

Project Briefing

The San Estevan Archaeological Project 2005

The University at Albany-SUNY

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Summer 2005 Anth 335: Field Methods in Archaeology

Instructor: Robert Hutchinson 3 credits Module B: June 26 – July 24

This course introduces undergraduates to field and laboratory techniques in archaeology through lectures, practical demonstrations and exercises in the field, and readings. It will be taught in tandem with Anth 338 under the auspices of the *San Estevan Archaeological Project* at the site of San Estevan, Belize, Central America. Students will acquire skills in setting up excavation units, recording elevations, selecting excavation strategies and areas to test, filling out field records, making field observations, drawing plan, profile, and site maps as well as laboratory processing of artifacts. These skills will be practiced daily in the field, and lectures will cover a broad range of field methodologies. Students will be required to pass a practical exam demonstrating competence in a full range of field skills and a written exam on field methods.

Summer 2005 Anth 338: Archaeological Field Research

Instructor: Robert Rosenswig 6 credits Module C: June 26 - August 7

Students will join the research team of the *San Estevan Archaeological Project* as assistant staff members in the exploration of the earliest domestic zones of San Estevan. This research site is located along one of the major waterways of northern Belize, a setting where early Maya peoples thrived prior to the emergence of Classic period civilization. Students will be directly involved in achieving the project objectives in the field and in laboratory analysis for the 2005 season. Such goals include the collection and analysis of data on household organization, the economics of this community, and temporal trends in population growth in the region. How did Archaic horticulturalists make a living and how did settled village life and the adoption of maize change this? How complex was Middle Formative society? Through the study of the political center of San Estevan we will document the site's development from the Archaic to the Late Formative periods (2500-500 BC). This work will help address questions about the earliest sedentary agriculturalists in the area as well as long term changes in community organization and interaction. Students will help analyze the nature of Maya social transformations over this 2000 year period. This field research course will stress links between data collection and interpretation. The research objective of this project will be contextualized within the context of Maya sites in Belize. Lectures will cover a range of topics on Maya research, and field trips will be taken to nearby archaeological sites. During this six week period, students will be living in the Belizean Maya community (originally founded by Yucatec Maya speakers from Mexico) of San Estevan. This experience will thus represent an intensive immersion in Maya and Belizean culture, both past and present. This course will be taught in tandem with Anth 335. Limited space is available for field school students, please speak to the instructor about registering. Email Robert Rosenswig at: robert.rosenswig@yale.edu.

Costs to student: **1) tuition** (paid to SUNY Albany in summer session registration like regular courses, summer tuition rates to be announced by SUNY in the spring - check w/summer sessions office), **2) field cost fee:** \$1,700. (room, board, ground transport for 6 weeks in Belize), **3) airfare.**

PROCEDURE TO SIGN UP: FILL OUT APPLICATION FORM AND GIVE TO ROBERT ROSENSWIG. YOUR POSITION IN THE FIELD SCHOOL WILL BE HELD UPON RECEIPT OF YOUR FIELD COST FEE - \$1700 - PAYABLE TO "THE RESEARCH FOUNDATION OF SUNY." PAYMENTS ACCEPTED FROM NOW UNTIL APRIL 15 (postdated checks for March 1, 2005 accepted now). THERE IS ROOM FOR ONLY 20 STUDENTS. Students will be accepted after April only if space is available. As the instructor leaves for the field in June, all arrangements must be completed on schedule or communications will be impossible.

APPLICATION FORM

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK - ALBANY SUMMER 2005 ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SCHOOL IN BELIZE

JUNE 26 - AUGUST 7, 2005

Please read instructions on reverse and turn this form into Robert Rosenswig, Arts and Sciences, Room 236. For appointments email robert.rosenswig@yale.edu

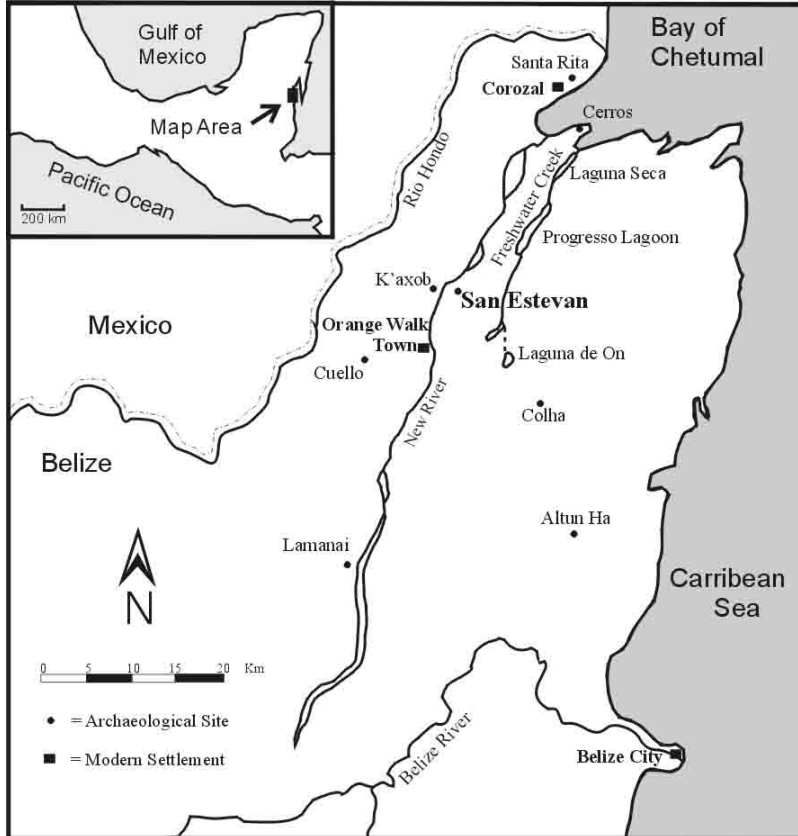
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age	# years in college	major	GPA Anthro.	overall GPA	SSN

1. Please list your previous anthropology and archaeology courses.
2. Please describe any special skills (photography, illustration, Spanish etc.) you may have.
3. Please list anything important about your medical history (respiratory problems, allergies, dietary restrictions, physical impairments, etc.). It is imperative that you consult your doctor or the health clinic on campus at SUNYA to be certain you have no health problems that will affect you in Belize. You will need to get your immunizations updated and get a prescription for anti-malaria medication as described in the briefing.
4. What is the name of your physician? _____
What is your physician's phone # (include area code)? _____
5. Do you have medical insurance? Provide details (name of co., member #) _____
6. Give the name and all phone numbers of your emergency contacts, and their relation to you.
7. Please introduce yourself to the Project Director. What are your expectations for the project? Have you spent much time outdoors or have you traveled in foreign countries before, and how did you find these experiences? Describe your interests and background. Use the back of this page and continue on an additional page if necessary.

Project History and 2005 Research Goals

Project History

Since 1997, The University at Albany-SUNY Belize field schools have taken undergraduate students to the field each year. These projects have provided training to over 120 undergrads and around 35 graduate students. The field school began as the *Belize Postclassic Project* to document occupation along the Freshwater Creek drainage (see Figure 1) in the years



after the so-called collapse of Classic Maya civilization. Seven seasons of archaeological investigations were conducted by SUNY Albany field schools at Laguna de On, Progresso Lagoon and Laguna Seca. Excavations were undertaken primarily at Postclassic sites but also at a number of sites from the preceding Terminal Classic and following Colonial periods were investigated. During most of these seasons the remains of Archaic adapted (i.e., non-sedentary and non-ceramic using) peoples were documented under many of the Maya villages we excavated (Rosenswig 2004).

Figure 1. Map of northern Belize with sites mentioned in the text.

San Estevan Excavations

The research to be performed during the summer of 2005 represents a new project that is a major departure from our past endeavors. The *San Estevan Archaeological Project* will investigate the origins of complex society in northern Belize and the transition from foraging to maize-based food production evident in the record from the Late Archaic through Late Formative periods (2500 – 500 BC) and associated economic, social, and political changes. During prior seasons, we documented a number of Archaic sites in northern Belize, many of which were identified by a distinct orange colored soil that contained distinctive stone tool assemblages (Rosenswig and Masson 2001). In 2001, during a field school visit to the San Estevan site, we noted that this distinct orange soil had been exposed by recent land disturbance. During the 2002 season, based on preliminary test pits at the San Estevan site we determined that above the orange horizon were the remains of an earlier Maya village buried under the mounds at the center of the site. This coming summer we return to investigate the early village in detail.

The first archaeological work at San Estevan was undertaken in 1962 by William Bullard (1965) and structures number I and II were excavated (Figure 2). At these structures Bullard documented Late Formative (300 BC – AD 300) and Early Classic (AD 300 – 600) components

of the site. In 1990, Dr. Laura Levi (1993, 1996, 2002) conducted work at the site with a program of architectural mapping and surface collecting. Test excavations were also dug to determine the site's architectural construction history. Levi's work determined the site's extent, but focused on the extensive Late Classic Period (AD 600 - 900) occupation. In contrast to these two previous projects, during the 2005 field school we will target the site's earliest Formative and Archaic Period occupational horizons.

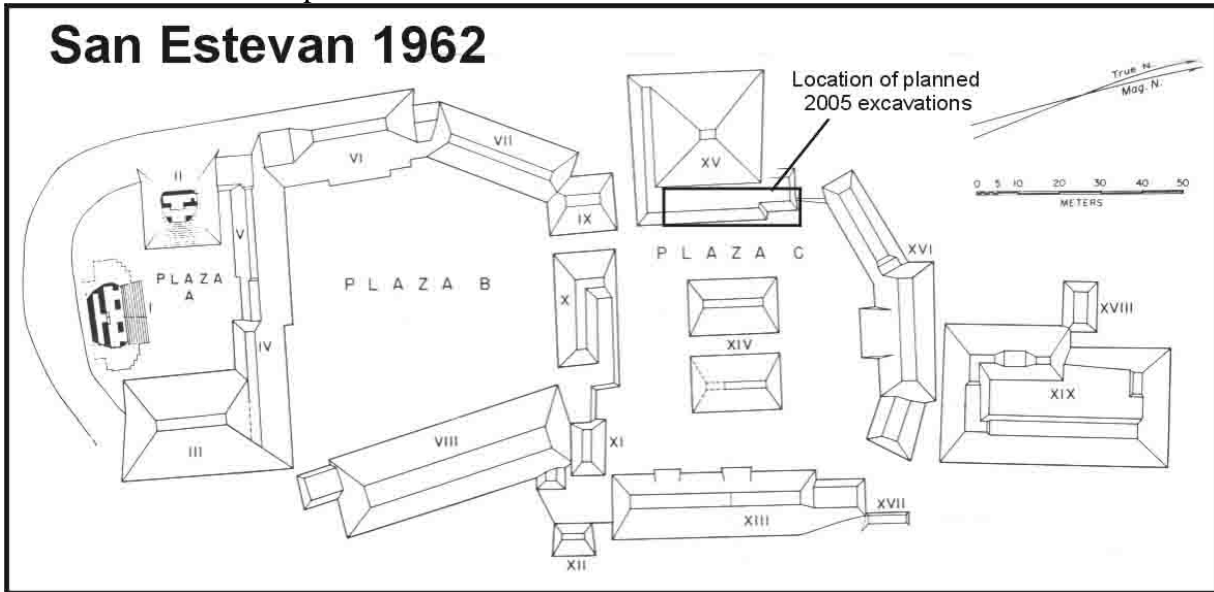


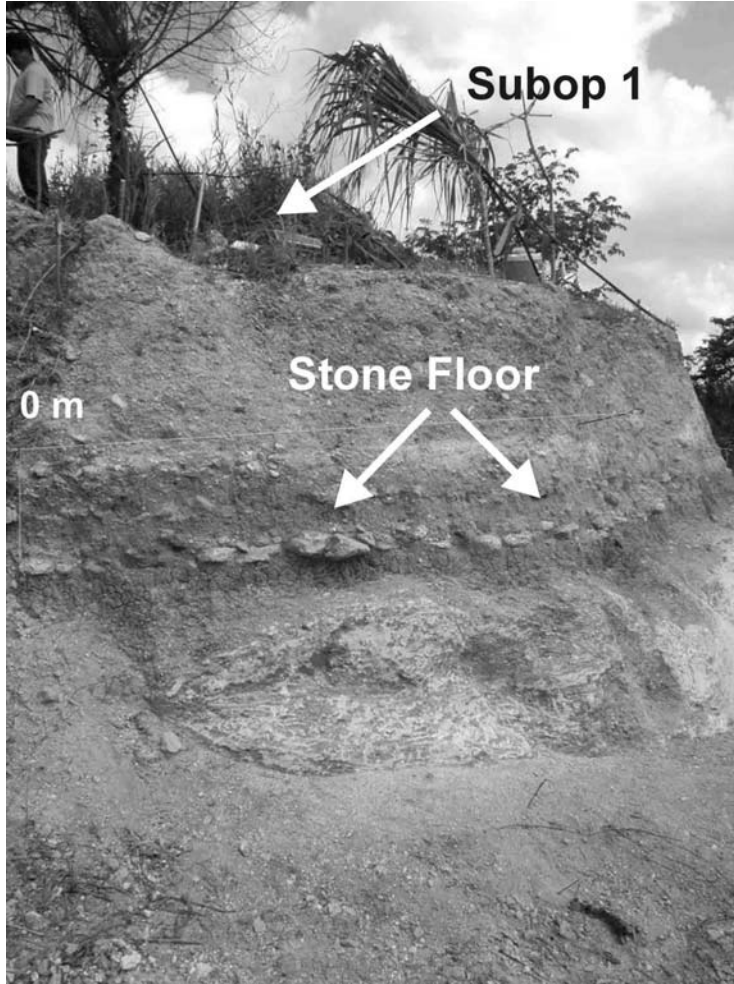
Figure 2. The San Estevan site core as mapped by Bullard (1965: Fig.2).

San Estevan provides a special opportunity for investigating early Maya village organization because a large part of Plaza C (see Figure 2) was illegally dug up and carted away for road fill during the late 1990s. However, portions of this plaza directly behind Mound XV (the largest mound at the site) were missed by the bulldozers and so early components stand ready for broad horizontal clearing. The scale of this operation will rival previous Formative projects in the area at Cuello, Colha and K'axob (e.g. Hammond 1991; McAnany 2004), as it was necessary for these projects to expend considerable time and resources documenting a millennia or more of later superimposed archaeological features. While the destruction at San Estevan is unfortunate, the removal of later components will allow us to investigate the earliest villages from Day 1. This unique situation is ideal for an archaeological field school as the exposed early levels reveal feature-rich deposits that contain numerous houses, refuse zones, burials and shrines that will necessitate the application of a broad range of excavation techniques to document the site.

The Belize Institute of Archaeology is anxious to have us work at the site because of the destruction that has occurred there; they view it as an important salvage project. San Estevan is also a site that can resolve questions about the ceramic chronology of the early Middle Formative, which is a topic germane to understanding the origins and organization of these first village groups in the eastern Maya lowlands (Andrews and Hammond 1990). San Estevan is one of a handful of sites with ceramic assemblages that pre-date the ubiquitous Middle Formative Mamom horizon. Not only will this site provide an interesting and informative research program for training students, it will also serve the Belize government's interests by salvaging a partly destroyed site of critical importance and it will make key research contributions to understanding the emergence of Maya society.

Research Objectives for the 2005 Season

For the 2005 season we have a number of research objectives related to enhancing our understanding of the origins of agriculture and settled life in Mesoamerica. **First**, we will determine the size and nature of the earliest sedentary Formative period village at the San Estevan site. Determining the size of the earliest village will be accomplished by undertaking an extensive excavation program of 2 x 2 meter units east of Mound XV (see Figure 2). Due to the destruction of Plaza C a profile of the village has been exposed that provides an enticing view of these early village levels, including a stone floor dating to the beginning of the Middle Formative period (800 BC) shown in Figure 3. **Second**, we will establish the existence and extent of the earlier Archaic occupation at the site. This will be accomplished through auger testing and carefully excavating the underlying orange soils and performing flotation analysis to collect all tiny artifacts as well as botanical remains from what we anticipate to be scarce remains. **Third**, we will document how the adoption of agriculture and increased sedentism changed the lives of the site's inhabitants. This will be accomplished through the analysis of various classes of artifacts. Food remains (both animal bones and plant remains) will be collected and analyzed as well as the stone tools used to undertake a range of domestic tasks. In addition, documenting



architectural features, storage pits and human burials will allow us to reconstruct the nature of early village life at San Estevan.

The excavations undertaken by the 2005 SUNY Albany field school will thus expose students to a wide range of excavation methods and analysis techniques. This research will also provide a significant contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the earliest Maya peoples in the region, a subject that is still poorly understood (see Marcus 2003: 73-79). Who were the earliest occupants of San Estevan? Were they Maya? Did life really change that much once people adopted maize-based food production and began to use ceramics and live in more settled communities? Join us in Belize this coming summer and help answer these questions.

Figure 3. Profile east of Mound XV with the remains of an intact stone floor indicated.

For color images and more information go to: www.albany.edu/ims/archaicbelize.html

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Project Staff

Position	Name	Institutional Affiliation
Principal Investigator/ Project Director	Robert Rosenswig	SUNY Albany/ Yale University
Project Co-Director	Douglas Kennett	University of Oregon
Laboratory Director	Josalyn Ferguson	SUNY Albany
Excavation Supervisors	Robert Hutchinson Elizabeth Paris Juliana Novic Sarah McClure	SUNY Albany SUNY Albany SUNY Albany University of Oregon
Project lithicist & faunal analyst	Marilyn Masson	SUNY Albany
Project Osteologist	Margaret Briggs	University of Houston

Project Timetable

June 18	PI arrives in field
June 22	Staff members arrive and set up camp in San Estevan village
June 26	Students arrive and excavations begin
July 15-17	Project break
Aug. 7	Students depart
Aug. 7-11	Staff members close up camp and depart

Rendezvous and Visas

Students will be met by project staff members at the Belize City airport. If you wish to be picked up by the project, you must arrive at the Belize airport on the assigned day. The airport is one hour from camp. Team members will be picked up in project vehicles. If you arrive early in Belize, please meet project staff at the Belize City airport at 11:30 am on the assigned day. You can catch a cab there from any of the Belize City hotels. If you change any travel arrangements please FAX the project 011-501-3-22201 AT LEAST 3 WEEKDAYS (M-F) IN ADVANCE to ensure that we know where and when to look for you. We don't get faxes daily or on weekends. For emergencies, you can give information to Victor & Sonya of Victor's Inn at 011-501-3-20183 and they will give us the message verbally. It is much easier for all concerned if you arrive on an earlier flight (American or Continental). The TACA flight arrives later in the day, and this does not give you much time to arrive in camp, get unpacked and oriented before nightfall. I believe prices are comparable among all of these airlines, so if at all possible, please choose an earlier flight. If you are under 26 and a student, get an international student ID card from the travel office at the university (costs \$20) & get a ticket through Council Travel (email me for more information).

You will not need to arrange a visa in advance to visit Belize. You will receive this upon showing your passport at the airport. You will need a passport to enter the country.

Field Communications

Field Communications

Communications are primarily through the fax office in Orange Walk town (011-501- 03-22201), which will be checked about twice a week and email (robert.rosenswig@yale.edu) which will be checked at least once a week. It will not be possible to call project members at the camp, but emergency messages can be left with Victor or Sonya at Victor's Inn (011-501-3-20183). U.S. Mail takes from 8 days to 3 weeks to arrive, or (less often) it may never arrive. Nonetheless, our address will be *San Estevan Archaeological Project*, General Delivery, Orange Walk Town, Belize, Central America.

Please Note:

If you make any last minute arrangements or alterations in your travel plans PLEASE fax the project (*San Estevan Archaeological Project*) at the fax number above. If unforeseen circumstances prevent you from meeting us at the airport on the designated day, please STAY PUT and call Victor's Inn so we can discuss the best plan to get you to camp. Someone goes to Victor's Inn every evening at 5:30 pm to pick up dinner and we will receive your message then - or earlier if it is an emergency (they will contact us at the camp). More adventurous travelers may wish to catch a bus to Orange Walk Town (about US\$ 2 from Belize City or Corozal) and then call Victor's Inn to arrange to get to the camp in San Estevan village. If you do not feel comfortable doing this, please just call Victor's Inn and be patient until the message reaches us.

Field Training

Orientation

An orientation to the project and its research goals will be provided upon arrival in Belize. The orientation will include a brief overview of Maya archaeology, in order to place the significance of the *San Estevan Archaeological Project* in a broader context. A camp and lab tour will also be conducted at this time, with a brief outline of daily procedures with which team members should be familiar.

Fieldwork

Upon arrival in the field, team members will be given a site tour and briefing of research goals. Excavation and field recording techniques will be explained and individually demonstrated to students by excavation supervisors. The project is designed to rely heavily on team members for mapping, field recording, and note taking as requested and overseen by excavation supervisors.

Informal Lectures

There will be approximately two lectures per week. Staff members have unique areas of expertise will be tapped for inclusion into a program of evening lectures. Other archaeologists working in Belize will also be invited to give informal lectures of 30-45 minutes in duration. In addition, instructional lectures will be given that cover aspects of field and lab methodology.

Field Trips

A number of field trips to archaeological sites of interest are planned. Sites to be visited will include Altun Ha and Lamanai which are both open for tourism. Site tours will be given by the PI or staff as their schedules permit. There is a fee for the 1.5 hour riverboat guided ecological tour to Lamanai (US \$25 as we arrange this through a local agency) and entrance to the sites of Lamanai (US\$ 5) and Altun Ha (US\$ 2.50). The project will bring packed lunches prepared for us by Victor's Inn. Both sites have souvenirs for sale.

Lamanai is a magical voyage that recaptures the aura of all things resplendent from the Classic period Maya, with tall temples covered in plaster mask portraits of lords that lived 1750 years ago, stelae, ballcourts, and high jungle canopy forest replete with howler monkeys. It is a special site that was occupied through the Colonial period, and we will see the remains of the “Indian Church” built there. The Altun Ha trip takes one on retrospective journey through the history of Colonial Belize. We will see towns of Maya origin, Carib origin, and interact with woodcarvers manning their stands along this trip up the single lane “old northern highway,” once the sole link between Belize and Mexico and originally a Maya trail. We will also pass the site of Colha along the way.

We will also visit the important nearby Formative period sites of Cuello and Cerros. See the map in the Project History and 2005 Research Goals for the locations of all these sites.

Excavation and Lab Activities

Excavations

Students will assist in all aspects of record keeping and data recovery (digging and screening) under the watchful eye of field supervisors, who will share the record keeping tasks, students will fill out field forms, bag artifacts, assign provenience labels, take elevations, map features and architecture, take photographs, and keep photo records. On the forms, space is allowed for interpretive observations (formed as a result of consultation with the project directors) in addition to measurements and standardized observations. On returning to the camp each day, students will assist in delivering collected archaeological materials to the lab. Writing, drafting, and photography skills are helpful but not mandatory.

Laboratory

On lab days, team members will help with all aspects of lab operations. Activities usually include washing of artifacts, cataloguing, classification and inventory of artifacts throughout the day. The Laboratory Director will supervise team members in these activities. Please let us know if you have illustration, photography, or computer skills.

Field Accommodations

Camp Duties

You will be expected to perform camp duties (various assignments include dishes, showers, bathrooms, sweeping, trash, lunch or breakfast preparation, etc.) on a weekly rotation. Please let the lab director know if there is something you simply cannot do - or truly wish to do.

Kitchen

The kitchen will have coolers of ice. Koolaid, the camp drink of choice, will always be available in addition to water. Bottled beverages (soft drinks or beer if you are of age) may be purchased at your own expense from local “tiendas” (little stores) on every street of the village.

Sleeping Facilities

Students and staff will be housed in public buildings of the San Estevan village, which have electricity and running water (major bonuses for a field camp). These buildings include the community center/hurricane shelter (which serves as dorm, lab, meeting hall, kitchen, and dining room with indoor showers and toilets) and the pre-school. These buildings have separate male and female quarters lined with cots and billowy mosquito nets (resulting in an ambience that is a mix of a Bedouin tent and a Victorian canopy bed). The project will provide one fan for each two cots which will oscillate between

the cots at night. Despite the fans, Belize is hot in the summer. It will take a couple of days to adjust to the lack of air conditioning. The roof of the Community Center, our nucleus of operations, has external stairs leading up to it. It is a popular place for relaxation, socializing, and star gazing. A public pay phone was just installed across the street from the Community Center, which makes it very easy to call home.

Showers and Toilets

Showers and flush toilets are available at both the community center and pre-school. It is also possible to swim in the New River after returning from the field. Two showers and toilets are in the community center, and the pre-school has a toilet. Temporary showers are constructed outside the pre-school by the project for the summer.

Latrines

Be mentally prepared for the latrine (pit toilet) experience on site, the topic of many a camp legend. We are fortunate to have flush toilets in town where we stay (it wasn't always so).

Food and Drink

Drinking water consists of treated town water. This is an unheard of luxury for an archaeological project in northern Belize, and results in a healthier camp. Camp hygiene is a collective effort and hand washing - after latrine use and before handling food - ensures the health of everyone!

Our dinners are catered by the owners of "Victor's Inn," Victor Ayuso and Sonya Espot. The food will be a sumptuous combination of local Caribbean-style Belizean cuisine as well as traditional Yucatec Maya dishes. Project members enjoy Belizean rice and beans, fried plantains, breadfruit, arroz con pollo (chicken with rice and vegetables), curried chicken, relleno, poc chuc, and other hearty dishes. Victor will entertain you with local legends and stories, and Sonya will teach you how to make homemade tortillas and salsa if you would like to learn. Once they even brought us steaming hot chicken tacos out to the site for lunch, delivered in their boat! They have a small resort at Laguna de On, one of our previous research sites, where we still sometimes have picnic lunches and swim on Saturday. Last year they were raising a deer as a pet in their back yard, by the name of "bambi."

Breakfasts will usually be hot, including combinations of eggs, beans, tortillas, pastries and fruit. You will be asked to serve one shift on breakfast or lunch duty, in which you will help a group of about 4 people prepare these meals with staff assistance. Lunches will consist of sandwiches and fruit. Fruit is plentiful in Belize, including watermelon, pineapples, papaya, mangos, mamey apples, bananas, and oranges. Yellow vegetables are widely available, including all manner of squashes and yams in addition to cabbage, carrots, tomatoes, and potatoes. Dark green leafy vegetables are rarely available, as they are not grown in Belize. Powdered and canned milk are available, and instant "Cafe Oro" or "Dolca" is a unique morning experience that is somewhat of a step down from Starbucks. Connoisseurs should bring their own private supply of gourmet coffee and hide it well. Vegetarian diets can usually be accommodated, within reason, and with advance warning.

A major culinary attraction located in Orange Walk Town is the "oasis" of Lee's Chinese Restaurant, a famous mecca for archaeological projects since the 1970's serving such famous delicacies as "sweet and sour lobster." You will have the option to dine at Lee's on Saturday nights *at your own expense* (about US\$ 10-12). The project will also serve dinner in camp (made to order from Victor's) or at Victor's Inn if you do not wish to do this.

New to San Estevan is a "G-Mart," which almost seems like a mirage. G-Mart, located a block from the community center, is a convenience store of unrivalled magnitude in all of Belize! Many a project participant was cited on G-Mart's front steps, cold coke in hand, relaxing to the tune of latest reggae or Columbian salsa music. The project almost feels TOO civilized with all of these recent amenities.

Project Schedule

Work runs five and a half days a week (Monday through Saturday morning). Saturday afternoons are devoted to field trips and/or recreation. Saturday evenings we have traditionally gone into Orange Walk Town (6 miles away) to dine out (at students' expense). Adventurous souls can journey on to the disco, or return to camp. The project will provide dinner (at our expense) for those who opt for a quiet evening in camp or who wish to dine at Victor's Inn. As most people choose to go to town, please let the P.I. know in advance so arrangements for food delivery from Victor's for you can be made. Sundays we have scheduled a number of field trips.

Daily Schedule:

6:00 am rise (5:15 for breakfast duty crew)

6:15 am breakfast

6:45 am depart for field

7:00 am arrive at San Estevan site

7:00-11:00 am excavations

11:00 am -11:30 pm lunch

11:30 am - 2:30 pm excavations

2:30-3:00 return to camp

3:30-6:00 showers, perform camp duties, free time for shopping or relaxation

6:00 dinner

7:15 occasional lectures, free time, or time to spend on field notes in communal setting

10:30 lights out

Physical Conditioning/Medical Advice

The physical demands of the project will involve early rising and spending long days out of doors in hot weather. Students should get a check-up by their physician to ensure that they are in good health. Field days include constant physical activity (with light, moderate, and heavy labor depending on your capacity), including sitting in tight places, standing at the screens, kneeling, bending over, and carrying equipment. You should also make sure that all of your vaccinations are up to date, particularly your tetanus shot. Hepatitis shots are optional, and left to the recommendation of each team member's physician. Anti-malaria medication is recommended, which has to be started in advance of the trip. The sun can be very intense, and its effects can be masked dangerously by the high breeze. Wear a hat! Take breaks! Use sun screen! Drink water! We must all pace ourselves on site.

Those with pronounced allergic reactions to insect bites (spiders, bees, biting flies, mosquitoes, etc.) such as breathing problems should consult their physician prior to arriving in Belize and, in consultation with the Project Director decide whether or not to join the project. Emergency evacuation from the site to the Orange Walk hospital is one hour (for minor emergencies) and to the Belize City hospital is two hours. Although first aid kits will be available in the field and at the camp, personal medical kits should include antibacterial ointment, cortisone cream, Pepto Bismol, a pain reliever (of the individual's choice) and a supply of personal medications sufficient to last the duration of the trip. Team members should bring plenty of sunscreen and insect repellent. The orientation will discuss ways that encounters with insects, reptiles, and poisonous plants can be avoided.

Psychological demands of the expedition primarily surround the lack of privacy. Spending all day with an excavation team, eating in large groups and sleeping in dorm rooms can be taxing at times for even the most sociable of us. Bringing reading materials and a walkman can help create some personal down-time. There will be no television, and not much radio. U.S. papers are not available and project

members should expect to lose touch with the industrialized world. Having our camp in the town of San Estevan allows some opportunity for personal shopping and socializing in the early evenings. Weekend trips planned by the project will visit archaeological sites, and Dining out in Orange Walk also provide chances to relax outside of camp.

The Belize Research Area

Climate

The tropical lowlands of Belize are characterized by an annual cycle of rainy and dry seasons. The dry season generally extends from December to May, with the rainy season extending from June through November. Occasional year-round showers consist of brief torrents. The temperature in Belize averages around 85 degrees, with rare ranges from 70 to 100 degrees in the summer. Humidity is high, usually above 80 %. Altitude is low in northern Belize, usually only a few meters above sea level. As this is a rainy season project, we will continue working in the event of rain. If we are lucky (as we have been for three years in a row), rains will only grace us in brief, passing interludes.

Flora and Fauna

Northern Belize is comprised of a mosaic of microenvironments that include hardwood uplands, swamp, and sawgrass marsh. The upland terrain was the favored location of most Maya settlement, in which a karstic limestone foundation supports highly organic soils and clays that are suitable for agricultural cultivation. It is host to a diverse array of tropical plants and animals, some of which possess toxic properties for human beings. Flies and mosquitoes are major irritants, but are easily combated with full length pants and long sleeve cotton shirts sprayed with repellent. As the insects are worse in the early morning and dusk hours, most individuals wear cooler shirts (&/or shorts), and put on long sleeve layers as needed. Poisonous snakes are numerous in Belize, but students will be advised in preventative measures to avoid encountering them. Snakes tend to avoid excavation areas that are daily inhabited by humans (no students have ever been bitten on the SUNY Albany field school). However, Maya workmen will be present at the excavation site to keep a watchful eye. We also clear brush in a wide berth around excavation areas for additional safety. This usually causes most living things to evacuate to more human-free zones. Dangerous plants include chi-chem (like poison oak), which students will be trained to identify and workmen will also watch out for. As the San Estevan site is not in high bush and is in an agricultural area, many of these jungle hazards are not really applicable. Nonetheless, I mention them, as it is better to be informed. Other hazards include thorned bushes and vines, but puncture wounds can generally be avoided by wearing shoes with substantial soles in uncleared areas and not grabbing unidentified vegetation. The workmen are more than happy to handle the flora and fauna for us, often accompanied by delightful lessons of jungle lore.

With proper caution, the tropical setting of Belize can be beautiful and thrilling. The forests support a number of fascinating mammals, including jaguars, ocelots, tapir, agouti, and others. Bird life is also colorful, with toucans, parrots, and egrets are regularly spotted. Many of these animals can be seen crossing the roads in the early mornings.

Political and Cultural Environment

Belize is a peaceful nation, allied with the United States and Britain. Independence was granted peacefully from Britain in 1981 (formerly British Honduras). The British and Americans maintain a military presence in the country which ensures Belize's protection from potential aggressors in Central America but there have never actually been any problems. Belize is a democratic nation with regular elections and a stable economy. While most of its citizens are not affluent, land is available and many rural citizens subsist through small farming operations.

Although Belize is geographically located in Central America, its character more resembles that of Caribbean nations. It is composed of diverse ethnic groups which include descendants of African-American "Caribs," colonial Europeans (British and Spanish), and Maya. There are also a significant Mennonite and Chinese populations and increasing numbers of immigrants from Pakistan and Taiwan. While English is the official language, Spanish is spoken at home by most people in northern Belize. All Belizeans also speak a "creole" which is similar to languages spoken in most Caribbean nations.

Exploring Belize Beyond the Project

Off of Belize's east is one of the largest coral reefs in the world. You may wish to come early or stay late to vacation on the Belizean Cayes, accessible by boat taxi (US\$ 25 roundtrip) or plane (US\$ 70 roundtrip). You can even fly or take boat taxis directly from the cayes to Belize City the morning of your arrival or departure. See various travel guide books on Belize available at your local bookstore. If you come early, please make plans with the PI to show up at the airport on the assigned day with the rest of your team.

Field Supply Checklist

Sleeping

- _____ sheets
- _____ pillow

Excavation Equipment

- _____ small backpack (to carry personal field supplies)
- _____ water bottle
- _____ pocket knife
- _____ a compass
- _____ a Marshalltown bricklayer's trowel (no longer than 5 inches - don't get a garden trowel!!)
- _____ a line level (about 3 inches long – the type that you hang on string)
- _____ a 3 or 5 meter METRIC tape measure
- _____ black pens and thick "Sharpie" brand permanent markers
- _____ a mechanical pencil
- _____ a 30 cm METRIC ruler

Clothing:

- _____ Long sleeve shirts to wear over t-shirts or tanks when insects are bothersome
(Long sleeve shirts can also be sprayed with repellent, which avoids directly spraying it on your skin, they are also sometimes critical if you are sunburned).
- _____ Long pants (denim or light cotton)
- _____ Shorts
(The choice of wearing long pants or shorts with bug spray varies with the individual. Insects are not excessively bad, and many individuals wear shorts for the entire project, but you should bring both types of clothing to preserve your options. Mosquitoes are worse in the evenings, and light cotton pants are commonly worn then. Insect spray will repel them if you prefer to wear shorts.)
- _____ T-shirts or other short-sleeved or sleeveless cool garments
- _____ Bathing suit (optional but recommended)
- _____ Tennis shoes (at least 2 pairs for when one gets wet)
- _____ Boots (optional)

- _____ Sandals (optional)
- _____ Socks (bring too many pairs as you never have enough, label them with your initials to safeguard against laundry mix-ups)
- _____ Hat (those with large brims work well to shield the sun)
- _____ Rain gear (preferably a fold-up poncho *with a hood* that can be carried in your backpack)
- _____ Sunglasses

Note: clothing selection should accommodate excavation, camp, beach and dinners/dancing in Orange Walk Town (according to your taste)

Personal Items

- _____ flashlight and batteries
- _____ towels
- _____ soap and shampoo
- _____ tooth brush and toothpaste
- _____ razors, shaving cream and a small mirror
- _____ first aid (Band-Aids, antibiotic cream, pain relievers, personal medication)
- _____ sunscreen
- _____ insect repellent
- _____ Camera and film (optional, but highly recommended!)
- _____ Gloves (optional)
- _____ Walkman and tapes (optional)

Spending Money

Spending money is recommended for soft drinks, beer, post cards and souvenirs (T-shirts, wood carvings and jewelry). Optional but also recommended is \$10-12 dinners at Lee's on Saturday nights (but you can always have dinner at Victor's on the project), \$25 for the boat trip to Lamanai and money for 2-3 days travel if you choose to go anywhere on the project break