July 18th 2016
Punta Gorda Town

Dear Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in the volunteer position of Communications Officer at Ya'axché Conservation Trust.

This application pack contains a Job Description (two pages), a Person Specification (two pages) and a volunteer manual. Please read these documents carefully.

To apply, please send a copy of your CV (no more than two pages) and a one-page letter outlining your interest and suitability for the position. All documents should be in .pdf format and should be emailed to **info@yaaxche.org**.

The closing date for submission of your application is August 5th 2016. We look forward hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Kamille Pennell
Operations Director

Ya'axché Conservation Trust
20A George Street, P.O. 177
Punta Gorda, Toledo District
Belize

Phone: (+501) 722-0108
Fax: (+501) 722-0108
E-mail: info@yaaxche.org
Web: yaaxche.org

JOB TITLE	Communications Officer
LOCATION	Punta Gorda Town/Golden Stream Field Station, Toledo, Belize
LENGTH OF STAY	Minimum commitment of 6 months (probation period 3 months)
SALARY	This is an unpaid (volunteer) position[1]
WORK SCHEDULE	Full time (Monday – Friday, 8:30am – 5:00pm) including weekends as required[2]
REPORTING TO	Marketing & Communications Manager

1.0 JOB DESCRIPTION

1.1 CONTEXT

Ya'axché Conservation Trust is a community-oriented NGO that couples conservation with sustainable development to advance integrated landscape management in southern Belize. The focal geographic area for Ya'axché's activities, the Maya Golden Landscape (MGL), extends from the Maya Mountains to the Port Honduras Marine Reserve in the Caribbean Sea and forms part of the largest remaining contiguous areas of broadleaf forest in Central America. The MGL includes Ya'axché's Golden Stream Corridor Preserve (GSCP, 15,000 acres), the Bladen Nature Reserve (BNR, 100,000 acres) and Maya Mountain North Forest Reserve (MMNFR, 36,000 acres), both of which are co-managed by Ya'axché and the Belize Forest Department. In addition to managing protected areas, Ya'axché puts an equivalent focus on the livelihoods of the surrounding communities through sustainable livelihood initiatives and implementation of best practices.

1.2 OVERALL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Communications Officer will work as part of the Development Team, managed by the Development Director. The post holder will work closely with the Marketing & Communications Manager and relevant Ya'axché staff. The Communications Officer is responsible for maintaining a positive image of Ya'axché among stakeholders, in accordance with the Communication Strategy. The Communications Officer is to ensure effective, consistent communication of Ya'axché's vision, mission and associated activities to all stakeholders. This position also provides support to all staff and board members but primarily the Development Team. The Communications Officer is responsible for the management of the organization's website, membership program, and online campaigns.

Furthermore, Ya'axché has recently developed a financing arm called Ya'axche Institute for Conservation Education (YICE). 100% of YICE's profits generated, fund Ya'axché's projects and programs. Among other sustainable financing activities, EcoTourism Belize, a developing and aspiring leader of ecotours operator and rustic accommodations provider in southern Belize, the Communications Officer will be supporting the marketing of these initiatives.

The Communications Officer strives to maintain a professional image of the organization through consistent and high quality communication pieces.

1.3 SPECIFIC DUTIES

1. Revise & Implement the organisation's Communication Strategy
2. Ensure that all external communication materials follow the guidelines for graphic standards as set out in the Communication Strategy.
3. Write articles for the Ya'axché website and bi-monthly e-newsletters
4. Publish and/or post high quality communication pieces to the public via the multiple mediums (social media, websites, newspapers, televisions, radio, etc.)
5. Acquire high quality photos and videos for marketing materials
6. Maintain a high quality website
7. Lead the design and production of high quality marketing and communication materials (i.e. posters, leaflet) for Ya'axché

8. Prepare and distribute the annual report, in liaison with all contributing authors
9. Assist the Development Team in maintaining an accurate, up-to-date donor and membership database.
10. Reconcile donation and membership records with the Finance Director
11. Provide quality control for all templates (e.g. for reports, presentations, etc.) and ensure that all staff are provided with access to the most current versions of these templates.
12. Market special events (i.e. Ya'axché Farmers' Expo, Summer Camp, etc)
13. Create a comprehensive database for the organisations' photos and videos

1 The volunteer must be able to cover all costs for the full six month period including international airfare, all in country travel, insurance, and any costs associated with obtaining visas and/or work permits (please refer to the Volunteer Manual for further information).

On successful completion of a consecutive six-month period of work, a stipend may be made available. This would normally be sufficient to cover the costs of living in rented accommodation in Punta Gorda town. Please note that a stipend cannot be guaranteed, it is dependent on available funding and is offered at the discretion of the Executive Director.

2 Please refer to the Volunteer Manual for further information on office & field station hours of operation.

2.0 EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Essential

- Knowledge of conservation and community development issues in developing countries.
- Some experience working for conservation and/or development NGO's
- Some communication and marketing experience
- Some experience in graphic design
- Excellent organizational and computer skills
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team

Desirable

- Degree in marketing, communication or related field.
- Experience of working for conservation and development NGO's in Belize and/or other developing countries.
- Proficiency in graphic and web design
- Knowledge of conservation and community development issues in developing countries.

3.0 TECHNICAL SKILLS

Essential

- Proficiency in Microsoft Office suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access)
- Excellent written and spoken English
- Excellent organizational, communication, interpersonal and planning skills
- Sensitivity to the needs of persons with low literacy and/or English as a Second Language (ESL) when creating written materials
- Basic skills in marketing of ecotourism
- Basic skills in using a digital SLR camera to take high quality photographs and videos
- Basic website development and management and associated programs including but not limited to Adobe Dreamweaver
- Basic skills in SEO content writing for websites
- Basic skills in Adobe Photoshop, Lightroom or similar photo editing software
- Basic skills in filmmaking, including use of Final Cut Pro or similar film editing software

Desirable

- Excellent marketing of conservation and ecotourism
- Proficiency in using a digital SLR camera to take high quality photographs and videos
- Proficiency in website development and management and associated programs including but not limited to Adobe Dreamweaver
- Proficiency in SEO content writing for websites
- Proficiency in Adobe Photoshop, Lightroom or similar photo editing software
- Proficiency in filmmaking, including use of Final Cut Pro or similar film editing software

4.0 PERSONAL SKILLS

Essential

- Commitment to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development issues.
- Ability to operate as part of a team in a dynamic environment, as well as self-motivation, drive and enthusiasm to work under own initiative.
- Excellent organizational, communication, interpersonal and planning skills.
- The ability to work with a wide variety of individuals (including a multi-cultural in-house team) by using tact, diplomacy and flexibility, resolve conflict effectively.
- Self-motivated and able to work independently with minimal supervision.
- Dependable and reliable, with a positive attitude.

- Meticulous attention to detail.
- Ability to work under pressure and to manage time effectively in order to meet deadlines.
- An ability to think strategically as well as having common sense and problem solving skills.
- Cultural sensitivity towards Belizeans in general and the indigenous communities of the Maya Golden Landscape in particular.

5.0 BENEFITS AND EXPENSES

5.1 VOLUNTEER BENEFITS

This is a voluntary, unpaid position. However the volunteer will receive benefits including:

- Opportunity to work closely with dynamic, multi-cultural staff
- Appreciation for your dedication and hard work
- Adventure in a country with pristine ecosystems, world-class snorkeling and SCUBA
- In-depth, interactive cultural experience unattainable by tourists

5.2 VOLUNTEER EXPENSES

There are no program fees charged for this experience, but the volunteer is expected to arrange and pay for:

- Transportation to Punta Gorda, Belize, including airfare.
- Food, personal expenses, in-country travel, rent in Punta Gorda
- Passport, visa, sufficient personal medical insurance

Additional information is available in the Volunteer Guide including a break-down of the realistic cost of living in Belize. If you have any further questions we are happy to provide information on request.

6.0 PERFORMANCE REVIEW & EVALUATION

All positions at Ya'axché (whether paid or volunteer) are subject to a review every three months. For the Communications Officer, the review will be carried out by the Marketing & Communications Manager and the Development Director. Reviews are conducted in a participatory manner to develop a mutual understanding in regards to the satisfactory fulfilment of duties detailed in the Job Description, adherence to Ya'axché's policies and operational procedures (copies will be provided once the ToR has been signed), and on the impact of activities undertaken on Ya'axché accomplishing its objectives. The review also provides an opportunity for the employee to discuss his/her performance over the past three months, to identify personal development needs and to set targets for the coming three months.

Information for Volunteers

Ya'axché Conservation Trust

Updated March 2016

Ya'axché Conservation Trust
20A George Street, P.O. 177
Punta Gorda, Toledo District
Belize

Phone: (+501) 722-0108
Fax: (+501) 722-0108
E-mail: info@yaaxche.org
Web: yaaxche.org

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Volunteering with Ya'axché

Thank you for your interest in taking up a volunteer position with the Ya'axché Conservation Trust (Ya'axché). This document is intended to provide some basic information about what to expect from your volunteer experience, and also to give you an idea of what Ya'axché expects from you. If you have any further questions, please use the contact details below.

YA'AXCHÉ'S VISION

Harmony between nature and human development for the benefit of both.

YA'AXCHÉ'S MISSION

Ya'axché is a Belizean organization which aims to maintain a healthy environment with empowered communities by fostering sustainable livelihoods, protected areas management, biodiversity conservation and environmental education within the Maya Golden Landscape.

Postal address*
Ya'axché Conservation Trust
P.O. Box 177
20A George Street
Punta Gorda, Toledo District
Belize
Central America

Phone/Fax
(+501)722 0108

Contact email
christina.garcia@yaaxche.org

Website
www.yaaxche.org

*This will be your mailing address whilst volunteering at Ya'axché.

You will be provided with your own Ya'axché email address.

Introduction to Belize

Useful information

Language: the country's official language is English, but most people speak Kriol (Belizean Creole) in informal situations. The communities where Ya'axché works speak Q'eqchi and Mopan Maya, while some villages in the region use Spanish as the main language of communication.

Government: Great Britain granted British Honduras (Belize's former name) self-governance in 1964, when the head of PUP government, George Price, became the first prime minister.

Electricity: 110 volts AC, 60 Hz, flat two-pin plugs.

Time zone: GMT/UTC –6. daylight saving time is not observed in Belize.

Weather: the overall climate of Belize can be described as sub-tropical. The coastal areas are exposed to southeast trade winds. Temperatures in Belize range from 50°F/10°C to 100°F/38°C with an annual mean of 79°F/26°C. May through August is the wet season, which is also the warmest period of the year at about an 81°F/27°C average. Rain falls mostly at night during the wet season, accompanied by spectacular thunder & lightning! Location is a big factor for temperature; inland areas to the west tend to be several degrees cooler than areas along the coast.

Money: the official currency is Belizean dollars, however US dollars are accepted everywhere at a more or less fixed rate of BZ$2 = US$1. There is NO NEED to change US dollars into Belizean dollars before you get here but remember to bring some small bills (US$5, US$10) as many vendors will be unable to change large bills. ATM's are available in Punta Gorda (Scotiabank and Belize Bank) but check with your home bank to ensure that you will have access in Belize. Also check whether your bank will charge you for using ATM's in Belize. Banks in Punta Gorda currently make a small charge for every ATM transaction.

Traveler's checks and credit cards are not widely accepted (especially in Punta Gorda) but this is slowly changing. Traveler's checks can be cashed in banks and Visa and MasterCard credit cards can be used to get cash advances from most banks. Most debit cards work in the ATM's in Belize, but stores, restaurants, bars, and some hotels accept payments only in cash. However, larger stores, restaurants and hotels (primarily in tourist-heavy locations such as Placencia and San Ignacio) accept debit or credit cards.

Brief cultural history of Belize

The earliest known inhabitants of southern Belize were the ancient Maya. Great Mayan cities and ceremonial centers grew and flourished throughout the region. Uxbenka ("The Old Place") is one of the oldest settlements known, perched on a hill outside of Santa Cruz village. Nim Li Punit ("Big Hat") wasn't discovered until the 1970s and is known for its variety and number of stele (modest-sized monoliths). Lubaantun ("Place of the Fallen Stones") is thought to have been the regional capital, acting as the religious, administrative, political and commercial center of the region.

Eventually, these great cities disappeared beneath the dense jungle canopy. The reason for the collapse of the Mayan Civilization is hidden in the mists of time. But we do know that the architects of the Mayan cities of southern Belize were a group of people called the "Manche Chol Maya." Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, the Chol remained unconquered, successfully resisting attempts by the Spanish to rule and tax them, though many were converted to Catholicism. Eventually, diseases such as smallpox decimated the Mayan population, and during the 18th and 19th centuries, the entire Chol population was transported to the highlands of Guatemala by the British. After this forced movement of people out of southern Belize, Toledo was mostly unpopulated until the mid 1800s when the Garifuna settlements of Punta Gorda, Punta Negra and Barranco were founded. The Garifuna are the result of a cultural and racial fusion of Carib Indians and African Blacks that occurred on the Lesser Antillean island of St. Vincent in the 16th century. The Garifuna have remained along the coastal communities of southern Belize.

Meanwhile, in 1868, Confederate soldiers seeking asylum at the end of the American Civil War settled in a spot called "Cattle Landing" just north of present day Punta Gorda. Sugar quickly became the dominant crop and by 1870, no less than 12 distinct sugar mills were in full operation in the region. Within a few years, sugar prices fell and, combined with a labor shortage, the sugar industry collapsed by the turn of the century.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, two distinct groups of Maya Indians, Mopan and Q'eqchi, began migrating into southern Belize from Guatemala, fleeing from heavy taxation. The Mopan Maya settled the uplands of Toledo around the present day village of San Antonio. The Q'eqchi Maya spread out into the isolated lowlands and along the many rivers of Toledo. Today, the Maya comprise the largest percentage of the population in Toledo and have remained the most traditional and culturally distinct. The Mopan and Q'eqchi Maya have together formed over 38 communities throughout Toledo. The other ethnic groups – Garifuna, Creole, East Indians and Chinese – live together in Punta Gorda and a few other small communities along the coastline.

The Toledo District in the south of Belize is Maya country – over half the population and most of the villages in this district are Mayan. However, Toledo District residents are proud of the harmony that exists between the many and varied cultures of southern Belize. Traveling south along the Southern Highway, clusters of thatched huts appear with increasing regularity – Toledo district is the poorest district of the country with 65% of the population living in poverty.

Punta Gorda (known locally as "PG") is the southernmost town in Belize and the capital of the Toledo District. Almost 210 miles by road from Belize City, the population of PG is close to 6,000 people. Despite the fact that majority of Toledo's population is Maya, Punta Gorda is home to a mix of primarily Creole and Garifuna residents.

The road into town follows the shoreline; five main streets run parallel inland. Various fruit trees, especially mango trees, line the streets. Most small homes are made of wood on stilts. The town has one hospital, a police station, two banks, a post office, a gas station, a civic center, a number of churches and schools, and various grocery stores and food vendors, hotels, restaurants and bars. Punta Gorda is a gateway to the Guatemalan port of Puerto Barrios, with an Immigration and Customs office near the town dock.

Punta Gorda is a pleasant and interesting town, with a slow and easy-going pace. Traffic is minimal on the streets with no traffic lights. People hang out on street corners chatting, while children play in the schoolyards. On holidays and market days (primarily Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday), the villagers pour into town to buy and sell homegrown produce and simple household goods. Fishermen may often be found selling along the sea front, as well as in the market. Nightlife is limited, but on certain nights, Garifuna and Creole drummers perform for tourists.

Threats to the environment

Why does Belize need organisations like Ya'axché? Despite having one of the lowest population densities in the world, Belize faces huge environmental concerns. Rising population density, associated development, agricultural and industrial activities result in increased pressure on both terrestrial and marine ecosystems. The challenge for Belize – an astonishingly rich country in terms of its biological and cultural diversity – is to nurture the economic livelihoods of local communities while sustaining the pristine ecosystems that make this region so special.

The volunteer experience

Benefits of Volunteering with Ya'axché

International volunteers make a very important contribution to Ya'axché's work in the Maya Golden Landscape of southern Belize and Ya'axché makes every effort to show appreciation for good work. It's important to Ya'axché that you get the most out of your volunteering experience but (unlike many 'pay-to-volunteer' schemes) we do not hand everything to you on a plate. We require *all* of our staff to be self-motivated and committed. The more effort you put it, the more you will get out of the volunteering experience.

Ya'axché has grown from a small grass-roots organization to be a national leader in conservation and community development. Previous volunteers have gone on to work for the United Nations Development Programme, the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance, Pro Natura and Wildlife Conservation Society. Several Ya'axché volunteers have returned to study at Masters or PhD level. In terms of your professional development, the experience you gain from being a Ya'axché volunteer is extremely valuable.

Volunteers have the option of free accommodation situated within a quiet nature preserve. You will have the opportunity to work closely with dynamic multi-cultural staff, and to benefit from an in-depth, interactive experience far beyond that which is attainable by a regular tourist. In your free time, there are many adventures to be had amongst Belize's pristine terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

Accommodation for volunteers

Ya'axché has an office in Punta Gorda and an operations center in the Golden Stream Corridor Preserve (usually referred to as the 'field center'). Depending on the duties and responsibilities of the volunteer position, the volunteer can choose to live and work at the field center, or to rent an apartment in Punta Gorda and work from the main office. Please note that if you choose to live in Punta Gorda, you are responsible for covering all of your costs (see below). For new volunteers, it is highly recommended to live at the field center for at least two weeks (preferably near the beginning of your stay) in order to learn the context of Ya'axché's work. It's also a great way to get to know the ranger team and the Community Outreach and Livelihoods (COL) team, all of whom are based at the field center.

Living at the field center

The field center is located just off the Southern Highway and so is easily accessible by vehicle. There is a large meeting room, office space and kitchen area in the main building, plus three bedrooms (one is always occupied by the ranger on night duty) and an indoor bathroom. Separate from the main building, is a bunkhouse utilized by students, researchers and tourists which is managed by Ya'axché's business arm, EcoTourism Belize (www.ecotourismbelize.com). The bunkhouse has a large shared room with 16 bunk beds and short walk away are two outdoor showers, two composting toilets and an outdoor laundry sink. All accommodation at the field center is basic but comfortable. The field center is a place of work as well as a living space and so privacy can be somewhat limited when the field

center is busy. Volunteers can expect to share the space with other Ya'axché staff, and from time to time, other visitors such as students and researchers.

You will probably also find yourself sharing with the local wildlife – including rats, bats, scorpions and tarantulas! The field center and the bunkhouse have screens that help to keep out insects, but you may wish to provide your own fine-mesh mosquito net. There is some bed linen at the field center but you may wish to bring your own, plus a light sleeping bag or blanket (it can get chilly at night during November and December). If you use bed linen belonging to the field center you are responsible for washing it. There is no washing machine an outside clothes washing sink for hand washing, or there is a drop-off laundry in PG.

The nearest village (Golden Stream) is approximately 1 mile away, while Punta Gorda is approximately 35 miles (50km) away (about one hour on the bus). Solar power and internet access are available at the field center, but can be limited at times. Cell phones (see below) work from the top of the water tower and depending on network you choose in Belize, works perfectly in the main building. There is no hot water (unless you boil it in a pan!). Water supply is pumped from a deep well and most people choose to drink from the tap without the need for any kind of purification. This decision is entirely up to the individual. Rainwater is collected and stored in a separate tank but should not be used for drinking or cooking purposes unless you have first taken measures to purify the water. There is a butane stove & oven that you may use for cooking but there is no fridge. Volunteers are responsible for providing and preparing all of their own food (see below). You will also need to assist the rangers with keeping the field center clean and tidy.

The Protected Areas Manager is responsible for overall management of the field center. He also ensures that basic supplies are always available, including butane, dish soap, toilet paper, etc. Although all essential kitchenware is available for use, the volunteer is responsible for purchasing his/her own food. Food and supplies may be bought in Punta Gorda at shops, grocery stores, and open-air markets. While fresh vegetables can only be bought in Punta Gorda, Golden Stream village has three shops selling food and household items (packet and tinned food, flour, rice, beans) and general items (beer, rubber boots, soap).

Living in Punta Gorda

If you choose to rent accommodation in Punta Gorda instead of living at the field center, you must be able to cover the full cost. Ya'axché cannot provide financial assistance with accommodation. The standard and price of accommodation in Punta Gorda is very variable. At the low end, a small house (two bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen/living room) starts at $BZ500 per month (for the entire property). Many houses and apartments come completely unfurnished (ie. without even a cooker or a fridge). Some come with basic furniture (cooker, fridge, beds, dining table & chairs). Some come with everything (including cutlery, crockery etc), depending on what previous tenants have left behind.

You may well be expected to pay for mains electricity and mains water in addition to monthly rent. The average water bill for a two-person household is approximately $BZ25 per month. The average electricity bill for a two-person household is approximately $BZ25 per month.

Most cookers run on butane supplied via a small tank. Refills are easy to arrange (can usually be done in a few hours on weekday) and very cheap.

Some property owners will ask for a security/damage deposit (usually one months rent), together with your first months rent. This can be quite a lot of money to pay out in one go if you are not earning any money. Check the property to make sure there are no major problems (leaking pipes, holes in the roof, etc). If you discover them after you move in, you may find it takes a long time to get things fixed. At the very least, make sure that the water and electricity are connected and working before you move in, otherwise you may end up having to pay for the reconnection yourself. Do not expect the plumbing and electrical wiring to be of the same standard as the developed world!

Health and safety whilst volunteering

Volunteers are responsible for providing their own adequate medical insurance that will cover them for the duration of their time at Ya'axché. You will be asked for proof of this within your first few days at Ya'axché and a copy will be kept on file at the Punta Gorda office in case of an emergency. You will also need to provide details of an emergency contact / next of kin. You will also be required to sign a 'Release from liability' form (a copy is provided at the end of this document). In the event of an accident or serious illness at either the field center of the PG office, Ya'axché staff will of course make every effort to ensure that you are transported to the nearest hospital or clinic. There is a hospital in Punta Gorda. Facilities are limited but general medical concerns can be addressed (i.e. prescriptions for antibiotics and cough medicine). This medical care is free. For more specialized attention it would be necessary to travel to Dangriga or Belize City, where more extensive facilities and private hospitals can be found.

Your health and safety in country is your responsibility. Make sure you are well informed prior to your arrival in Belize and consult your physician, a local travel health clinic, the US Center for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov), the World Health Organization (www.who.int) for the most up-to-date information on vaccinations required for Belize. Biting insects, including sand flies, doctor flies, botlas flies, and mosquitoes are nuisances throughout the year. Mosquitoes may transmit a number of diseases, including malaria, which is present in Belize. Although avoiding mosquito bites by covering up at night and using repellent are effective measures, taking an anti-malarial medication is up to the discretion of the volunteer.

Volunteers should exercise caution and good judgment regarding their personal security and safety. Punta Gorda is a relatively safe town. Foreign female visitors usually attract a lot of local male attention in Punta Gorda and elsewhere. For the most part, this is good-natured and harmless but it can be a little overwhelming at first! For those traveling to other regions in Belize before or after their volunteer experience, be aware that Belize has some high crime areas. Please consult http://travel.state.gov/travel for the latest travel information. Belize City currently has very high crime rates and you are advised to be extremely cautious with regard to your personal safety – particularly at night.

Transport in Belize

You will not be permitted to drive any of Ya'axché's vehicles, but you may rent or drive your own vehicle. Police checks are frequent throughout the country and you will need to show your drivers license. Various bus companies operate throughout the country and buses to Punta Gorda pass the Field Center several times every day. James bus operates a very reliable service between Punta Gorda and Belize City. Prices and times for a single journey on the James bus line are as follows;

Punta Gorda – field center	BZ$5
Punta Gorda – Dangriga	BZ13
Punta Gorda – Belmopan	BZ$19
Punta Gorda – Belize City	BZ$22

Volunteers should ensure they have sufficient funds to cover all transport costs in-country, including travel that is required as part of your job. Occasionally there may be a travel stipend available for work-related trips but you must check this will your supervisor in advance of travelling. Most volunteers living in Punta Gorda choose to purchase a bicycle for getting around town, although everything is within easy walking distance. A second hand bicycle will cost $BZ170 - 200 and it is advisable to purchase a lock, as the theft of bikes is very common in Punta Gorda!

Communications

Belize has limited network coverage compared to neighbouring countries, with even international roaming services often not working. Check with your cell phone provider to see which carriers work in southern Belize. It is possible to purchase cell phone from one of two communication companies: Digicell / BTL or Smart. If you have an unblocked handset, you may purchase a SIM card from Digicell. It is also sometimes possible to unblock blocked phones, but the cost of unblocking can be equivalent to purchasing a new cell phone! If you choose to use the Smart network service you will have to buy a new phone because Smart does not use regular SIM cards. Both phone services use pre-paid minutes and can be easily recharged at most shops in PG. You can get better phone service at our field station with Smart communication company.

Internet access at the field center can be unreliable and is sometimes very slow. Access at the Punta Gorda office is reliable and of a reasonable speed but downloading large files can be very slow. It is possible to Skype but the internet (especially if there are a lot of people in the office) is frequently too slow to have non-interrupted conversations. Google Talk seems to work well.

Cost of living

Belize is more expensive than the rest of Central America (with perhaps the exception of Costa Rica). The amount spent varies greatly with each volunteer, depending on the amount of traveling and type of activities you plan to engage in as well as how much imported goods/food you purchase. On average, volunteers who live at the field station (commuting to Punta Gorda 2-3 times per week on the bus) spend approximately $BZ500 per month for transportation, food, and incidentals. Volunteers based in Punta Gorda should budget minimum of $BZ700 a month. Note that this figure DOES NOT include traveling around the country or any tourist activities. Some guidelines for approximate costs are listed below (prices in BZ$);

Lunch in PG (traditional rice & beans)	$6 – 8 per person
Bottled beer	$3 – 4
1 liter carton milk	$2.50
Backpacker hostel	$30 per person per night
Mid-range hotel	$50 – 70 per person per night

Several shops in Punta Gorda now sell fresh fruit and vegetables but these can be expensive. It is cheaper to buy from the market. The selection of imported goods available in Punta Gorda is limited and these items are much more expensive than those produced locally. Brodies store (in Belmopan or Belize City) has by far the best selection of imported goods but prices are high.

Travelling and tourism

During weekends and before and after your volunteer time, you may choose to visit Maya ruins, Maya communities, caves and waterfalls, and to kayak rivers and coastal waters. You may also be able to arrange jungle hikes and bird-watching trips, and enjoy some of the local Maya, Garifuna, Creole and East Indian cuisine.

This area of coastal Central America contains a myriad of habitats, from tropical forests and mangroves to the vast Meso-American Barrier reef, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Thousands of Maya archaeological sites dot the landscape, and rivers cascade from the mountains to the sea over dramatic falls and through limestone caves. Belize has retained much of its coastal forest providing a vital resource for local sustainability.

Belize's barrier reef ecosystem, second only to Australia's Great Barrier Reef, covers a large offshore area of estuaries, lagoons, islands, and shallow water reefs. The reef supports hundreds of species of fish, as well as mollusks, sponges, and other plants and animals. Of special note are the critically endangered manatees and marine turtles as well as struggling populations of lobsters and queen conch that are vital to the local economy.

Responsibilities of the volunteer

Personal Expenses

There is no fee charged for the volunteer experience at Ya'axché, but the volunteer is expected to arrange and pay for the following;

- Transportation to Punta Gorda, Belize, including airfare.
- Food, personal expenses, in-country travel, passport and visa costs.
- Rent if the volunteer chooses to live in PG.

Length of stay

Volunteers fill key positions in the organization and are therefore expected to commit to at least six months. If after six months you decide you would like to remain at Ya'axché for a further period, you need to discuss this with your immediate supervisor. The Executive Director will make the final decision as to whether you are required for a further six months (also see section 3.6).

Visas and work permits

Prior to your arrival in country you should check the requirements for your nationality with regard to entering Belize. It is your responsibility to arrange your visa if you need one.

At the time of writing American and European Union citizens are not required to apply for a tourist visa prior to arrival. When you arrive in Belize, your passport will be stamped with a 30-day tourist visa, free of charge. You can renew your tourist visa each month at a cost of BZ$50 (payable at the Treasury Office on Front Street, directly opposite PG immigration). If you stay for longer than six months without leaving the country, you *may* be charged BZ$100 per month from the seventh month onwards. If you leave the country and then re-enter, the fee *should* remain at BZ$50 per month but this is not always the case. There have been cases where immigration have refused to issue further tourist stamps and have insisted that the volunteer must obtain an employment permit (see below). If you are late renewing your tourist visa, you can be fined up to BZ$200. All visa costs are the responsibility of the volunteer.

Please note that the tourist visa stamp states that you should not undertake work of any kind – paid or unpaid. If you inform immigration that you are volunteering, they will most likely advise you to obtain a Temporary Employment Permit (TEP – sometimes also referred to as a work permit). If you are certain that you will be staying for longer than six months (and this has been approved by the Executive Director), it is advisable to apply for a TEP. Please note, certain documentation will be required such as criminal check, original or notarized copies of any degrees certificates relevant to your role and four passport type photos. Some volunteers choose to do this even if they are only staying for six months. If you would like to do this, please speak to your manager prior to arrival in Belize. You should begin this process as soon as possible. Based on the experiences of past volunteers, it can take at least two months from start to finish during which time you will still have to pay to renew your tourist visa each month. At the time of writing, the cost of a 12 month TEP for a volunteer is BZ$100 and BZ$50 for a 6 month TEP. You are responsible for paying this fee and for filling

out the required forms. There is quite a lot of paperwork involved but other volunteers will be on hand to help you through the process.

The entire process will cost you approximately BZ$160, so if you intend to stay for longer than six months, you will save money by applying for the TEP. At the time of writing, there is no such thing as a 'volunteer visa'. Some NGO's have a prior agreement with the Government of Belize for their volunteers to obtain 'conditional stamps'. Ya'axché does not currently have this arrangement in place.

Terms of Reference

You will be issued with Terms of Reference (ToR) for your position within a few days of your arrival at Ya'axché. Although volunteers are selected to carry out specific tasks as per their ToR, they will be able, or sometimes requested, to help in other activities. This is a great way to build new skills and to provide help where it is most needed.

You will be asked to sign the following documents (copies can be found at the end of this manual) shortly after your arrival in country, as well as providing Ya'axché with insurance and emergency contact details (see Section 2.3);

- Release from Liability form.
- Acknowledgement of Volunteer Information form.
- Confidentiality, copyright & intellectual property rights form.

Use of office & field center equipment

Please note that Ya'axché does not provide computers for volunteer use (with the exception of the GIS volunteer). You will need to bring your own laptop. You may use the Ya'axché server for backing up your work (wireless connection) but it is your responsibility to ensure that your computer is virus-free. If you fail to do so and you then infect any of Ya'axché's network equipment, you will be responsible for covering the cost of any necessary repairs. Be warned that this can be extremely expensive in Belize. Please ensure your computer has adequate virus protection. Printers are available for your use at both the field center and the PG office but should be used for work purposes only. Other equipment required for you to carry out your role is provided. If you feel that other items are necessary, you should discuss this with your immediate supervisor.

Stipends

Ya'axché does not provide any financial assistance to volunteers during the first six months. If you decide you would like to stay longer than six months, you should mention this to your supervisor as soon as possible. He or she will discuss it with the Executive Director. If you are offered the opportunity to remain at Ya'axché for a further period, you must be prepared to cover your costs. Depending on the availability of funding, a small monthly stipend (ie. sufficient to cover basic living expenses) may be available once you have completed your first six months but this is by no means guaranteed. It is likely that funding for a stipend will need to be written into a grant proposal, therefore financial assistance may not become available immediately, if at all.

Long-term volunteers (ie. more than two years of continuous service) may be considered for salaried positions if and when they arise but this is not common. Wherever possible, Ya'axché seeks to employ appropriately qualified and experienced Belizeans to carry out key positions within the organization, or to build the capacity of Belizeans so that they may be employed in the future. However, Ya'axché recognizes that in-country technical capacity is currently limited in some areas and therefore makes every effort to employ the best candidate for the job in question, regardless of age, nationality or ethnic background.

Personal conduct & cultural sensitivity

As a Ya'axché volunteer, you are considered to be a full-time (non-paid) staff member and your conduct should reflect this. The volunteer is expected to conduct him / herself in a professional manner, respectful of local customs and laws. Any conduct that reflects negatively on Ya'axché will result in the volunteer's immediate dismissal. Any violations of Belizean law will be prosecuted in Belize with no recourse to foreign laws and attorneys and may be grounds for immediate deportation at the volunteer's own expense.

Volunteers will have the opportunity to interact with the district's different cultural groups. The volunteer must be able to experience new cultures and situations with grace and sensitivity, refraining from potentially offensive language and dress, as well as judgmental and ethnocentric attitudes. If there is any question of what is acceptable for the situation, please discuss the situation with your supervisor.

Working hours and time off

Your hours of work may vary from 'normal' office hours and we ask that you be as flexible as possible. Volunteers are expected to work from Monday – Friday. As a general rule, office-based staff will usually work from 8:30am – 5pm. Days at the field center start early and finish early. The ranger on duty will usually wake at around 5am. The rest of the ranger team and members of the COL team usually arrive before 7:30am and will finish at 4pm. This reflects life in the villages of Toledo, where most people are awake at 4:30am and in bed by 8pm! At either location, most staff take a one-hour lunch break.

You may occasionally be asked to work on a Saturday or Sunday but this is rare. Ya'axché requests that volunteers do not take weekdays off during the first six-months of their appointment. We understand that people may need to take a little break so a minimum of 5 week days vacation may be taken upon request to the Executive Director.

Volunteers who have worked for a period of one year or more are permitted 20 days of vacation time if they are NOT returning to their home country. If returning to their home country, a vacation period of one calendar month + 10 days off for time in lieu. All vacation time / days off must be approved by your immediate supervisor and by the Executive Director. Ya'axché does not provide financial assistance for any travel costs associated with vacations and/or returning to your home country.

Volunteers who take up a full-time salaried position will be entitled to 20 days vacation as per the Staff Handbook.

Ya'axché's focus on capacity building and education

Capacity building is the process of helping people identify issues and develop insights, knowledge and experience needed to implement change and to solve problems. Ya'axché's initiatives include local capacity building and community education, moving conservation to the forefront and working toward constructive solutions. One of the primary solutions is to facilitate the adoption of sustainable livelihoods by the local villagers as a means of protecting the natural resources; substituting eco-friendly activities and methods for traditional, less environmentally healthy practices. However, all these changes in attitudes and behaviors are to be encouraged through awareness building and with consent of individuals. Capacity building is key to Ya'axché's work. It is very likely that you have been offered a volunteer position because you have skills and experience that Ya'axché needs in order to continue its current work, and/or to develop into new areas. As such, you will be expected to share your skills with members of the Ya'axché team and other stakeholders as appropriate.

Volunteer pack list

Essential items

- Photocopies of passport, flight itinerary and credit cards in case the originals are lost.
- Passport, credit cards, cash.
- Laptop & surge protector (Ya'axché does not provide a computer for your work).
- Travel adapter for electrical items.
- Medications and copy of prescriptions.
- Eyeglasses/contact lenses (and copy of your prescription).
- Large backpack.
- Daypack.
- Fins-mesh mosquito net, sheets, light sleeping bag (check with Ya'axché staff first for availability of these items).
- 2 towels.
- Headlamp or small flashlight.
- Sunglasses & hat.
- Water bottle.
- Alarm clock/watch.
- Camera, digital memory storage, camera battery, charger.
- Clothing – mostly lightweight! Swimwear. You may also want to include rain gear.
- Footwear (sandals, tennis shoes, hiking boots).
- Some warmer clothes as it can get chilly at night during December and January.

If there is the possibility of going out on patrol with the rangers, possibly camping in the jungle, you will need light but tough clothes (long-sleeved shirts, pants) as you will encounter ticks and biting insects. Rubber boots may be desirable but can be purchased locally if needed.

Optional Items

- Camping hammock or travel tent
- Snorkel/scuba gear.
- Entertainment – books, ipod, etc. There are no bookshops in Punta Gorda but there is a small library. There is a shop that sells DVD's but these are often poor quality copies!
- Cell phone (check if you handset needs to be unlocked BEFORE you leave home!)

Bring from home or purchase in Belize

- Personal toiletries (biodegradable soaps, shampoos, sunscreen are recommended).
- Insect repellent spray with DEET for mosquitoes, mosquito coils.
- Oil or oil-based repellant for sand flies e.g. baby oil, AVON Skin-so-Soft Original Bath Oil
- Batteries.
- Notepad and pens.

You can purchase all of the above in Belize (including Punta Gorda) but it may not be the brand you prefer or are used to!

Purchase in Belize

- Phone or pre-paid phone card

Release from Liability

(To sign)

Volunteer's Name (please print): _____

To minimize liability to Ya'axché Conservation Trust, please read the following conditions that apply to your service as a volunteer:

1. I wish to volunteer my time, effort, and services as a volunteer to assist Ya'axché Conservation Trust and understand that I will receive no monetary compensation in return.
2. I have read the Volunteer Manual and I will do my best to meet the expectations of me as a volunteer for Ya'axché Conservation Trust.
3. I recognize and understand that my volunteer activities for the Ya'axché Conservation Trust may expose me to the possibility of injury to my person and property and that I may suffer some kind of injury as a result of an accident and other unforeseen circumstances.
4. I recognize that as a volunteer, I must provide my own adequate medical and repatriation insurance and I agree to provide a copy of my insurance certificate to the Executive Director on arrival at Ya'axché.
5. I have read the Volunteer manual and I am aware that I am not covered by any workers' compensation or similar insurance that would pay my medical bills incurred because of any injury I may receive while performing services as a volunteer.
6. Despite this risk of injury and lack of workers' compensation or other medical insurance coverage from Ya'axché Conservation Trust, I knowingly and voluntarily waive any and all claims, actions, or causes of action against Ya'axché and agree to hold Ya'axché, its board, agents, affiliates, and employees harmless for any injury or damage that I may suffer as a result of my activities as a volunteer.

In return for my agreement to these conditions, Ya'axché Conservation Trust agrees to accept my services as a volunteer.

_____

Signature Date

Acknowledgement of volunteer information

(To sign and fill out)

I have read and understand all of the information included in this document and in my Terms of Reference. I have been provided the opportunity to ask questions and address any issues therein.

Signature Date

Contact information

Name

Home address

Home phone

Email address

Medical Conditions

Medications

Emergency Contact – name, relationship to you, phone number

Emergency Contact – name, relationship to you, phone number