

# RIDGE TO REEF EXPEDITIONS

## BELIZE

### A STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM



*Develop your conservation students into  
conservation professionals*



*A program of the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment*

# TESTIMONIALS



***"Before the expedition, I didn't know what I wanted to do.... now it's very clear in my mind that I want a career in marine conservation. It has made me more passionate and more motivated than ever to get where I want to be and land myself a job that I love."***

- Emma Ashton, Student at University of Hull UK; 8-week Group Expedition participant



***"My nine weeks spent with TIDE has been one of the most enriching and enjoyable experiences of my life. The sheer range of skills learned and opportunities open to me was broader than I could ever have imagined - there truly is something to appeal to everyone."***

- Hannah Holah, Student at University of Bangor UK; 9-week Individual Placement volunteer



***"From this experience I have gained an understanding of a totally new country, culture and way of life, as well as an insight into the way TIDE works and the positive impacts TIDE has in the local community and ecosystems."***

- Matt Uttley, Student at University of Southampton UK; 8-week Group Expedition participant



***"My 4 weeks in Belize with Ridge to Reef has to rank amongst the most amazing experiences of my life... I felt privileged to be working as part of TIDE's community research team conducting ongoing valuable monitoring and conservation work."***

- Alison Shepherd, Student at University of Chester UK; 4-week Individual Placement volunteer



***"The expedition has confirmed that I'm on the right career path at university and it's definitely enhanced my love for nature and the outdoors! I particularly want to go travelling round the rest of Belize. "***

- Matt Pepperdine, Student at University of Bangor UK; 8-week Group Expedition participant

# ABOUT TIDE

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The Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE), based in southern Belize, works with communities to promote the sustainable use and management of the area's rich resources, from the peaks of the highest forest ridges to the coral reefs of the ocean floor.

Belize has the 2<sup>nd</sup> biggest barrier reef in the world and 60% forest cover. TIDE helps to protect these globally significant ecosystems.

TIDE manages three protected areas with some of the most pristine habitat in the entire Mesoamerican Complex:

- The Port Honduras Marine Reserve
- Payne's Creek National Park
- TIDE Private Protected Lands

With a team of dedicated rangers, scientists, educators and community stewards, TIDE prides itself on bringing people



# ABOUT RIDGE TO REEF

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**Ridge to Reef Expeditions** is designed to offer our volunteers hands-on experience in Central America working alongside TIDE's passionate team on projects that contribute to the preservation and protection of the diverse habitats in Mesoamerica, while working closely with local communities.

**Ridge to Reef Expeditions** offers a variety of programs from Individual Placements and Team Expeditions, to University Level Study Abroad Programs.

The University Level Study Abroad Programs can be tailored to meet course requirements, student interests and can be used to gain course credits. We work with you to ensure the program is right for your students.

With options to focus on both marine and terrestrial environments, this unique opportunity is designed to transform your conservation students into conservation professionals with a truly Ridge to Reef experience.



# STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM

Inspire your students to become conservation professionals by immersing them in the international conservation world. Belize offers a fascinating arena in which to study developing world environmental issues since it provides a microcosm of issues affecting tropical nations worldwide.

With our Study Abroad Program your students have the opportunity to practice sustainable solutions to complex issues through knowledge exchange and hands-on experience. Individual benefits to your students will include:



TIDE staff and volunteers outside the offices in Punta Gorda

**IMPACT**— Our Study Abroad Program contributes real value to TIDE’s holistic approach to conservation management. Each Student learns how their individual actions can make a difference.

**IMMERSION**—students live and work with local rangers, community researchers, & students in this English-speaking country. They learn what it takes to participate in conservation work in an international setting.

**GROWTH**—students will develop leadership skills, work as part of a team, and stretch the limits of their physical and mental strength.

**EXPERIENCE**—students gain an inside look at how an NGO operates. They have the opportunity to work with people from across the organization to develop the skills they care about.

**STAND OUT**—students can earn college credit, make professional contacts, and gain experience that adds to a unique resume.



Volunteers Adam & Danielle with members of Punta Negra women’s group presenting their final project

# WHY WE ARE DIFFERENT

What makes **Ridge to Reef Expeditions** special are our ties to the community. The program was designed to support the cutting edge conservation and development work of TIDE. This means all our volunteer activities make a real contribution to the management of the three spectacular protected areas we manage, and benefit the people who live closest to them.

With over 15 years' experience, the programs are organized in-house through TIDE Tours. Apart from international flights and insurance, we can arrange all aspects of your itinerary so you have nothing else to worry about. Knowing that we will arrange all the details through one central contact, means you have a much easier planning and implementation process.

Very few organisations are managing whole land and seascapes in an integrated way. Through our programs, volunteers gain an understanding of holistic ridge to reef management.



Meet the Team! With local knowledge and hospitality we are always at your disposal.



Explore the Maya Mountain Marine Corridor and it's forests, rivers and reefs



Join local experts in their field of work



Children benefit in form of school scholarships by TIDE's proceeds.

R2R volunteers work alongside local experts in the field – Belizean scientists, educators and park rangers who care passionately about the areas we work in. With the staff team being so connected to the areas and communities, it is easier for students to understand the benefits and impacts that their efforts will have.

All proceeds from our programs go into conservation and community development programs – the same programs that students get to know intimately during their time here.

# PROJECTS

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We have grouped our projects under three broad categories. Through classes and practical fieldwork, students will learn how each project contributes to TIDE's overall mission and how, in fact, these categories are inextricably linked.

**TERRESTRIAL** - Working with TIDE's ranger and science teams in the two terrestrial protected areas we co-manage, students can study diverse habitats and complex social issues surrounding their management. Our teams are experts on identifying and surveying Belize's lush population of birds, amphibians, mammals and plants, and also some of the country's leading experts on wildfire management. Students can learn a wide range of practical conservation and monitoring techniques, and an understanding of the ridge to reef impacts of terrestrial activities.

**MARINE** - Our marine research team conducts a wide range of monitoring programs in the Port Honduras Marine Reserve, which TIDE co-manages alongside the Belize Fisheries Department. Coral reefs are some of the most diverse yet threatened ecosystems in the world, and fisheries across the globe are under threat. From studying commercial marine species to recommend legislation, to protecting endangered nesting turtles, students will gain practical skills and a wide understanding of the challenges.

**COMMUNITY** - At the center of TIDE's mission and conservation programs are Toledo's local Communities. Our education and outreach programs seek to engage buffer communities in the work we do to foster sustainable use of natural resources. Our team works in schools and communities across the region, sharing information and partnering on sustainable development programs. Students can gain insight into social science methods and the effects of environmental protection on local communities, as well as working directly with communities and schools.



Learn to SCUBA dive from experienced instructors

## SCUBA DIVING

As a registered PADI dive center TIDE offers SCUBA training as part of the study abroad program. As well as gaining PADI qualifications, students learn how to conduct underwater monitoring, such as buoyancy control, running underwater transects, and species identification, enabling them to collect data, which contributes to fishery legislation.



# PROJECTS

Belize, with over 60% forest cover and the second largest Barrier Reef in the world, is an incredible place to take part in nature conservation. The work students carry out here allows TIDE to greatly expand its positive impact in the three protected areas it co-manages.

Listed below are examples of projects that can be included in your study abroad program

## TERRESTRIAL

- Learning how to identify birds, amphibians, mammals and plants
- Learning how to monitor different species using transects, camera traps and tracking methods
- Working on construction projects that benefit TIDE and communities, such as nature trail boardwalks, education centers or school facilities
- Monitoring the effects of wildfire and clearing firebreaks



## MARINE

- Learning how to identify fish, corals, and other marine species
- Learning how to monitor different commercial species, such as conch and lobster, to contribute to fishery policy
- Monitoring long-term trends in marine ecosystem health, for example surveying coral bleaching
- Patrolling turtle nesting beaches and facilitating increased hatchling survival
- Cleaning beaches of marine trash



## COMMUNITY

- Visiting local schools to teach children about different conservation issues
- Collaborating with local groups on reforestation projects
- Conducting social surveys in communities, for example investigating local opinion on the invasive lionfish issue which is threatening native commercial fish stocks



# EXPERIENCE BELIZE

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While Belize offers vast areas of pristine, untouched environment flourishing with biodiversity, it is also a melting pot of cultural diversity, with Maya, Creole, Garifuna, Mestizo, Mennonite, East Indian and Chinese communities. As a primarily English-speaking country with a small population, Belize is perfect for students to visit and safely explore and just a stone's throw away from the U.S.A.

As part of the study abroad program, there are options for students to explore the Toledo District with our parent company TIDE Tours who will show them the hidden gems that exist in Belize.



Local Mayan Women demonstrate traditional Corn Tortilla making.

## CULTURAL IMPRESSIONS...

Experience the many thriving cultures of southern Belize, from visiting archeological sites, preparing traditional foods, taking part in crafts such as basket weaving and jewellery making, to Garifuna drum circles and chocolate making, there is so much to see and do in Toledo.



Ziplining Adventure across the Jungle of Belize

## TOTAL ADVENTURE...

If students are looking for a little more adventure on their trip, then the Toledo District is bursting with opportunities, from breathtaking waterfalls you can jump into, caving, kayaking and snorkelling to zip-lining and river tubing. There is something for everyone looking for a thrill.



Bird enthusiasts love Belize's for than 600 species

## AND SO MUCH MORE...

There are also opportunities for peaceful early morning birding, gentle hikes to view the panoramic views of Punta Gorda from ridge to reef, friendly volleyball games with TIDE's staff and so much more. Students will have the opportunity to experience everything this district has to offer.

# ACCOMMODATION

We offer a variety of different accommodation types, depending on activities and group size. All sites come with their own charm, from sleeping in a camping hammock to comfortable bunk rooms.

## FIELD STATION AT PAYNE'S CREEK

This rustic field station is located in fragrant pine savannah by the banks of an intricate lagoon system where manatees are a common sight, in the heart of the peaceful Payne's Creek National Park. There is a comfortable, screened bunkhouse and cabanas, a kitchen/ dining area with meeting space, flushing toilets, solar power and plenty of open space for volleyball and football games after a day's work. Here you will find enough space as for larger groups if needed.



## FIELD STATION AT RIO GRANDE

This field station is nestled in the jungle on the banks of the Rio Grande river within the TIDE Private Protected Lands. Travelling upriver to the field station is a peaceful boat ride, and staying here is a great way to get back to enjoy nature. Designed for smaller group sizes, accommodation is a comfortable camping hammock and the field station provides a kitchen, outdoor dining area, composting toilets, shower and space for volleyball.



## THE HOUSE AT BIG FALLS

About a 30-minute drive from Punta Gorda is a beautiful house and small cabin situated in 10 acres of former orange orchard and a perfect place for larger groups, with comfortable bedrooms and bathrooms, a large kitchen/dining area and meeting space and a screened porch where you can see nothing but forest before you. This is a perfect place to relax after a long day in the field. Within a couple of minutes, you can walk into Big Falls village, where there are small shops and an internet café.



# BUILDING YOUR PROGRAM

**Ridge to Reef Expeditions** has a flexible approach to building your study abroad program, so that it's exactly what you need. These are the building blocks we use to create your itinerary:

## CREATING THE CONSERVATION PROGRAM COMPONENT

By discussing with you details about program duration, schedule, and course requirements, we suggest potential program ideas that would benefit TIDE. Whilst there is always a holistic ridge-to-reef aspect to our teaching and activities, we can focus more on any of the following to suit your course: terrestrial conservation; marine conservation; community projects and education; research and monitoring; practical activities (such as constructing visitor walkways), etc.

## DESIGNING THE BELIZE EXPERIENCE

There is a wealth to see and do in southern Belize that will enrich the study abroad program for all involved. Although optional, we advise that you allow us to include day tours into your schedule to maximize the student experience and minimize the organizational burden on yourself. We will discuss with you the different cultural and adventure tours available through TIDE Tours, and include these in your package so that you have nothing to worry about. We can also include evening activities such as meals out at local restaurants in your itinerary.



Whilst many costs are fixed, we have flexibility in certain activities which allows us to work within your budget, e.g. choosing whether to travel to Punta Gorda from Belize City by road or flight, booking meals out at restaurants, or including days off on weekend rather than booking tours both days. In addition to this, we can price your staff places in a way to suit. As we build your program, we will ask whether you have a budget in mind and will plan your itinerary accordingly.

As our study abroad program will be tailored to your needs, we are happy to accommodate your own set classroom and theory sessions, or can deliver sessions designed by us to compliment the project. We also have learning spaces at our field sites and main office, as well as lab facilities and a range of experts who will introduce the students into their field of work. Our Expedition Manager will communicate with you to ensure that the expedition fulfills all academic requirements, and is happy to assist in developing the curriculum.

## PRICING TO YOUR BUDGET

## DEVELOPING THE CURRICULUM

# HOW WE WORK WITH YOU

**Ridge to Reef Expeditions** is committed to delivering a first-class but personal program for each and every participant, and we know that this is only possible by working closely with organizers to ensure we meet and exceed your expectations at every stage of the process.

Here's how we do it:

From the point of initial contact, throughout your expedition, and with any follow-up, our Expedition Manager will be your first point of call. This means that getting the information you need is easy.

We will assess your specific program requirements, and make sure that the expedition we design for you fulfills those requirements as well as contributing towards TIDE's mission.



As we build your program, we make it very clear what is and isn't included, so that you and your students can make an informed decision.

Volunteer information packs will be sent to you containing information such as visa requirements, pre-departure health checks, currency and kit lists.

We have emergency communications in place 24 hours a day should there be an emergency in the field or back at home.

Your dedicated expedition manager will accompany your group 24/7, meaning that you and your students have nothing to worry about. As well as organizing all the logistics, they form a close relationship with the group and are friendly and approachable should a student have a personal issue during their program.



# OTHER PROGRAMS

If there is no room in the official work schedule then perhaps students would be interested in spending their summers or breaks from university on one of our expeditions or individual placements, gaining conservation skills to set their resume apart.

## TEAM EXPEDITIONS

Students have the opportunity to join 6-12 international volunteers for 4-8 weeks, carrying out conservation activities in both terrestrial and marine environments. Living out at our field stations from Monday to Friday and working closely with TIDE rangers and scientists, volunteers get the chance to experience a diverse number of activities, while building lasting friendships with their team. Team expeditions provide PADI SCUBA training as part of the package and at weekends volunteers can go on tours to local attractions in the Toledo district with TIDE Tours or simply relax in town.



Experience teamwork and explore Belize together in a group



Individual hands-on experience in fields of your interest

## INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENTS

For a more personal and flexible expedition, Ridge to Reef offers Individual Placements which can be anywhere from one week to two months or longer.

Volunteers join TIDE scientists and rangers out in the field and contribute to their regularly scheduled activities. Based at a homestay in Punta Gorda at weekends, and living with field teams from Monday to Friday at one of our terrestrial field stations, this type of expedition allows for volunteers to gain an insight into the inner workings of an NGO and tropical ecosystem management.

***If you think that your students would be interested in Ridge to Reef Expeditions, please tell them about us.***

***More information on all of our programs can be found on our website.  
<http://fromridgetoreef.com/>***

# MEET THE TEAM

## CAROLINE OLIVER - EXPEDITION MANAGER



Ms. Oliver has extensive experience in marine science and tourism and is our Ridge to Reef Expeditions Manager. With a BSc in Environment, Economics & Ecology, an MSc in Conservation & Tourism, and three years running expeditions, Caroline brings an array of knowledge and experience conducting science research and monitoring. As a SCUBA divemaster, Ms. Oliver is passionate about marine conservation and protecting the unique ecosystems and species of Belize. Caroline joins participants on every step of the expedition, providing safety, knowledge, and fun.

## MARIO MUSCHAMP - PROTECTED AREAS MANAGER



Mr. Muschamp is TIDE's longest tenured staff, starting as a ranger in 1999. Now serving as the Protected Areas Manager, Mario manages Payne's Creek National Park, all terrestrial staff, and the Port Honduras Marine Reserve. Mario is the leading expert in fire management in Belize and has extensive experience working in marine and terrestrial environments. Mr. Muschamp is from Monkey River and splits his time between the Payne's Creek field station and TIDE headquarters.

## ELMAR REQUENA - TERRESTRIAL BIOLOGIST



With a degree in Natural Resource Management and certificates in ecology and botany, Mr. Requena serves as TIDE's terrestrial biologist and Hicatee Research and Education Group team leader. Elmar joined TIDE in 2008, and has extensive experience in monitoring marine and terrestrial ecosystems, and managing research projects on behalf of universities and NGOs, like the Wildlife Conservation Society. During Expeditions, Mr. Requena works with participants on terrestrial biodiversity monitoring activities.

## JAMES FOLEY - SCIENCE DIRECTOR



With an MSc in Tropical Coastal Management, Mr. Foley has served as the research director and executive director for the Roatán Marine Park Association in Honduras. He has an abundance of work experience on conservation and sustainable development issues from Mexico to Nicaragua. His passion lies in working in cross-cutting disciplines to achieve sustainable Integrated Coastal Zone Management. During expeditions Mr. Foley provides participants with thorough background knowledge on TIDE's science research and monitoring programs, methods, and data analysis.

## TANYA BARONA- MARINE BIOLOGIST



Ms. Barona hails from the Corozal district in northern Belize and brings to TIDE a deep passion for all things marine. Ms. Barona has a degree in Marine Science and extensive knowledge and experience working with conservation organizations throughout Belize. When not in the field, you can find Tanya at TIDE headquarters working hard on research projects and data analysis for TIDE's science programs. During the Expedition you can count on Tanya to share her expertise of aquatic life in Belize's waters.

## LUGIE CRUZ - ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATOR



Mr. Cruz joined TIDE's environmental education team in 2015. He has completed his Bachelor's Degree in Biology and Education. Previously Mr. Cruz worked as an educator in outreach education as a primary and secondary teacher in Belize and abroad.

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**KFW**