

First Gap Year Company Sign Major Agreement to Preserve Unprotected Rainforest in Central America

A north east based gap year company have signed an agreement in a move that will ensure their Central America based gap year projects continue to make a difference, and are looking for volunteers to join them in February 2008.

In November 2007, Trekforce Worldwide and Friends for Conservation and Development signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the long term conservation of the Chiquibul National Park. This agreement means that Friends for Conservation and Development and Trekforce have committed to a long term partnership to protect and enhance the natural environment of the Park in Belize.

The partnership will create a unified approach to conservation in Belize's largest national park, with FCD identifying vital projects, key to their management plan, and Trekforce providing the manpower and expertise to see the projects through to completion.

Trekforce Country Manager, Greg Coe says: "I'm very excited about the signing of this monumental agreement. It's another small step in the protection of the ecology and biological diversity in Belize. Trekforce will be able to commit its volunteers to projects in Belize vital to the long term needs of one of the most ecologically at-risk areas in Central America."

Both organisations play distinctive roles, whilst working towards the common goal of conservation:

- Friends for Conservation and Development are an environmental consultancy in charge of the management plan for the Chiquibul National Park in Belize
- Trekforce Worldwide are a UK-based company who complete conservation projects with a volunteer workforce on behalf of project partners

The plan for the Chiquibul National Park is much more than solely preserving the environment, but also working to manage proper use of the resources available to create a sustainable income for the benefit of local communities.

Entering the jungle in February 2008, two groups will be clearing the northern boundary of the National Park, constructing an observation post using local materials deep into the park and collecting any sightings of wildlife or interesting features. Past reconnaissance efforts that Trekforce have taken part in within Belize have been successful, which included discovering 2 new waterfalls and the Morelets Tree Frog which had never been recorded in Belize before. These results are only possible because of how remote Trekforce in their expeditions; often to unexplored areas of jungle, only achievable due to the highly experienced leaders and medics that join Trekforce on project.

Director Rob-Murray John explains: There has been lots of negative publicity about gap year companies lately. This agreements shows that there are worthwhile gap year companies out there like Trekforce, committed to carrying out worthwhile projects which benefit both the local community and the volunteers. Volunteers can walk away from a completed project in 2008 and know they have made a real impact. This partnership will create a positive impact for the conservation of the Chiquibul-Maya Mountain area for years to come, in the careful planning and execution of valuable projects'.

Expeditions with Trekforce to Belize leave the UK in February and July 2008 when you can choose a 4 week to 2 month project. For more details go to www.trekforceworldwide.com or call 0845 241 3085.

Ends.

