



Intern/Volunteer FAQ

About our companies

Ecorana Environmental is a Canadian-based eco-travel and environmental education company that specializes in designing and organizing low-cost applied learning holidays for students, researchers, and eco-tourists. Ecorana has a formal partnership with **T.R.E.E.S (Toucan Ridge Ecology and Education Society)** in Belize to offer their clients a truly unique experience living in the rainforests of the Maya Mountains at the T.R.E.E.S Hosting Center, a registered tourism facility. T.R.E.E.S is a grassroots not-for-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of Belize's natural and cultural heritage through scientific research, education, local capacity building, and creating income-generating and other community projects that increase the well-being of the people and their surrounding environment.

All of the internships and volunteer projects based out of the T.R.E.E.S Hosting Center are geared towards conservation of the flora and fauna of this extremely biodiverse area, and/or improvement of the lives of the nearby community members. Interns and volunteers play a large role in helping Ecorana and T.R.E.E.S meet their objectives thus you can be assured that your efforts and internship/volunteer fees are used directly to cover the costs of creating/running the internships with any profit going directly to sustaining the local not-for-profit programs.

What is the total cost and conditions of the internship/volunteership?

Internships

Internship rates vary depending on the type of internship and whether the internship includes a meal plan (meals provided for you from our kitchen and cook) or no meal plan (you cook your own meals as a group with groceries provided by us). Whether or not a meal plan option is available depends on timing of your internship – at some points in the year a meal plan may not be available.

Price breakdowns are as follows:

- *Generalist wildlife ecology interns* receive basic training on a combination of wildlife ecology sampling techniques (mammals, birds, herps), work independently on own projects of choice, and also help occasionally with other ongoing farm, trail, or field station maintenance projects:
 - \$329 USD (incl. hotel tax) per week for a 4-week internship with a meal plan OR
 - \$304 USD (incl. hotel tax) per week with no meal plan.
 - Interns that wish to stay longer than 4 weeks pay \$75 USD less per week following the initial 4-week period.
- *Bird and bat mist-netting focused interns* receive specialized focused one-on-one training on mist-netting and banding/processing with certified trainers, can work independently on own projects of choice, but are not required to help on farm, trail, or field station maintenance projects (though may if desired).

- \$379 USD (incl. hotel tax) per week with a meal plan or \$354 USD (incl. hotel tax) per week with no meal plan. Interns that wish to stay longer than 4 weeks pay \$75 USD less per week following the initial 4-week period.

The above Meal Plan rates DO NOT include meals over the weekend. For interns that decide to stay over the weekend that are on a meal plan, groceries will be provided for self-catering at a cost of \$10 USD/day and added to the intern's tab to pay upon check-out. Interns who are not on a meal plan will not be charged an additional fee for weekend groceries.

Volunteerships

Volunteers assist on our organic farm, on cleaning and cooking and maintaining our facilities, trails, and grounds. Some volunteers with skillsets in areas like marketing, education, yoga, etc. are also encouraged to apply their skills in our community.

Price breakdown is as follows:

- \$184 USD (incl. hotel tax) per week for a 4-week volunteership with a meal plan OR
- \$159 USD (incl. hotel tax) with no meal plan.

The above Meal Plan rates DO NOT include meals over the weekend. For interns that decide to stay over the weekend that are on a meal plan, groceries will be provided for self-catering at a cost of \$10 USD/day and added to the intern's tab to pay upon check-out. Interns who are not on a meal plan will not be charged an additional fee for weekend groceries.

For both internships and volunteerships, fees include the following:

- Lodging in shared cabins (maximum of four same-sex interns to a bunk-house room in a bunkhouse of mixed males and females)
- Three meals a day Monday through Friday (meal plan only) or access to basic communal kitchen facilities and supplies (Monday through Sunday)
- Access to all facilities including bathrooms with flush toilets, hot showers, 24-hour electricity, a computer workstation and Wifi (limited use 100 mb per day), all supplies/materials/equipment required for the internship, as well as training by local experts.
- All bedding is provided but interns/volunteers are expected to bring their own towels and other bath essentials. Depending on other groups on site and field station capacity, interns may need to move accommodations during their stay (i.e., from bunkhouse to tents, etc.).

Transportation

Flights are not included in the internship cost, and Ecorana does not provide transport to/from the internship center as the center is on a main bus route and easily accessible by public transit (\$25 USD for taxi to Belize City bus terminal then \$15 USD from Belize City to T.R.E.E.S by bus).

Visas

All visitors to Belize get a 30-day visitor Visa. This Visitor Visa is technically not available for “volunteers” and volunteers are supposed to apply for a special Volunteer Visa however this application and processing is an onerous process. So we ask that you do not tell Customs/Immigrations that you are “volunteering” but rather are just visiting the country as a tourist or else doing an Internship. A Visa extension for interns/volunteers deciding to stay for more than 30-days can be purchased at Immigrations in any of the major towns for \$100 USD/30 days.

Travel Insurance

Interns/volunteers are required to show proof of their own emergency travel medical insurance prior to or upon arrival at the center.

What are the food arrangements?

Meals are included in the cost for interns that choose the meal plan and provided on Monday through Friday. All dietary restrictions and allergies can be accommodated by our cook.

Meal plans may not always be available depending on the internship period. You will be notified in advance if this is the case and charged the intern rate without a meal plan. In this case, whenever the cook is on site, interns will have the option of purchasing meals from our restaurant at the low internship rate of \$5.00 USD/meal.

For interns not on a meal plan, meals are prepared by interns/volunteers with other interns/volunteers and T.R.E.E.S staff in a communal manner and T.R.E.E.S provides the groceries for these meals. We stock basic groceries (produce, meat, oils, spices, etc.) including gluten-free and dairy-free food items. Many of our supplies are grown locally on our farm (including chicken meat and eggs).

What is the length of the internship/volunteership period?

The suggested length of an internship is 4 weeks to really get a feel for the project and grasp the skills and make the most of the training opportunities; it can be shorter or longer if desired. The minimum period for an internship is 2 weeks, and the minimum period for volunteer work is 2 weeks. For anyone choosing to stay longer than 4-weeks, a Visa extension is required (\$100 USD for 30 days).

Is there any form of scholarship available through T.R.E.E.S. or Ecorana to subsidize the costs of the internship?

Unfortunately, our companies do not have funding to provide subsidies. We do consider reducing fees for Latin American students as well as students from other areas that we feel are truly skilled with a lot of experience in the internship topic that would be able to take a leadership role, though we may not be able to reduce the fees completely as we need to at least cover our costs of having interns stay and learn. Depending on the project we bring in local experts to teach which we have to pay for, and we also have to hire employees to work with interns on various projects.

We encourage students to look into grants/scholarships from other sources; there are a lot out there that are not tapped into. For American students, here are some possible sources:

http://www.volunteerforever.com/article_post/200-volunteer-abroad-study-abroad-scholarships-grants
<http://www.gooverseas.com/scholarships-volunteering-abroad>
<http://www.gooverseas.com/blog/65-study-abroad-grants-and-scholarships>
<http://www.sit.edu/studyabroad/959.htm>

We may consider reducing fees dramatically (to as little as \$70 US/week including food) for volunteers that are mature, skilled, and would like to help in the areas of educational programming and teaching, supervising a particular internship or coordinating an internship period, marketing, organic gardening and tending to livestock, guest hospitality, accounting, and/or reservations. Waived fees only apply to volunteers wishing to stay a minimum of six weeks. Volunteers applying to supervise an internship topic should expect that they will not get the same training opportunities as the interns as they will essentially be the trainers for that particular internship.

What is the work schedule like?

The schedule largely depends on the project. If you are working more or less independently on a project or on volunteer work, you have a large amount of control over your own schedule. It is expected that a minimum of 6-8 hours per day, five days per week (Monday to Friday), are spent on project time. There are many side projects that may be carried out on the premises if desired. Projects with more participants will be more tightly scheduled, but will follow this general pattern. For now, all projects carried out at the station (including the trail building projects) will be within a 2 mile radius of the station's main facilities and thus interns will be able to return for meals and to the facilities and will not be expected to pack a lunch or stay off-site at any time. Normally weekends are free, but occasionally projects will need to be conducted over the weekend. In this case the intern/volunteer will have days off during the week instead.

Are the internships open to non-students or only to students?

The internships are open for applications from whoever is interested!

What other things should I prepare myself for?

Interns should make sure they have received required vaccinations prior to coming to Belize. Please refer to the travel visitor guide that is sent with your registration package.

The T.R.E.E.S Research Center is a field station in the jungle. Although we are off a main highway and accessible easily by road, we are still nonetheless located in the jungle in a remote, rural area of a developing country. As such, interns should prepare themselves to experience cultural differences and accept that they may not have all of the products available that they may be used to (nor the internet speed that they have come to expect in the developed world!).

Interns must also be able to adapt to the presence of fauna that many find intimidating and disturbing, including venomous snakes (though they are rarely seen) and a plethora of scorpions, spiders, biting flies, and other creepy-crawlies that some people might not be accustomed to (though very few are harmful).

What are the registration steps?

- 1) After you have supplied us with your application package, we will contact you within a week to let you know if we consider you to be a suitable candidate for the position. If you are short-listed for the position and can confirm that you are available for the dates we suggest, we move forward with the registration.
- 2) Once selected, we will send you a registration package which includes:
 - Guest information form (includes information on medical insurance coverage, emergency contact info, and food and other allergies)
 - Deposit/Cancellation/Payment form
 - A waiver release form
- 3) All forms need to be filled out, signed (electronic signature will suffice), scanned (unless using e-signature), and sent back to us by email to: registration@ecorana.ca
- 4) You will need to pay a reservation deposit of \$75 USD (information on this deposit is included in the form that we will send you) and will need to notify us of how you would like to make the payment. We will then send you the necessary information for allowing you to make the payment.
- 5) You will be sent an email confirmation stating that we have received your reservation deposit and your position will be held.
- 6) You will be reminded 60 days prior to the internship/volunteer position start date and will receive an invoice at this time detailing the total amount owing for the position. You can choose to pay 50% deposit at this time, or the full amount if you wish.
- 7) **The full amount of the internship/volunteership for the agreed upon time MUST be paid in advance BEFORE ARRIVAL and your placement is not confirmed until receipt of payment in full. There are no exceptions to this policy.**