantun is a fitting and majestic setting for the Maya-themed Festival Finale. The Sunday finale to the festival at Lubaantun is sponsored by US Capital Energy.

Located in the foothills of the Maya Mountains, Lubaantun flourished in the Late Classic period (AD 730 to AD860), but seems to have been abandoned soon after. Lubaantun is famed for its many clay whistles found at the site, exemplary stone work - including its "rounded corners" - and, of course, for the legend of the Crystal Skull. With its rich soils and high rainfall the area was, and is to this day, perfectly suited to growing the high quality Toledo cacao, and many TCGA members have their cacao farms in this area.

Come and browse the local craft stalls and enjoy local Mayan food, followed by traditional music and dance in the Plaza - this is a great "picnic in the park" event with a Maya twist! Bring your friends, a blanket to sit on, a camera and spare batteries, and enjoy a true cultural extravaganza.

For more information, visit our website at www.ChocolateFestivalofBelize.com and like our [www.Facebook.com/belizechocolatefestival](https://www.facebook.com/belizechocolatefestival) page.

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Check out this Comprehensive Online Directory of Business & Organizations for the Southern District of Toledo

Nim Li Punit Archaeological Site

Nim Li Punit was the second major site to be settled in Toledo District. Like Uxbenka, it was first occupied during the Early Classic period. At present we have dated the early occupation of Nim Li Punit only from the stylistic analysis of pottery. This demonstrates that the first inhabitants settled at the site sometime in the early fifth century A.D., about 400 years after Uxbenka was settled and about 150 years before Pusilha—the largest city in southern Belize by far—was founded about A.D. 570.

Like Uxbenka, Nim Li Punit is a small place. It is better to think of it not as a city, but as a rural manor site founded by one or more elite families. From its founding ca. AD 400-450, however, Nim Li Punit did serve as a regional administrative center. Structure 8, a long platform located along the western edge of the "Plaza of the Tombs," was built around this time and served as a *popol nah* or council house. Over the course of 400 years, the building was enlarged and rebuilt four times, but it always kept the same form and function. Maya council houses are not common in Belize or Guatemala, but are much more typical of sites in Yucatan. They suggest decentralized rule, where different lineages, families, or factions made joint decisions under a

king with relatively weak authority.

After Pusilha, Nim Li Punit has more readable hieroglyphic monuments (8) than any other site in southern Belize. The written texts of Nim Li Punit, however, were carved during just two very short time periods: A.D. 734-741 and A.D. 790-830. These two brief periods represent the high points of the site as a regional power. The first of these two periods probably corresponds to the lifetime of a single ruler. What is most fascinating is that at the same time that the rulers of Nim Li Punit began to erect monuments, great political unrest was seen not too far away at Quirigua, Guatemala. That site declared independence from Copan, Honduras during this period, and both Nim Li Punit and Quirigua employed the same strange title, *Ek Xukpi ajaw*, which might refer to inde-



The excavations at Nim Li Punit in 2012

pendence from Copan influence. After a 50-year hiatus, claims of political independence again appeared at Nim Li Punit during the time period of the famous Maya Collapse. It may be that in the chaos of the decline of Pusilha and Uxbenka, other sites—including Nim Li Punit and Lubaantun—were able to flourish.

Archaeologists from the University of California, San Diego, will continue to work at Nim Li Punit during the 2013 dry season.

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Asha's Culture Kitchen

The Howler recently visited Asha's Culture Kitchen in Punta Gorda. This seaside restaurant is located on Front Street south of the market and specializes in fresh Creole seafood, vegetarian and BBQ. They are also one of Toledo BTIA's newest members.

Owner Ashton Martin opened Asha's Culture Kitchen in July 2011. The restaurant

ingredient is love - although he also uses coconut, cilantro, fresh vegetables and herbs. The seafood is fresh daily so the menu changes according to availability and season but usually includes a variety of fish, wild shrimp and lobster dishes.

One of the most surprising items on Asha's menu is lionfish. Most of us know that lionfish have become a problem in the Caribbean in recent years. They were probably introduced by aquarium owners who released them into the wild and didn't realize that the invasive lionfish reproduce at a much higher rate than the local species. Add to that the fact that lionfish predate the eggs of commercial fish and the problem quickly became a major headache for marine conservationists. What the Howler didn't know is that lionfish are also extremely tasty to eat, with a mild flavor similar to snapper. So we can all help keep the local numbers of lionfish down by catching and eating them!

customers inside and on the verandah.

Asha's Culture Kitchen is open for dinner daily throughout the year from 4pm to



Asha shows off a catch of fresh lobster destined for the menu. Lobster season runs from the 15th June to 15th February.

was originally located on Middle Main Street before moving to its present seaside location. Asha's Culture Kitchen is actually built out over the water so there is a delightful sense of being surrounded by the sea. This place arguably has the best views in PG, looking out across the Gulf of Honduras towards Guatemala and points south. The owner says the stars at night are equally impressive from the verandah.

Ashton's wife, Stacy, is in charge of marketing and decorating. Ashton, originally from Punta Negra in northern Toledo, is in charge of the mouth watering menu. He has a passion for cooking and says his main

Asha's Culture Kitchen also prides itself in promoting Creole culture. On Sundays, from 6pm, they have a jam session with Creole drummers alongside international guest musicians. Visitors are welcome to come along and jam with the musicians or just sit and enjoy the music while sipping on a glass of fresh fruit juice or beer.

Asha's cater for special events such as weddings and can seat a total of sixty-four



Musicians gather to play at Asha's on Sunday evenings

midnight. See their ad in this issue and listing in the Restaurant Guide.

Phone or email for more information:
632-8025 or ashasculturekitchen@gmail.com.



Can't beat this view from Asha's verandah

The Chocolate Festival of Belize would like to thank our Festival sponsors for their support



Celebrating Belizean chocolate, and Toledo culture

Commonwealth Day Holiday Weekend, 24th to 26th May 2013

www.ChocolateFestivalOfBelize.com

Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Venue/Time	Other Info
March 11th	Bank Holiday - National Heroes and Benefactors Day	Regatta and aquatic games at Market Wharf	Celebrating Baron Bliss
March 24th	Annual Maya Day: inc Cortez Dance and Maya Ball Game.	Tumul K'in, Blue Creek Village	
March 29th	Bank Holiday - Good Friday		Local businesses closed
April 1st	Bank Holiday - Easter Monday		Local businesses closed
May 1st	Bank Holiday - Labour Day		Local businesses closed
May 24th	Wine and Chocolate Evening - first day of Chocolate Festival of Belize	Belcampo Lodge from 6pm to 10pm	Tickets in advance \$40, at the door \$60. More info contact btiatoledo@btl.net or call 722-2531
May 25th	Taste of Toledo - second day of Chocolate Festival of Belize	Front Street, Punta Gorda - Cultural food and entertainment from 9am-6pm	More info contact btiatoledo@btl.net or call 722-2531
May 26th	Lubaantun Finale - third day of the Chocolate Festival of Belize	San Pedro Columbia Village, Lubaantun Maya Site from 10am to 4pm	More info contact btiatoledo@btl.net or call 722-2531
May 27th	Bank Holiday - Commonwealth Day		Local businesses closed
Sept 10th	Bank Holiday - St. George's Caye Day	Carnival parade in Punta Gorda	Local businesses closed
Sept 21st	Bank Holiday - Independence Day Flag raising ceremony to welcome Independence Day Parade and jump up/block party.	Central Park at Midnight	
October 11th	Seafood Gala - first day of TIDE Fish Fest	Venue to be decided	info@tidetours.org or call 722-2129
October 12th	Youth Conservation Competition - second day of TIDE Fish Fest	Venue to be decided	info@tidetours.org or call 722-2129
October 13th	Fish Fest - last day of TIDE Fish Fest	TIDE Headquarters, Hopeville	info@tidetours.org or call 722-2129
October 14th	Bank Holiday - Pan American Day		Local businesses closed
16th November	TOLTEX 2013 : Toledo Tourism Expo celebrating diversity of cultural tourism businesses	Central Park, Punta Gorda 9am- 4pm	Contact btiatoledo@btl.net or call 722-2531
16th November	Battle of the Drums	Sports Complex, Punta Gorda 7:30pm	For more info contact Beya Suites: 722-2188
November 17th	Paranda Top 10: live radio broadcast on Love FM. Music performed by local PG Paranderos.	Beya Suites, Hopeville	Beya Suites - 722-2188
November 19th	Yurumein—Garifuna Settlement Re-enactment	PG Cooperative Wharf 6:30 am	



Toledo Cacao Growers Association



The Toledo Cacao Growers Association (TCGA) is a not-for-profit organization established in 1984 that seeks to improve the socioeconomic standard of its members through a diversified system of production incorporating sound ecological practices. Today more than 1,100 subsistence farmers (primarily in the Toledo and South Stann Creek Districts) are engaged in cacao production. Its members are divided into 52 communities in the Toledo, Stann Creek and Cayo Districts that produce some 50 tons of cacao beans annually.

Service to Members:

- 1. Trainings in Cacao Production (improved farm management techniques)
- 2. Technical support/consultation through the extension department
- 3. Organic and Fairtrade Certification
- 4. Wet bean purchase and pick up
- 5. Farm Rehabilitation
- 6. Sales of polythene bags, selected high yielding seeds and tree saplings
- 7. Grafted trees (during transplanting season only)

- 8. Drying facilities and cascading fermentaries
- 9. Guaranteed purchase of quality beans

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 - 4. Ixcacao (formerly Cyrila's Chocolate)
 - 5. Cotton Tree Chocolate

To Become a Member:

- 1. Farmer must have /or interested to plant at least 1 acre of cacao
- 2. Proposed site must be inspected and approved by TCGA
- 3. Complete Membership Application form and pay \$5.00 Application Fee and \$10.00 annual fee
- 4. Abide by TCGA's organic terms and conditions



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Dreamlight Internet Café



Kenrick Coleman, manager of Dreamlight Internet Cafe

them they have over 35 years' professional experience. We spoke to Kenrick about Dreamlight's many and varied services.

As you'd expect with an internet café, Dreamlight has several computers available for internet access, and they charge BZ\$1 for the first half-hour, and BZ\$1 for every additional quarter hour. Kenrick tells us that many students use the internet facility to help with their studies, and

the service has proved so popular that they have now expanded to offer a second computer lab to keep up with demand. The café is open daily with hot coffee and donuts available to keep energy levels high, and they have now opened a games room with PlayStation and Xbox for when people need a fun break from studies.

Whilst Skype services are not available, their answer is to provide cheap-rate international calls, which start at just 25 cents a minute. Dreamlight has also become something of a one-stop shop for internet, technology and office supplies, selling a range of goods from phone top-up cards to paper and printing services, camera accessories and ID photos, to DVDs – as well as souvenirs. If it's computer or

office-related, then Dreamlight is the place to go.

Computer technology is still very new to some people, and Dreamlight offers ten-week computer introductory courses, covering Word, Excel, Powerpoint, internet and email, and typing skills. On successful completion students can then move up to take a further ten-week advanced level course. They are also a core partner in education and provide on-site training for ITVET Toledo, Julian Cho Technical High School, and Toledo Community College.

As well as their educational partnership, Dreamlight believes in being an active part of the community, and two such examples are their weekly raffle – where every customer has the chance to win BZ\$25 – and their community website www.PGBelize.com. Their goal is to list every business and organization in Toledo so as to provide a comprehensive directory of Toledo services. The website averages around 2,500 visits each month, but the number of new visitors is steadily growing. Many small businesses in Toledo can't afford the time, or may not have the expertise, to build a website and PGBelize.com offers an easy solution for them, designing and hosting a web page for BZ\$50 a year.

Dreamlight Internet Café is located on the corner of North and Main Street (next to the Belikin Depot, close to the Uno Gas Station), and is open from 6.30am until 8.30pm Monday to Saturday, and 9am to 1pm on Sundays. See their ad on Page 2 of this issue.

For more information call 702-0113.

The Road to the Border

Everyone living in the Toledo District knows the government is in the process of paving the highway to the Guatemalan border. There have been mixed feelings about this development but we at the Toledo Howler believe it will be a good thing all around. Once the road is paved, getting into PG will be faster and easier for those living in remote villages. A smooth, all-weather surface will reduce wear and tear on village buses and vehicles generally as well as reducing fuel consumption.

For tourism, the new road will mean easier access to some of the most beautiful destinations in the district, such as Blue Creek and Rio Blanco National Park and falls. Travelling times to these beauty spots have already been greatly reduced.

The project also includes improved signage along the road which will help visitors with their own vehicles to find their way around more easily.

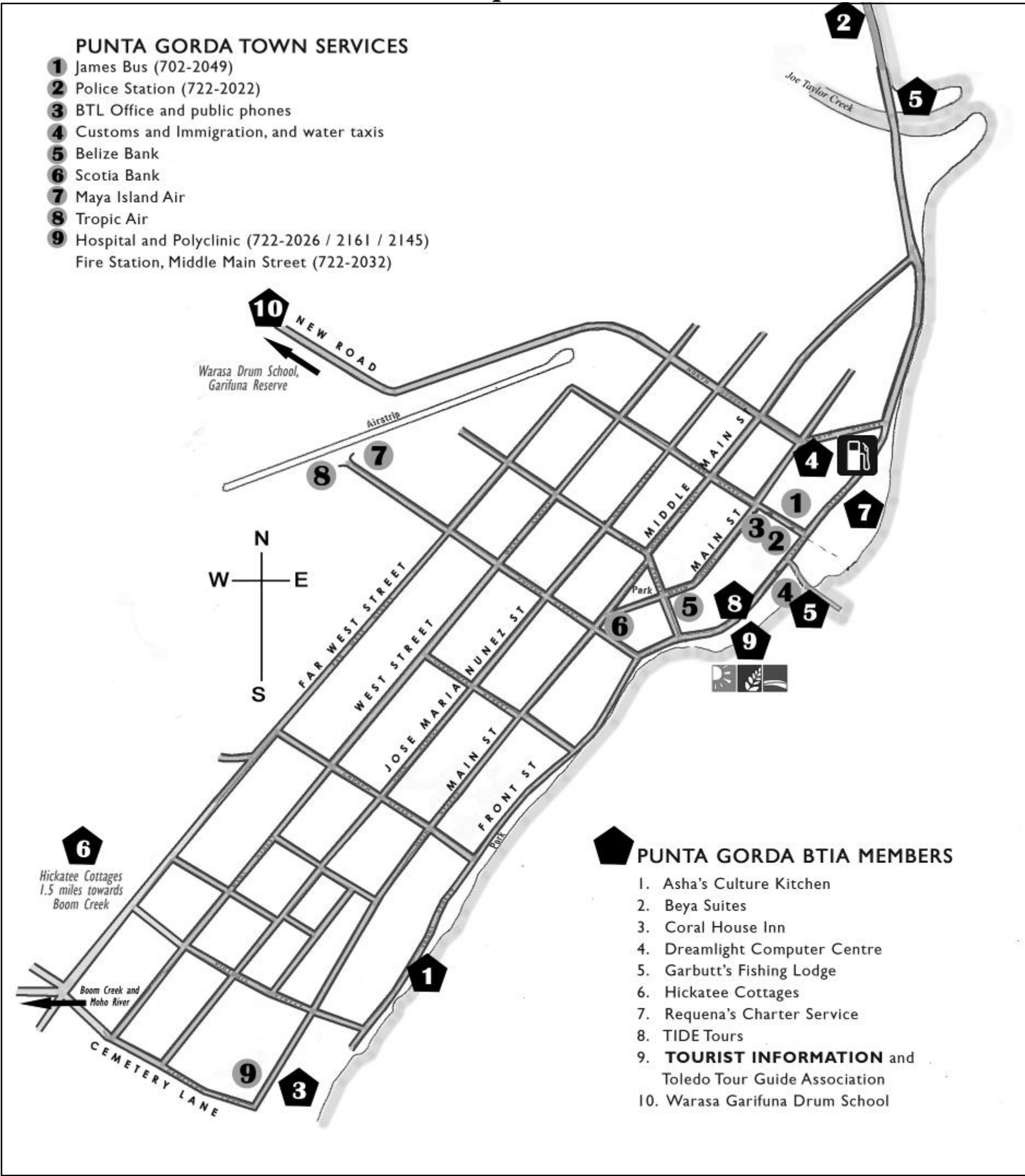
We are told the present phase of the project is due to be completed in April 2014—weather permitting of course! Completion of this phase will mean 20 miles of paved highway from the junction known as Dump to Treetops, the BDF's outpost near the



border. There will eventually be a formal border crossing point although we understand the exact location has not yet been confirmed.

The most challenging aspect of this project, according to our sources, is the earthworks. Western Toledo is very hilly and becomes more so as you get closer to the border. This is of course one reason Toledo is so picturesque but it also means the construction team have to excavate into hillsides with heavy equipment to make way for the widened highway. That takes time and as much dry weather as they can get. We look forward to seeing completion of the project next year.

Sketch map of PG Town



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In the past year, Belize Telemedia Limited has proudly partnered with a number of noteworthy organizations in the Toledo district by contributing to a wide cross-section of programs which focus on both the people and the environment.

The participation and support provided by BTL has played an important role in facilitating programs that positively affect different sectors of the district including urban and rural communities. We are honored to have had the opportunity to be a source of affirmation to the communities we serve in the beautiful South.

Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous – 4th Environmental Science Fair

Toledo Cacao Growers Association – Cacao Festival

Toledo Institute for Development and Environment – Fish Fest

Great Program

Plenty Belize

Punta Gorda Town Council

Toledo School Feeding Program

Golden Stream Government School

Zion Park Methodist School

Julian Cho Technical High School

Big Falls RC School

As an active Corporate Citizen, BTL and its entire team are committed to the development and sustainability of programs that support education, community, sports, health, culture, industry and environmental conservation.



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Map of Front Street, Punta Gorda, Chocolate Festival Weekend 24th–26th May



Marimba players perform on Front Street in 2012



Mandy Tsang's artisanal soaps and massage oils attract visitors at the Taste of Toledo Street Fair

Members of the Toledo Tour Guides Association

Location	Name	Location	Name	Location	Name
Aguacate	Rafael Bul	Hicattee	Agapito Pop	Punta Gorda	Lionel Martin
Aguacate	Felix Cus	Hopeville	George Alford	Punta Gorda	Ana Mutrie
Aguacate	Sylvestre Cus	Hopeville	Daniel Castellanos	Punta Gorda	Wilfred Mutrie
Aguacate	Elvis Tush	Hopeville	Emmanuel M. Chan	Punta Gorda	Patricia Nightingale
Aguacate	Francisco Tush	Hopeville	George Coleman	Punta Gorda	Armando Ramirez
Big Falls	Andrew Caliz	Hopeville	Kyrone N. Leonardo	Punta Gorda	Desmond Ramirez
Big Falls	Estevan Choco	Indian Creek	Sipirano Canti	San Benito Poite	Manuel Cucul
Big Falls	Perfecto Cholum	Indian Creek	Rosendo Coy	Santa Cruz	Jose Mes
Blue Creek	William Ack	Indian Creek	Nathaniel Mas	San Felipe	Juan Cho
Blue Creek	Heraldo Pop	Monkey River	Alfonso Zuniga	San Miguel	Christina Ack
Blue Creek	Isidoro Sho	Monkey River	Brent A. Young	San Miguel	Martin Ack
Blue Creek	Rosalio Sho	Punta Gorda	Guillermo Avila	San Miguel	Gabriel Choco
Blue Creek	Sylvano Sho	Punta Gorda	Abraham Coleman	San Miguel	Mario Choco
Cattle Landing	Thomas Garbutt	Punta Gorda	Dennis Garbutt	San Pedro Columbia	Feliciano Pop
Crique Sarco	Antonio Rash	Punta Gorda	Oliver Garbutt	Santa Teresa	Mario Chub
Cuxlin Ha	Lorenzo Coc	Punta Gorda	Bicente Ical	Santa Teresa	Pedro Chub
Cuxlin Ha	Celiano Pop	Punta Gorda	Victor Jacobs	Sun Creek	Bruno Kuppinger
Forest Home	Bradford C. Johnson	Punta Gorda	Alex Leonardo		

The tour guide listing is for guidance and use by tour operators.

Visitors are advised to use only the services of tour operators that have satisfied the licensing and insurance requirements of the Belize Tourism Board aimed at ensuring visitor enjoyment in a safe, legal environment.

TOLEDO VILLAGE BUSES					
Service	Depart P.G.	Destination	Villages Visited	Days	Return to P.G.
Kan	11:30am	Aguacate	Dump, Mafredi, Blue Creek	Mon to Sat	5:20am
J n L	12pm	Barranco	San Felipe, Santa Ana, Midway	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	6am
Chub	11:30am	Crique Sarco	San Felipe, Santa Ana, Midway, Conejo, Sunday Wood	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	5:15am
Ack	12pm	Dolores	Dump, Mafredi, Jordan, Santa Teresa, Mabilha, San Lucas, Corazon Creek, Otoxha	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	3am
Pop	10:30am	Golden Stream	Dump, Big Falls, Hicatee, Indian Creek	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	6:45am
Pop	1pm	Golden Stream	Dump, Big Falls, Hicatee, Indian Creek	Mon to Sat	7:30am
Pop	5pm	Indian Creek	Dump, Big Falls, Hicatee	Mon to Sat	12pm
Pop	9pm	Indian Creek	Dump, Big Falls, Hicatee	Mon to Thurs	3:30pm
Chunny	11:30am	Jalacte	Dump, Mafredi, San Antonio, Santa Cruz, Pueblo Viejo, Jalacte	Mon to Sat	3am
Bol	4pm	Jalacte	Dump, Mafredi, San Antonio, Santa Cruz, Pueblo Viejo, Jalacte	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	3pm
Bol	6am	Jalacte	Dump, Mafredi,San Antonio, Santa Cruz, Santa Elena, Pueblo Viejo	Mon to Sun	5:30am
Shol	12pm	Laguna	Elridgeville	Wed/Fri/Sat	
Pop	11:30am	Medina Bank	Dump, Big Falls, Hicatee, Indian Creek	Mon to Sat	5:30am
Chunny	12pm	San Antonio	Dump, Mafredi	Mon to Sat	6am
Coc	12pm	San Antonio	Jacintoville, Dump, Mafredi	Mon to Sat	6:30am
Coc	5:15pm	San Antonio	Jacintoville, Dump, Mafredi	Mon to Sat	1:30pm
Teck	12pm	San Benito Poite	Jacintoville, Dump, Mafredi, Blue Creek, Jordon, Santa Teresa	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	4:30am
Sho	11:30am	San Jose	Dump, Mafredi, Crique Jute, Nah Lum Cah	Wed/Sat	4am
Choc	12pm	San Jose	Jacintoville, Dump, Mafredi, Crique Jute, Nah Lum Cah	Mon/Fri	5am
Chen	12pm	San Vicente	Dump, Mafredi, San Antonio, Santa Cruz, Santa Elena, Pueblo Viejo, Jalacte	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	2am
Chen	5:30am	San Vicente	Dump, Mafredi, San Antonio, Santa Cruz, Santa Elena, Pueblo Viejo, Jalacte	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	2pm
Bobby	11am	Santa Ana	San Felipe	Mon/Wed/Fri/Sat	7:15am
Cucul	11:30am	Silver Creek	Dump, San Pedro Columbia, San Miguel	Mon to Sat	6am
Cal	11am	Silver Creek	Dump, San Pedro Columbia, San Miguel	Mon to Sat	7am
Cal	4:30am	Silver Creek	Dump, San Pedro Columbia, San Miguel	Mon to Sat	1pm
Cucul	4pm	Silver Creek	Dump, San Pedro Columbia, San Miguel	Mon to Sat	12:30pm
Cucul	9pm	Silver Creek	Dump, San Pedro Columbia, San Miguel	Mon to Thurs	4pm

Bug Corner

The strange habits of the Sapho (*heliconius sapho*)

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.

The Sapho butterfly is often seen flitting around the Toledo District. Nim Li Punit, with its plethora of favoured butterfly plants, is a great place to see butterflies on the wing. The Sapho is one of the heliconius species, and is very similar in appearance to the Cydno. Sometimes called the “Holstein” butterfly for its black and white markings it will actually appear a beautiful dark metallic blue under the right lighting conditions.

The heliconius butterflies have two unique, derived ecological traits – feeding and mating behaviour!



Whilst butterflies generally feed on fluids, and are usually split into either “fruit feeders” or “nectar feeders”, some heliconius species collect pollen for its nutritional value in the form of amino acids. The nutrients increase egg production and can increase the adult life span to up to six months, and the relationship between the butterfly and the pollen-producing vine is a classic text book case of co-evolution.

The second rather bizarre trait involves some strange mating behaviour, where the male butterfly will appear to mate with a female pupa! Butterflies are very choosy about which plants they lay their eggs on and have only a few select larval food plants, depending on their breed. Males of some *Heliconius* species, including the Sapho, will search the food plants for female pupae, and then sit on the pupae a day before emergence – this is known as “mate guarding” and similar behaviour has also been observed in some aquatic crustaceans, frogs, and some other insects. The males then mate with the female the next morning as she starts breaking from the pupal case, but while her wings are unextended and so soft that this strategy is known as “pupal mating”.

TRANSPORT SCHEDULES					
Flights					
Depart Punta Gorda	Arrive Belize City	Service Provider	Depart Belize Intl.	Arrive 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.					
		<p>Toledo Tourism Information Centre Front Street, Punta Gorda Town</p> <p>Mon to Fri 8am to 4pm, Sat 8am to 11.30am</p> <p>Tel: 722-2531 Email: BTIAtoledo@btl.net</p>		<p>Where to get your copy of The Toledo Howler</p> <p>Distribution points include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Tourism Information Centres throughout Belize◆ Tropic Air and Maya Island Air terminals◆ BTIA Toledo members◆ Requena's Charters, Puerto Barrios◆ Major gas stations <p>As well as a wide online presence in electronic format</p> <p><i>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!</i></p>	
					

Wine, Chocolate and Belikin: Where can I get my tickets? Tickets available from the Toledo Tourism Information Centre on Front Street in PG, BTIA office on North Park Street in Belize City and the BTB office on Regent Street, Kakaw Chocolate in San Pedro, Goss Chocolate in Seine Bight and .the BTIA Office in Placencia.

Wine, Chocolate, and Belikin – Friday 24th May (tickets BZ\$50 in advance, BZ\$60 at the door)

Lubaantun finale - Sunday 26th May (adults BZ\$10, high school students BZ\$5, primary school students BZ\$2) Tickets at the entrance; no advanced ticket sales

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WINE, CHOCOLATE & BELIKIN
Friday, 24th May



TASTE OF TOLEDO
Saturday, 25th May



LUBAANTUN FINALE
Sunday, 26th May



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Southern Voices: Kamela Palma



Kamela Palma is a resident of Punta Gorda in Toledo. She has had a varied career, at one time having been Principal of St Peter Claver College in Punta Gorda Town and Lecturer at the Belize Teachers’ Training College, CEO in the Ministry of Human Development, then Deputy Ambassador at the Belize Mission in Guatemala City and most recently she has returned from a posting as Belize’s High Commissioner in London.

Have you always lived in Toledo, Kamela? My grandfather, Guillermo Palma, came to Belize with his family from Santa Rosa de Copan in Honduras where the famous Mayan site of Copan is located just a mile across the border from Guatemala. He came to work as a manual labourer on a farm known as El Dorado close to Forest Home and the present day dolomite quarry. Though uneducated he was obviously someone with a vision, for after a few years he was able to acquire property in the area of what is now Big Falls village. He called his place, a mile square, Missouri and it is located east of the bridge downstream from the present day village. He was the first ‘local’ to plant sugar cane and to produce brown sugar for commercial purposes. Eventually all his brothers arrived to work with him. He married Angelina Pattico and their only daughter was Isabel Palma, my mother. This is the same Isabel Palma whom the new clinic in San Antonio is named after. She worked throughout the country as a Rural Health Nurse and she was posted for many years in San Antonio village to serve all the villages of Toledo West. My Father was Carlton Fairweather, a distinguished gentleman who had served the Motherland by travelling to the United Kingdom to join the World War 2 effort and who returned to serve in the Government Service of his beloved Belize.

So you are of Hispanic origin? Well I am a true Creole. I have Mayan, Spanish, African and Scottish blood. When I drink that is the Scottish side coming out. The African side shows itself when I dance and the Spanish when I argue or sing and my Mayan side when I am spiritual and introspective.

What are the most significant changes you have seen in

Toledo in your lifetime? For me the biggest change is the road link with the north. I remember as a little girl travelling to Belize by boat. There were three passenger/cargo boats. The “Heron H”, “The Mayan Prince” and “The Honduran”. It was a long overnight journey. There were cabins available with two bunks or you could sit on deck on in the lounges. I remember the pigs squealing down in the hold. Punta Gorda was not the end of the line since the boats went on to Puerto Barrios. They then returned to Punta Gorda and made that return journey to Belize City, stopping at all the coastal settlements on the way. I began to travel by road in the late sixties when I was attending sixth form college in Belize City.

Are you optimistic about the development of tourism in Toledo? I am most optimistic about tourism down here. Toledo really is a gem but I am concerned about how we go about it. I think that we can become an example of best practice in sustainable tourism but we need to create the right image and attract the kind of tourist concerned about sustainability and cultural preservation.

What can PG Town Council do to support tourism? When the new road through the villages to Guatemala is completed it is likely to have an impact on Punta Gorda town itself because it will no longer be at the end of the road. The Council needs to help make PG so desirable that visitors will still want to come here. I think there is a need in Punta Gorda Town for a cultural centre or museum highlighting the richness of the different cultures.

Do you prefer the reef or rainforest? That is a really difficult choice because I love them both. But if forced to choose then I would have to say that I am more taken spiritually by the rainforest.

And if a tourist can only visit one place in Toledo which would it be? Well I would like one at sea and two inland. West Snake Caye is a wonderful place to visit and I love to look back to the mainland with the silhouettes of the Seven Hills and the Maya Mountains. Inland the Mayan sites of Lubaantun and Nim Li Punit both have a great sense of spirituality and when visiting I feel so much a part of the place.

What is your favourite time of the year? I love Easter when the trade winds are blowing from the north east and the leaves shimmer in the heat and of course I love Christmas anywhere in the world.

What is your favourite Belizean dish? It’s a sin to ask anyone to choose only one. I love “tamalitos” known as “dukunu” by many Belizeans. That is green corn, ground, seasoned, wrapped and cooked in the leaves of the young corn. I really love cohune cabbage that the East Indians make and another favourite is “Boil Up”. That is pig’s tail boiled until tender or salted or fresh fish (sometimes both pigtail and fish are included) along with ground food such as cassava, yam, yampi and ripe and green plantain. It is served with a rich onion and tomati.

My favourite rice and beans is made with the black-eyed beans and lots of coconut milk.

Wat’s Cookin?

Twisted Creole Lobster

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 7 minutes

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

¼ cup chopped cilantro

¼ cup chopped onion

¼ cup grated carrot

1 medium green pepper finely chopped

1 tbs minced garlic

¼ tsp salt

¼ tsp Complete Seasoning

½ tsp butter

1 lb lobster diced into 1” cubes

½ cup freshly squeezed coconut milk

DIRECTIONS

1. Mix cilantro, onion, carrot, green pepper, garlic, salt and Complete Seasoning together. Use this mixture to season the lobster cubes.
2. Heat a pot to medium heat; melt butter before adding seasoned lobster. Simmer and stir for 3 minutes.
3. Add coconut milk, stir and simmer 4 more minutes.

Recipe kindly donated by :



Restaurant Guide				
Asha's Culture Kitchen	80 Front Street, south of market, only building over the sea	Creole/Seafood/BBQ and Vegetarian	632-8025	Daily from 12:00-14:00 (lunch ONLY during high season) 16:00-24:00 (dinner/bar year-round).
Belcampo	Wilson’s Road	Pan Central American and International	722-0050	Lunch: noon-14:30. Dinner: 19:30-22:00. (Reservations preferred)
Bone Ville Cafe	Jose Maria Nunez Street, next to University of Belize campus	Fast Food/Catering	702-2009/669-3299	Monday to Friday: 10:00 to 21:00. Closed on Wednesday and school vacation time.
Coleman’s Cafe	Big Falls Village, near the rice mill	Belizean	720-2017	Daily: 11:30-16:00 & 18:00-21:00 (Reservations Preferred)
Drift Wood Cafe	Front Street, next to James Bus Line	Vegetarian		
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 Welcome sign	Local & international vegetarian / 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	Main St, PG	Chinese	722-2064	Daily: 10:00-14:00 & 17:00 - midnight
Mangrove Restaurant	Cattle Landing, by the curve	Belizean / International	623-0497	Daily: 17:00-22:00. (Reservations preferred)
Marian’s Bay View Restaurant	Front St, south of the market by the sea	East Indian/ Belizean/Catering	722-0129	Mon-Sat: 11:00-14:00 & 18:00-22:00 Sun & Hols: noon – 14:00 & 19:00-21:00
Martina’s Kitchen	Main Street, beside tortilla factory	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 on 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
Starz Diner	BTL parking lot, PG	Belizean		Mon. to Sat. 7:00 to 15:00 Closed on Sundays
The Lodge at Big Falls	Big Falls Village, near the rice mill	International/ Middle Eastern / Belizean	732-4444	Daily: 11:30–14:00 & 18:30–21:00 (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

Golden Stream Spice Farm

The Howler staff had passed by the farm in Golden Stream dozens of times, idly wondering who might live there and what they were up to. About a year ago signs went up along the highway advertising the Golden Stream Spice Farm and Botanical Gardens. Then the Spice Farm became one of BTIA's newest members and the Howler decided it was time to go and take a look.

The farm belongs to Dr Thomas and Mrs Tessie Matthew who have been here in southern Belize since 1989-90 dividing their time between Washington DC, where Dr Matthew



Dr Thomas Mathew stands besides a banyan tree

practises as an anesthesiologist. They own an area of 500 acres that includes a well-



A ripe fruit of the nutmeg. The familiar dark brown nut is inside .

established citrus plantation but their true love lies in all the other things that they are growing there. They include both indigenous



Seed pods of the vanilla orchid

species like vanilla and exotics like cinnamon and nutmeg.

The first species on our tour of the spice farm was cardamom, another exotic, native to the Indian sub-continent. I love using it in making curries in particular but have always bought it on trips outside Belize. Now I can find it nine miles up the road! And I was very surprised to discover it growing at the base of a plant that looked similar to a ginger. The plants grow in semi-shade in rows. The intention is to develop this as a commercial crop. The cardamom pods are harvested and dried between February and May.

Another commercial crop is the vanilla production that many visitors are surprised to learn comes from the vanilla orchid. Vanilla comes in both wild and commercial varieties. We found them growing up the trunks of madre de cacao trees that were there simply to provide support for the orchids. The vanilla is normally harvested in November.

The farm's black pepper production already provides two thousand pounds of peppercorns annually for the Belize market and Dr Matthew is working with the Toledo Cacao Growers Association to create further income streams for the associa-

tion's farmer members. December is harvest time for the black pepper and nutmeg is produced in small quantities all year round.

Faustino Che from Silver Creek village has been the long term manager of the farm and its twenty-five workers who are mainly employed on tending the citrus plantation.

The spice farm is a labour of love that began more than twenty years ago and the love affair continues. The climate of Belize is not too different from that of Dr Mathew's native Kerala state in south west India and quite a number of specimens have been imported from



Flowers and seeds of the cardamom

there. Apart from the commercial crops you can find the fragrant sandalwood growing that is such a distinctive smell in the middle east and south Asia and widely used for incense. There are also stands of several bamboo species.


The tour of the farm covers quite some distance and may be too much for less fit visitors. But help is at hand because, when the Howler visited, workers were putting the finishing touches to a charabanc on which guests will be pulled behind a small tractor for their guided tour. A restaurant is also part of the plans for future development of the farm.

For more information:

Phone 732-4014 or Email

goldenstreamspicefarm@gmail.com

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TASTE OF TOLEDO

Saturday, May 25 - Punta Gorda

LUBAANTUN FINALE

Sunday, May 26 - Lubaantun
 Archaeological Site



BTIA TOLEDO MEMBERS 2013

Business	Contact Person	Phone Number	Email
Asha's Culture Kitchen	Ashton Martin	632-8025	ashasculturekitchen@gmai.com
Belcampo	Shirelymae Parham	722-0050	info@belcampobz.com
Beya Suites	Lisa Avila	722-2188	info@beyasuites.com
Big Falls Extreme Adventure and Las Fal-das	Andrew Caliz	634-6979/620-3881	andrewcaliz@bigfallsextremeadventures.com
Catarina Choco, Deputy Manager The Lodge at Big Falls	Catarina Choco	634-6772	catarinachoco@gmail.com
Coleman's Café	Thomas & Pearleen Cole-man	630-4069 / 630-4432	belizetom@aol.com
Coral House Inn	Ale Cho	722-2878	coralhousebelize@yahoo.com
Cuxlin Ha Retirement Village	Dona Scafe	732-4747	cuxlinha@hotmail.com
Dreamlight Computer Center	Timothy Dami	702-0113	dreamlightpg@yahoo.com
Garbutt's Fishing Lodge	Dennis Garbutt	722-0070 / 604-3548	garbuttsmarine@yahoo.com
Golden Stream Plantation	Thomas & Tessy Mathew	732-4014	goldenstreamspicefarm@gmail.com
Hickatee Cottages	Ian & Kate Morton	662-4475	www.hickatee.com
Ixcacao Maya Belizean Chocolate	Juan Cho	742-4050	theorganicmaster@gmail.com
Living Maya Experience	Anita Cal & Marta Chiac	627-7408/632-4585	livingmayaexperience@gmail.com
Requena's Charter Service	Julio Requena	722-2070	watertaxi@btl.net
The Farm Inn	Petro Steunenber	732-4781 / 604-4918	info@thefarminbelize.com
The Lodge at Big Falls	Rob & Marta Hirons	732-4444 / 671-6677	info@thelodgeatbigfalls.com
Tide Tours	Delonie Forman	722-2129	info@tidetours.org
Toledo Tour Guide Association	BTIA Office	637-2000	ttga@gmail.com
Tranquility Lodge	Lee & Susan Oltmann	677-9921	tranquilitylodge28@gmail.com
Warasa Garifuna Drumming School	Ruth & Ronald McDonald	632-7701	warasadrumschool@gmail.com



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13th Annual Christmas Bird Count



Crested Caracara: photo courtesy of Ryan Phillips of the Belize Raptor Research Institute

The 13th annual Punta Gorda Christmas Bird Count was held on 5 January. We had an excellent turnout with 33 participants organized into 7 teams. We recorded 5221 birds representing 240 species. Despite the large turnout, we fell short of our yearly average of 248 species and 5958 individuals, but the results may have been affected by the weather. The day started out bright and sunny start, but it began to rain around mid-morning and did not let up until mid-afternoon. The lower-than-average total was also affected by our inability to get into Aguacaliente Lagoon this year. This cost us at least half a dozen species. The boardwalk is now in such disrepair that it can

no longer be used. The water was also higher than it has been in several years, and much of the trail was under water. It is a pity that all the hard work that went into constructing the boardwalk has come to naught for lack of maintenance, leaving one of the country's birdiest wildlife sanctuaries essentially inaccessible to the public.

Count highlights were Crested Caracara, Aplomado Falcon, and Rufous-browed Peppershrike, all of which were new for the count, and Common Gallinule and Olive-sided Flycatcher, which were seen for only the second time in thirteen years.

The effects of deforestation over the years are being reflected in the changing types and numbers of birds seen on the count since its inception in 2000. White-tipped Dove, unlike its close cousins, the Gray-chested Dove and Gray-headed Dove, is exhibiting a distinct upward

trend in numbers. In 1999, Toledo recorded its first White-tipped Dove, a bird found just across the border from Stann Creek near Independence. The first one was recorded on the P.G. count in 2004. This year we recorded 19. Of its two forest relatives, we recorded only 6 Gray-chested Doves, and for the fourth year out of the last five we found no Gray-headed Doves.

Crested Caracara is another bird of open pastureland and savannas. It was unrecorded in Belize twenty years ago and not recorded in Toledo until 2007 when one was seen at Aguacaliente Lagoon chasing an Osprey, intent on depriving it of its next meal, a fish it had just nabbed from the lagoon. On the count, one was found in one of the large pastures

recently carved out of the forest near Boom Creek. The two Aplomado Falcons were also found there. The Rufous-browed Peppershrike was found along the entrance road to Cotton Tree Lodge, also on the edge of a pasture.

On the down side, we missed eight species for the first time in the 13-year count history: Black-crowned Night-Heron, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Short-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Sepia-capped Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Tawny-crowned Greenlet, and Red-crowned Ant-Tanager.



Aplomado Falcon photo courtesy of Ryan Phillips

Find out more about the Belize Raptor Research Institute at www.belize-raptor-research.org and at www.facebook.com/pages/Belize-Raptor-Research-Institute.

The Belize Bird Records Committee

Segueing to another aspect of birding, Belize now has a bird records committee. Formed in December 2011 and now in its second year, the Belize Bird Records Committee, or BBRC, is comprised of eight members. Chaired by Punta Gorda resident Lee Jones, the committee also has one other member from Toledo, Steven Choco, the bird guide at The Lodge at Big Falls. The BBRC maintains the official list of birds recorded in Belize. It resolves the problem of what to do with reports of birds rarely seen in Belize, including those being reported for the first time. Since birding, unlike scientific collecting, relies heavily on sight records, the seven BBRC voting members (the secretary does not vote) decide which reported species to accept as valid records and which to reject as un-

supported. The BBRC still has a number of older records to vote on before it can come up with a sanctioned list of Belize birds, but it is likely to be close to 590 species. With one or two species being added each year, it will not be long before Belize reaches the 600 species milestone. The latest species new to Belize have mostly been ducks: Redhead, Gadwall, and Ruddy Duck, plus a few other odds and ends such as Hermit Thrush and Black Swift. Although none of these has yet been accepted by a vote of the BBRC, all were photographed, which certainly helps the BBRC in coming to a conclusion as to their validity.

(Right) An Aplomado Falcon in flight



Arzu on Medicinal Plants: Theobroma Cacao

Theobroma Cacao - The cacao is a true botanical team player by design, and insistently dependent on the rain forest for its odd environmental requirements. It is one of the easiest rain forest dwellers to identify. Native cacao varieties are mostly found growing in association with taller shade trees like the aptly named "madre cacao" in order to protect young saplings from direct sunlight. The cacao is not among the taller trees of the rainforest, and only grows from 10 to 20m at the most. The tree's bark and branches are covered with grayish brown mossy patches of colored lichen and fungi. Young cacao trees seldom drop their leaves. They are not deciduous and you can see large old glossy green leaves and new limp red leaves growing on the tree at the same time, and on the same stems. But after the trees are well established, they form a forest canopy of their own, and the forest floor beneath them becomes thick with a mat of fallen leaves that return nutrients to the soil. Those leaves, together with the shade from the canopy, inhibit the growth of weeds under the trees, something that we cacao farmers obviously welcome!

The pollen of the cacao is another oddity, it is too thick and heavy for the wind to carry. The plant is incapable of pollinating itself, and requires the help and cooperation of other species and microscopic insects of the rain forest to produce and reproduce. The tiny pinkish flowers of the cacao plant are also odd; growing in cauliflower like clusters from stems of older branches that were merely leaves the year before. Cacao flowers are in such harmony with our planetary solar system that they are fertile only from sunrise to sunset. They die and drop to the ground if they are not pollinated during that daytime window. If they are indeed pollinated by some loving creepy crawler, we are blessed with a cacao fruit. The cacao fruit develops as green oblong squash-like pods that grow anywhere from four to twelve inches long, depending on the species. In the six months the cacao fruit take to mature, they gradually make their way through the spectrum of light, going from green to yellow, to orange or to red, depending on the variety. Some even odder species go as far as purple before they mature. Each pod contains a load of about fifty or so neatly stacked seeds; each individually embedded in a deliciously fragrant sweet and sour ivory white pulp. As children growing up in Dangriga, we would eat cacao fruit once or twice per year. We would suck the seeds dry until our cheeks hurt before discarding them. In our childhood innocence, we did not know that we were rejecting the most valuable part of the cacao, the seeds that provide the raw material used to make chocolate.

Indigenous people believe cacao was originally planted by the Gods. There may be more truth than folklore in the scientific name "Theobroma Cacao." The scientific botanical name of the cacao is a composite of two Greek words (Theos=God and Broma=food) which literally translate as "Food of the Gods". Unlike most fruiting trees, the cacao can live beyond 200 years and continue to bear fruit for over 25 years. There is reportedly a cacao tree growing in Barranco that is believed to be over one hundred years of age and still bearing cacao fruit. The oldest trees on our property are at least sixty years old, and are by no means the oldest in the village...and they are still bearing. My uncle told me that when he was a child in Barranco, just about every yard in the village had a few bearing cacao trees. Baranguna used to dry and process the cacao beans and preserve them in balls that



A farmer splits pen a ripe cacao pod to reveal the pulp covered beans

could be made into a delicious chocolate drink on demand.

Yes, chocolate drinks and candy really do have medicinal uses and can even be considered a health food. High cacao content chocolate drinks have been proven to have stimulating and anti-depressant properties. They are nutritional and provide a good energizing remedy for mental and physical exhaustion. High cacao content chocolate drinks are especially recommended for women who suffer from PMS and already like chocolate because it makes them happy. The very fragrance of chocolate makes us swoon and smile. We crave it because our bodies know there is something in it that is good for us, and its all true. High cacao content chocolate is rich in B vitamins, (riboflavin, niacin, thiamine), calcium, iron, potassium and magnesium and also contains vitamins A, C, D, and E. It is particularly rich in magnesium, which may be the reason why chocolate is often craved as a menstrual tension reliever. Magnesium influences female hormone levels, which are responsible for the mood swings associated with PMS. Magnesium deficiency is also associated with heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and joint problems. Recent scientific research suggests that chocolate may prevent arterial plaque. Chocolate was found to contain flavonoids that function as antioxidants of the bloodstream. Increased antioxidants in our bloodstream lower the probability of artery clogging cells. Darker chocolate provides twice the amount of antioxidants than light chocolate. However, both light and dark chocolate are more antioxidant than prunes, raisins, berries, and leafy green vegetables.

But the above statements only hold true if you are referring to real unadulterated chocolate made with enough actual cacao. The determining factors for any possible health benefits depend on the amount and quality of cacao used in the chocolate. The chocolate bars in sweet shops with fancy wrappers

and big name brands are NOT what I am talking about here. Most chocolate bars and products contain only enough cacao solids mixed in for flavoring, and more amounts of harmful emulsified fats, sugars, pasteurized cow's milk, artificially extracted natural flavorings, colors, and preservatives. Milk chocolate candy bars contain (by law) animal fats, and/or palm oil, both of which are known to raise cholesterol levels. Such chocolates and chocolate products are no longer healthy, and barely recognizable as a byproduct of our sacred cacao.

The only chocolate products we can count on for any positive effects on our well-being are the ones we make ourselves like we did in Barranco, or those made locally by our own IXCA-CAO Mayan Belizean Chocolate; all produced from the same unadulterated Theobroma Cacao originally planted in Belize by the Gods.



Variety of cacao know locally as "balam" and used as currency by the ancient Maya

Contributed by

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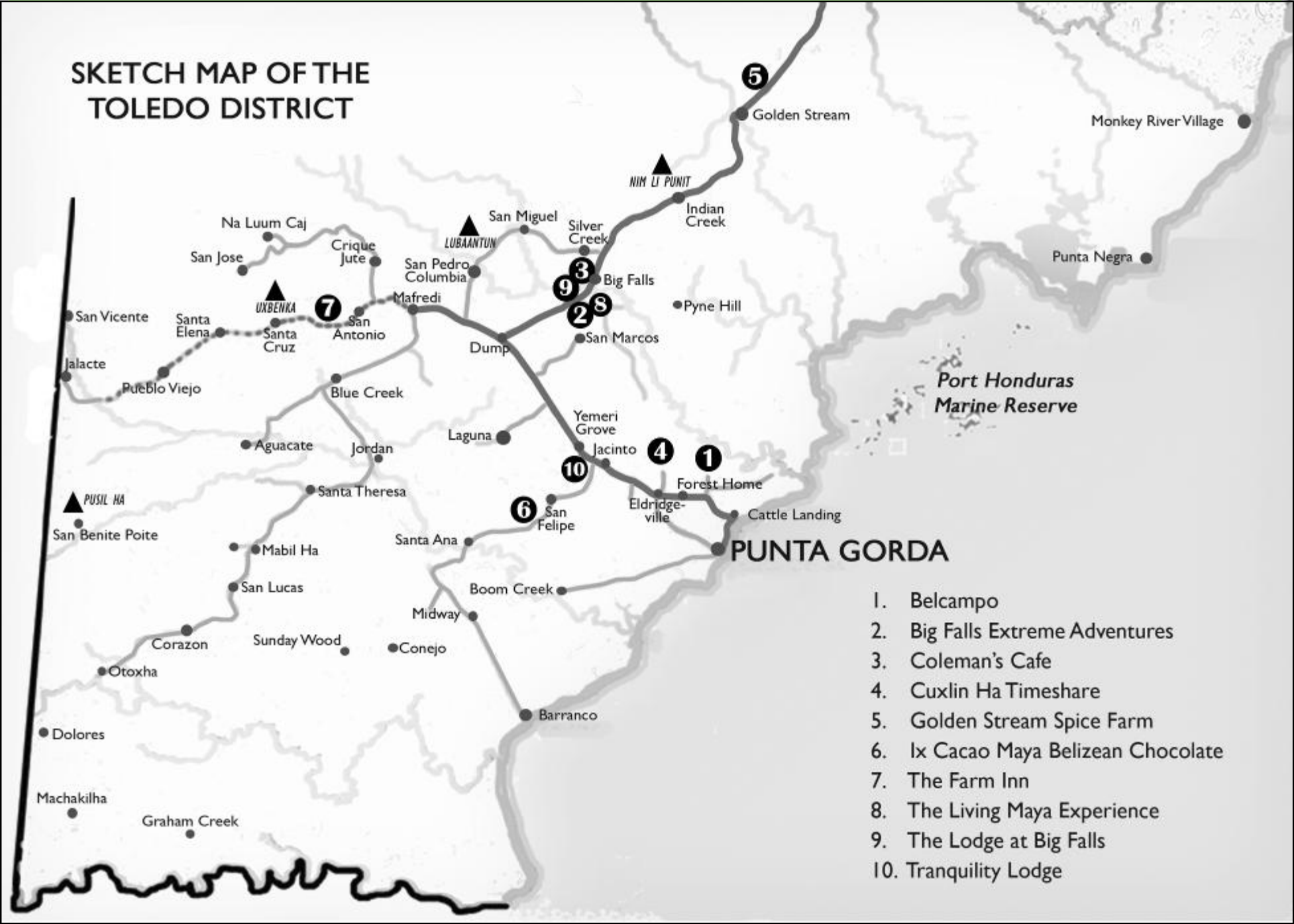
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