



FAQ for Visitors to T.R.E.E.S



***Due to COVID there are a few travelling restrictions in Belize, visit this website for more information:
[https://belizetourismboard.org/news-and-gallery/belize-covid-19-travel-updates/#!](https://belizetourismboard.org/news-and-gallery/belize-covid-19-travel-updates/)***

General FAQ

How do I Get to T.R.E.E.S?

The T.R.E.E.S Research Center can be found at mile marker 27.5 of the Hummingbird Hwy in the Stann Creek District of Belize. We are centrally located and easily accessible from the highway so you can travel here easily on your own by public transit which is the most economical choice. However, we are easily accessible by car (4 x 4 not necessary) if you choose to rent a vehicle while in Belize. Guests travelling southbound from The Phillip Goldson International Airport via public transport should have a 1 hour bus ride from Belize City to Belmopan which costs \$2.50 USD. However you will need to take a taxi from the airport to the bus terminal in Belize City (\$25 US for two people). The bus ride from Belmopan to our centre is about 45 minutes and costs \$1.50 USD. The car ride travelling southbound is approximately 1.5 hrs from Belize City and if you choose to hire a taxi all the way from the airport you will be charged between \$135 and \$150 USD.

If you are coming from the south (i.e., Dangriga) we are about 2 miles north of Middlesex. From the bus terminal take a bus that is northbound to Belmopan or Belize City. The ride takes around 45 minutes and should cost \$1.50 USD. If you are arriving from the Dangriga airport we suggest that you take a taxi to the bus terminal which is about 10 minutes away and should not cost more than \$5.00 USD. Again, most conductors know where we are located, but if not, we are 2 miles north of Middlesex.

What's the environment like at T.R.E.E.S?

The dominant ecosystem present at our site is Lowland Broadleaf Forest. Dominant plant species associated with this habitat and geology include Cohune Palm, Tree Ferns, a multitude of bromeliads and other epiphytes, many lianas and vines especially philodendrons, and a variety of hardwood tree species such as Ironwood, Mahogany, and Sapodilla. Habitat types represented include a combination of primary and secondary growth moist broadleaf forest, moist broadleaf riparian forest, an organic fruit orchard, an old overgrown orchard and pasture, and mixed forested edge and open edge habitat immediately surrounding the center. Dry Creek, a small river, meanders for about 1 km through the length of the property and is fed by an assortment of mountain tributaries scattered throughout the site, providing ample freshwater habitat for aquatic and semi-aquatic species. Over 10 km of trails run through the property and connect on the neighbouring property and into the Forest Reserve.

Where do I sleep?

At T.R.E.E.S there are four (4) sleeping arrangements available to guests; these include our private Jungle Cabins (studio and family-style), Fully Furnished Casita, Jungle Bunkhouses, and Camping. The studio Jungle Cabins are stand-alone cabins ideally suited for guests that prefer privacy. The family-style Jungle Cabins are great for family and friend groups that want to share a common deck but sleep in separate rooms. All of the jungle cabins can bunk up to 5 individuals (and some can sleep up to 6). Beds can be alternately arranged into King-sized options for couples (1 couple per cabin, plus one additional individual). Our beds are all fitted with comfortable mattresses to guarantee a good night's sleep. Each cabin comes with a large deck with hammocks, tables, and chairs overlooking the luscious jungle or the beautiful Maya Mountains and also equipped with fire alarms, fire extinguishers, fans, bedding, and towels. Jungle cabins have shared toilet and shower facilities which are not inside the cabins but are only a short walk from all cabins. All showers are hot/cold water and toilets are flush toilets. The two Jungle Bunkhouses can sleep up to 10 and 12 people in bunk-beds with comfortable mattresses and all of the same amenities as the private Jungle Cabins. Guests staying in the Jungle Cabins or Jungle Bunkhouses can order meals from our on-site restaurant or cook for themselves in the communal kitchen.

The Casita, a small fully-furnished house, has two single beds in a bedroom (that can be rearranged into a King-sized bed) and a double hideaway couch bed in the living room. This cabin is ideal for instructors and group leaders that wish to be away from their group in the evenings or eco-tourists that want a little more luxury in the jungle. The Casita has a bathroom (hot shower, flush toilet), bedroom, living room, and a small equipped kitchenette (propane stove, refrigerator, etc.). Up to 4 guests can be accommodated in this cabin (3 in the bedroom and 2 on a double futon in the main living room).

For guests looking for the camping experience, T.R.E.E.S offers camping at Camp Toucanet. Camp Toucanet is located in our organic lime orchard about a 10 minute walk from the main buildings and is equipped with 4 beautiful thatch-roof raised platforms, to keep you dry and comfortable even in inclement weather. There is also a bathroom building with two composting toilets, a shower (cold only) and outdoor sink, picnic table, and fire pit. You can either bring your own tent or we can rent you a tent for a small fee.

What are the meal arrangements?

The menus will differ depending on groups and season and specific menus can be created depending on your group needs. We also cater to most diet types and restrictions including: vegetarian, vegan, lactose intolerance, celiac, etc. Our menus are composed of a variety of dishes, from local Belizean classics to international classics, to just simple comfort food.

Meals are served buffet-style in the main dining area that can host up to 40 guests. Fresh juice, coffee, and tea can be made available at all times for groups upon request. You also have access to unlimited purified drinking water and purified ice. Our centre is a licensed facility and we offer wine and beer at Belizean prices and we also sell soft drinks such as Coke and Sprite.

Interns, volunteers, and eco-tourists on a budget can prepare their own gourmet meals in our communal kitchen, which is fully equipped with toaster oven, propane stove, coffee machine, rice cooker, blender, pots and pans, and cutlery. There is also a good selection of spices and basic cooking items (vegetable oil, hot sauce, salt and pepper, etc.) which are provided. The kitchen and dining area can easily accommodate 10 guests. When there

are large groups or different groups that want to use the kitchen, a cooking schedule is enforced to ascertain that everyone has a pleasant experience in the kitchen.

How can I connect to the outside world?

We are surprisingly well-connected to the outside world for being in the jungle in a developing country. However, we ask that guests please anticipate limitations. Though we do offer free hi-speed internet Wifi for guests, the maximum limit of data use per connected device per day is 50 MB, which is plenty for keeping in touch with your loved ones via instant messaging or even WhatsApp/Skype audio calls back home as well as basic email, but limits the use of video chatting, YouTube, and other data heavy uses. Our phone service is very reliable and guests can always call out for a fee of \$0.50 US/minute (even internationally), or receive unlimited incoming calls free of charge.

If you expect to have high data usage needs then we suggest you plan to purchase your own Digicell SIM card to go in your International phone, which can be purchased at T.R.E.E.S for \$15.00 US. Make sure your phone is unlocked to take advantage of this service. Data plans can be purchased for \$6 US/GB of data and we sell credit for these plans at T.R.E.E.S.

What additional services does T.R.E.E.S offer?

In addition to our ecological and educational activities offered at the centre which can be found on our website, we also employ professional biologists who can be hired to teach aspects of courses, either via lectures or through field and lab experiments. We also offer additional services such as Event Hosting and Eco-Tourism. Full rental of our facility is available and ideal for weddings, family gatherings, elementary and high school outings, professional retreats, conferences, and more. We have activities for all tastes for guests who wish to experience the wonders of the Maya Mountains with the most picturesque back-drop the country has to offer. There is a well-designed trail system, two jungle swimming holes, a variety of tours available on-site and at nearby attractions, a volleyball field, soccer field, board games, etc. We also have a yoga platform and events stage and we can arrange to have some of the best local musicians in the country play for your event.

Our facility is registered with the Belize Tourism Board and we are open to eco-tourists, both eco-tour groups and individuals. All of the activities and educational opportunities we offer at the centre can be enjoyed by tourists. Because our lodging and meal rates are very reasonable and we are centrally located within Belize, we are also a great location to stay for groups and individuals wanting to take day trips to major attractions throughout Belize and still come back to a delicious home-cooked meal and your same comfortable bed each night.

We also offer laundry services for \$5 US per wash/dry/fold.

What Health and safety measures does T.R.E.E.S have in place?

To ensure your quick recovery in the rare case of a serious emergency we ask that all visitors to our centre present proof of adequate travel medical insurance, specifically with emergency air evacuation coverage. Though hospitals in Belize are very adequate for dealing with routine injuries (including snake bite), major emergencies are better handled outside of Belize.

Your health and safety are very important to us at T.R.E.E.S and as such we have the following measures in place:

- We have a first aid station that is always fully stocked and all field staff and managers have up-to-date first aid certification.
- Field staff and managers are also equipped with first aid kits when in the field with guests.
- The station is equipped with an Epi-Pen.
- All of the cabins and communal facilities are equipped with smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.
- We have an up-to-date emergency preparedness plan as well as evacuation plans if need be.

We also recommend that all guests bring their own first aid kits, sunscreen, and sunburn relief cream, allergy medication, bug repellent, and AfterBite to make their stay at T.R.E.E.S as enjoyable as possible!

What are your rates?

We have both individual rates (lodging and meals separate for 1 – 7 people) and group package rates (groups of 8 people or more with food and lodging included). All of our rates can be found on our website, including rates for accommodations, meals, and available activities. T.R.E.E.S biologists can be hired on-site to assist with teaching at a flat rate of \$150 US/day or off-site at other locations in Belize for \$200 US/day which includes travel expenses. We also have a variety of on-site activities available to guests staying at T.R.E.E.S, ranging from bird and bat mist-netting workshops to guided waterfall hikes to village tours and local cooking workshops. An activity guide can be downloaded from our website.

We will also arrange all your off-site activities and transportation upon request through our Canadian partner company Ecorana Environmental Ltd. If you or your group requires multiple off-site excursions to be organized, we charge a \$50 USD flat-rate travel consulting fee. Rates for off-site excursions and transportation are dependent on the activity and the distance so please contact us directly for pricing. We offer up to 20% discounts for Belizean residents/companies and up to 35% discount to Belizean NGOs and volunteers/students. These discounts are applied to accommodations only for individuals and both meals and accommodations for groups.

How do I pay for my stay?

We have several methods of payment available for clients paying from outside of Belize and within Belize:

- Wire transfer from your financial institution to our Canadian bank account
- Paypal to our Canadian bank account (send to registration@ecorana.ca)
- Personal cheque or money order sent by registered mail to our banker in Vancouver, B.C., to be deposited in our Canadian account
- Canadian clients can also pay by direct deposit into our TD Canada Trust bank account or by Interac e-transfer (sent to registration@ecorana.ca) if you have online banking with almost any Canadian bank
- Clients within Belize can pay us by cheque or by direct deposit into our Belize Scotiabank account or in cash on site (Belize Dollars or U.S. Dollars accepted).

Detailed banking information (including account numbers) will be sent along with your invoice depending on your location and desired mode of payment. Unfortunately at this time we have no method of accepting credit cards within Belize and thus Paypal is the only payment option if you wish to pay by credit card.

What should I bring besides my usual personal belongings?

Flash rains do occur at any time of the year up in the mountains, even during the dry season, so we highly suggest that you bring some boots to work in the jungle as well as some rain gear, at least a fast-drying rain jacket.

- Rain gear
- Insect Repellent (bug spray)
- Sturdy hiking shoes/boots
- Rain (rubber) boots and/or Tevas or other hiking sandals that can be used in the water
- Sandals and summer clothes
- Bathing Suit
- Beach towel for swimming at the river (our towels are for bathing use only)
- Long pants (preferably light, quick-dry material)
- At least one warm shirt
- At least one quick-drying long sleeved shirt
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Headlamp/flashlight (Important for Bat Workshop)
- Bat Gloves (Thick gloves that have good dexterity and are as tight-fitting as possible. I.e, good examples are leather driving gloves, golfing gloves, or working gloves) important for Bat Workshop
- Binoculars and/or Camera
- A Rite-in-the-Rain book with waterproof paper to use as a field journal
- USB thumb drive
- Rubber boots
- **Books (adults, children, and science texts) to donate to our community library***
- **Field and/or lab equipment to donate to our field station***
- **Sports equipment, arts and crafts supplies, games, etc. to donate for our community programs***

***Of course these are optional supplies but if you do have room in your luggage and wish to donate some stuff that you no longer need to a good cause, we will happily accept your donations!**

Traveling to Belize

To make your trip to Belize go as smoothly as possible, we suggest the following tips!!!

Persons entering Belize are NO longer required to download and complete the Belize Health App prior to arrival BUT you still must book a stay at the Gold Standard Hotel and present confirmation at immigration. You are required to complete the Customs and Immigration form that is provided to you on your flight to Belize.

Effective August 19th, 2021, ALL travellers, both vaccinated and unvaccinated, entering Belize through the International Airport from other countries will be required to present a negative COVID-19 Test. A negative result of a Covid- 19 PCR test taken within 96 hours of travel or a negative rapid test from any approved Antigen Rapid Test taken within 48 hours of travel is required. If no test is presented, a COVID-19 test will be administered at the airport for a fee of \$50 USD per passenger. Children under 5 are not required to present a negative test.

For more detailed information on COVID protocols visit : <https://belizetourismboard.org/news-and-gallery/belize-covid-19-travel-updates/#!>

Passport

To enter Belize you will need a passport valid for more than six months before its expiration date. It can take as many as 6 weeks to obtain a passport, so get ready in advance. Nationals of the United States, Canada, Mexico, European Union countries, Norway, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Venezuela and members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) don't need a visa to enter the country.

Tourists who aren't from the previously mentioned countries may be required to apply and pay for a tourist visa before coming to Belize and, in some cases, might have to acquire permission from Belize Immigration to enter the country. Visas can cost anywhere from USD\$100 to USD\$2,000 depending on your nationality. Belize allows visitors a maximum of one month's stay in the country before they require an extension obtained through the Belize Ministry of Defense and Immigration. Longer stays can be granted on a monthly basis for \$100 US per month, up to 6 months.

Vaccines and Prophylactics

We recommend the use of a travel clinic in preparing for travel to any foreign destination. These clinics will check the current recommendations for your destination country and then provide the appropriate vaccines and medications for such things as malaria prophylaxis. Although the incidence of malaria is very low in Belize, a prophylactic drug could be taken, this is a personal decision and that of your travel clinic doctor. As travelling anywhere in the world, Hepatitis A and B shots are recommended as well as up to date Tetanus, and Typhoid may be recommended if you will be in country for more than two weeks and traveling to remote villages. There is a low risk of dengue in the country but it is present. Unfortunately, there are no vaccines to be taken for dengue.

Flights

We recommend that you purchase your tickets online using any of the various travel websites (e.g. Travelocity.com or Hotwire.com). These will provide you with flight options in order of cost. Remember to shop around, as different sites will offer deals through various carriers.

From the U.S., most people can still find flights for under \$700 from a major airport.

From Canada, most can still find flights for under \$800 from the big cities. As of yet, there are no direct flights from Canada. There are rumours that West Jet may fly to Placencia shortly, but these are still only rumours.

Be sure of your travel dates, as changing flights can be expensive or impossible for certain deals (e.g. hotwire does not allow any change of flights). Your destination will be the PHILIP S W GOLDSOHN INTL in Belize City.

Language

English is the official language of Belize and is spoken throughout the country, although only 4 % of the population speak it as their first language. English is the primary language of public education, with Spanish taught in primary and secondary school as well. Bilingualism is very common. Literacy currently stands at nearly 80%.

All courses at T.R.E.E.S will be taught in English though French and Spanish are also spoken by the staff.

The Belizean Kriol, an English-based Kriol is spoken throughout the country as well as Spanish. Then there many other languages regularly spoken in specific areas of Belize., the breakdown of spoken languages is as follows: Spanish 46%, Creole 32.9%, Mayan dialects, 8.9%, English 3.9% (official language), Garifuna 3.4% (Carib), German (Germanic Plautdietsch, spoken by the Mennonites) 3.3%, other 1.4%.

Money

The Belize Dollar is the official currency of Belize. For several decades now the Belize Dollar has been tied to the U.S. dollar at an official rate of two Belize Dollars to one US dollar, thus, one U.S. dollar equals two Belize dollars. While not recommended as a day to day practice most establishments will accept American money, this even includes the little food stores, as long as the bills are not too big.

There is a bank machine in the Airport that will hand out Belize dollars as well as a Money Exchange office. There are also bank machines in the larger cities (Belmopan, Dangriga, Placencia, etc.). We recommend travelling with some cash but there is no need to travel with large amounts as you can withdraw money from bank machines using foreign cards in all major towns.

Most larger stores, particularly tourist shops, will nearly always accept credit cards.

Telephone/Internet

Belize has two internet/telephone companies that both provide phone and Data (internet, 4G LTE) service. Only Digicell has SIM cards that can work with international phones, which can be purchased at T.R.E.E.S for \$15.00 USD. Make sure your phone is unlocked to take advantage of this service. Data plans can be purchased for \$6 US/GB of data and can also be purchased at T.R.E.E.S. Though Digicell does not work everywhere in rural areas, it does work in most of the country and will be the fastest and most reliable way to keep you connected on your trip. It is also significantly cheaper than paying for a roaming plan from your at-home network.

Packing

Pack light but bring everything you may need. Goods purchased in Belize (such as batteries and film) may be much more expensive and of inferior quality to those you are accustomed to purchasing. We supply bedding (sheets, pillows, and blankets) and towels at T.R.E.E.S (though towels are supplied for short-term guests, longer-term interns and volunteers should bring their own towels). We do not supply bath products (soap, shampoo, conditioner). Many field stations and some other types of rustic accommodations in Belize do not supply bedding. Make sure you check with all of your accommodation providers to ensure you are bringing everything you may need. Cabins at T.R.E.E.S have screens as will most other accommodations. However, some people feel more comfortable sleeping under a mosquito net and we recommend bringing a bed net to anyone that wishes. There are hooks above all of the beds for hanging these nets.

Remember, you will be limited to one checked bag on most American airlines and two carry-on bags. We recommend packing light clothes. In most seasons (wet and dry) we recommend gear and clothes that dry quickly, either the wetness of the rainy season or the humidity of the jungle even during the dry season causes things to go moldy rapidly. Long pants and long-sleeved shirts are great at keeping the biting flies away and we usually recommend wearing pants at all times at T.R.E.E.S.

Flash rains do occur during the wet season up in the mountains, so we highly suggest that you bring some boots to work in the jungle as well as some rain gear, at least a fast-drying rain jacket.

- Rain gear
- Insect Repellent (bug spray)
- Sturdy hiking shoes/boots
- Rain (rubber) boots and/or Tevas or other hiking sandals that can be used in the water
- Sandals and summer clothes
- Bathing Suit
- Towel
- Long pants (preferably light, quick-dry material)
- One warm shirt
- At least one quick-drying long sleeved shirt
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- A good book, during those off times
- Headlamp/flashlight
- Binoculars and/or Camera
- A Rite-in-the-Rain book with waterproof paper to use as a field journal
- USB thumb drive
- Sturdy, thick and well-fitted gloves (if you are working with bats)

Other precautions

There are some thefts in Belize; while most incidents are in Belize City and crime is not directly targeted at tourists we recommend that you take the usual precautions.

The first tip is to not look flashy, don't flaunt nice watches, purses, etc. Always carry your money and passport on your person when travelling. Although we have never had any incidences of thieving at T.R.E.E.S., these people

are still around, and you can keep your passport and money in our safe when you arrive at the station, if you so desire.

Make a photocopy of the photo page of your passport and keep this in a separate place from your actual passport. This can aid in getting a new passport should you lose yours.

Bring your driver's licence but leave your school ID and unnecessary credit cards at home. If it is difficult to replace, if you don't need it, or if you can't afford to lose it, leave it at home. The only necessary documentation in Belize is your passport and driver's license if you decide to rent a car or drive for any reason.

If you take medication for any reason, be sure you have an adequate supply.

We suggest that you bring plenty of insect repellent with DEET (25%), although it can be found quite easily in the country (but more expensive than home). One must remember that DEET eats plastic and 100 % DEET is not recommended for direct contact with skin. Citronella insect repellents seem to work quite well for the Botliss flies which are the most common biting insects at T.R.E.E.S.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at info@ecorana.ca