We live in interesting times. We can see the many ways in which vast numbers of people are suffering in many parts of the world. We can see materialism, waste, pollution and war. We can also understand that every person and every living thing is endangered by human induced climate change. It has become impossible for us to ignore what is happening. We have been called to act for the benefit of all who are alive and future generations.

As individuals, no matter how hard we work, it is not possible to consider restoring the Earth...but together we are an amazing force and if we so choose we can restore all degraded landscapes wherever they are on the Earth. Restoration needs to be at the centre of human intention. When we collaboratively study how to restore the Earth our lives have real meaning. When we live our lives restoring the Earth we know we are doing what we can to redress many of the mistakes of the past and ensure that future generations will enjoy a fully functional Earth.

You are at the heart of this initiative. Congratulations and thank you for choosing to join the Ecosystem Restoration Communities movement to help restore paradise on earth. We want you to have the best experience restoring with us.

Let’s restore the earth!

John D. Liu
Founder, Ecosystem Restoration Communities movement
WELCOME!

TO EARTH CONNECTION

This handbook is for volunteers and participants of courses and experiences organised at Earth Connection Centre, providing background information about the biological reserve and the location, and practical advice concerning travel, what to bring, and what to expect during your stay.

ABOUT US

Situated in the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico, Earth Connection is a biological reserve with a Cenote and Mayan ruins. Historically, this tropical forest was clear cut and used as a cattle ranch for many years, leaving the land exposed and heavily degraded. This restoration community is restoring 39 hectares, through extensive planting of native species. They are also experimenting with various forms of agroecology, with the creation of a food forest and other regenerative food growing methods. Their end goal is to expand their impact by sharing the successes with the local Mayan communities, ideally helping to restore thousands of hectares.

Since restoration of the land began in 2016 the soil has turned brown, an organic layer has developed and the tree canopy has started to close so there is more moisture held in the soil. The wildlife has responded, increasing in diversity and abundance. Their ever-expanding list of species is one of Earth Connection’s proudest achievements.

Earth Connection Centre is part of Ecosystem Restoration Communities, a global, grassroots movement of more than 60 ecosystem restoration initiatives repairing the earth to create a world of abundance, to provide humanity with hope and a better future. The movement brings everyday people together to restore degraded ecosystems from the ground up, and is an official partner to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Join the mighty movement at www.erc.earth
YOUR HOSTS & TEACHERS AT EARTH CONNECTION

PAUL MORRIS
Paul is an Ecosystem Restoration Practitioner with over 25 years of experience in the fields of ecology, botany, ecosystem restoration, and regenerative farming. Paul is a Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner (CERP) with the Society for Ecological Restoration and also the co-founder of Earth Connection Center Biological Reserve in Yucatan, Mexico, where he has spent 8 years restoring a 39 hectare biological reserve back to a tropical dry forest.

SOPHIA ORTIZ
Sophia is an Agronomy Engineer, specializing in ornamental horticulture, biotechnology and plant micropropagation. She has consulted and trained in the biotechnology space while simultaneously following her passion for creating artwork with vertical ecosystems. Sophia co-founded Earth Connection Centre. She works with students to research soil regeneration, local plant propagation and regenerative agriculture, and is developing a local species botanical garden.

ASHLEIGH BROWN
Ashleigh is is Co-Founder and Education Coordinator at Ecosystem Restoration Communities and producer of the Introduction to Ecosystem Restoration Course. She will be supporting Paul and Sophia in the smooth delivery of the Introduction to Ecosystem Restoration in-person training workshop, supporting with documenting the training workshop, taking photos and capturing feedback. She will also be gathering learnings from the workshop to support other ERCs around the world who may want to offer similar workshops sometime in the future.

We offer a dynamic learning environment with a unique experience that will change how you live and work in this precious world. We work with the landscape and with the rhythm of the planet.

Paul
All accommodation has access to a bathroom with a composting toilet, and separate shower room with solar-heated fresh-water showers. We keep our showers as brief as possible (and turn the water off while soaping up) to conserve our precious supply of water. Showering with a friend is another favourite eco-friendly, water-saving technique.

Our shared dry toilet is located near the guest housing and is cleaned and maintained regularly by our staff. Composting toilets are an amazing way to practice a closed-loop balanced eco-friendly lifestyle.

In the winter, temperatures can get close to 0°C at night and summer over 40°C in the day. April-May is the hottest part of the year with temperatures in the 40s. Rainy season is late May to end October, dry season November to May. December to February are the best times to come if you prefer it cool.

There are three covered accommodations each with 2 bunk beds. Alternatively, you may choose to camp on site (please bring your own tent). If you'd prefer to stay in a nearby hotel we recommend Hacienda Sotuta de Peon. You will need to hire a car to get to and from Earth Connection Center each day.

At Earth Connection Center we like to “disconnect to reconnect” - unplugging from our phones and social media as much as possible to deepen our presence and in-person relationships. That being said, we still like to make contact with the outside world from time to time, and we offer WiFi to our guests in the main community house during the breaks at breakfast, lunch and after dinner.

Our main community house is equipped with electrical outlets where you can charge your devices. Please be mindful and charge when the sun is out.

We ask that you help with community kitchen cleanup after meals a few times during your stay.

ABOUT EARTH CONNECTION

FAST FACTS

Our restoration activities on site:
- Compost making
- Water retention
- Tree planting
- Food growing
- Soil building
- Habitat creation
- Bioremediation
- Community building
- Natural building
- Biological research
- Ecological restoration

Composting toilets are an amazing way to practice a closed-loop balanced eco-friendly lifestyle.

关于地球连接

快速事实

我们的恢复活动包括：
- 堆肥
- 水保持
- 树种植
- 食物生长
- 土壤建造
- 生物多样性
- 社区建设
- 自然建筑
- 生物研究
- 生物学

在冬天，温度可以在晚上接近0°C，在夏天超过40°C。四月至五月是一年中最热的部分，温度在40°C以上。雨季是五月至十月，旱季是十一月至五月。十二月至二月是最佳时期，如果你喜欢凉爽。

有三个带顶的住宿，每间有2张上下铺。否则，你可以选择在露营场露营，请自带帐篷。如果你更喜欢在附近酒店住宿，我们推荐索图塔德彭。你需要租车前往地球连接中心。

在地球连接中心，我们喜欢“断开连接以重新连接”——从我们的手机和社交媒体中断开，尽可能地加深我们的存在和个人关系。虽然如此，我们仍然需要与外面的世界联系，我们会在主社区屋提供WiFi在早餐、午餐和晚餐时间。

我们的主社区屋配备了电源插座，你可以在阳光充足时为设备充电。请谨慎地在阳光充足时充电。

我们要求你帮助清洁社区厨房，尤其是在用餐后。

WiFi

All accommodation has access to a bathroom with a composting toilet, and separate shower room with solar-heated fresh-water showers. We keep our showers as brief as possible (and turn the water off while soaping up) to conserve our precious supply of water. Showering with a friend is another favourite eco-friendly, water-saving technique.

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WHAT TO BRING TO EARTH CONNECTION

- Tent, sleeping bag and pillow (if camping)
- Towel
- Hat and bandana
- Sunscreen and bug repellent (biodegradable and natural)
- Biodegradable soaps/toothpaste/shampoo/conditioner (please do not bring toiletries that are not biodegradable!)
- Head torch
- Water bottle
- Working gloves
- Sturdy footwear and clothing suitable for the jungle and many thorns - pack long pants, long sleeve shirt (for jungle work and sun protection)
- Eye protection (for machete work or construction)
- Ear plugs (for construction or getting a good night sleep)
- Water container (hydration needs to be maintained to prevent heat illness)
- If you smoke tobacco, bring only rolling tobacco and please avoid bringing cigarettes with filters

Be warned that the tropical jungle is not the kindest environment for material possessions. We recommend not bringing anything you are really attached to (clothes, jewelry, books, etc.) as things might get wet/mouldy/stained/really smelly (even books). Leather will especially be damaged.
WHAT TO EXPECT AT EARTH CONNECTION

Expect jungle living and an authentic off-grid living, rich learning experience at this solar and wind powered center. Your stay includes all activities, tuition and events mentioned in the program, and three varied, family-style, delicious Mexican vegetarian meals each day, as well as unlimited water, tea and coffee. As our guests, you are part of our Earth Connection family, and we encourage you to enjoy all of our shared spaces throughout our home:

- We have a Sacred fire pit created by a local shaman
- Water ponds for wildlife
- Large regenerative agriculture garden
- Food forests
- 39 ha of tropical forest restoration
- Cenote with clear blue water for swimming and diving. Note, you will need to wash off any chemicals before swimming in the cenote. It is the groundwater where we get our water and home to many endangered creatures that do not tolerate these chemicals.

The Yucatan region is known for its tropical beaches, spectacular wildlife, ancient Mayan ruins and small villages. It is also home to Chicxulub, where the meteor that killed the dinosaurs fell, and there are over 3000 cenotes (natural sinkholes) in the area.

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

- Hot humid weather - if you're not used to the heat take it slow until you acclimatize
- The sun is strong - use sunscreen if you have low melanin
- Biting creatures include mosquitoes, ticks, Chaga beetle
- Poisonous snakes - don't touch them
- Spines and thorns
- Skin irritating plants - chaya, little leaf vine
- Minor cuts should be checked and treated
BEFORE YOU START
Load Earth Connection Center on Google Maps before heading out to help explain directions.

http://ge0.me/skqKwutQon/Calle_56

GPS COORDINATES
20.960613 -89.621648 or 20°57′38.21″N 89°37′17.93″W

TAXI
Uber or motor taxis will take you to Earth Connection Center from Molas or Merida.

BUS & TAXI
You can catch the local bus to Molas (the Movit app gives the local bus schedule) one block south of the Mercado de San Benito/Market in Merida. In Molas, the motor taxis will take you to the center. Ask to be taken to Cenote Tsunul or show them the google map. Look for the Blue Gate at km 6.1 on the Saskab Road (see picture below). We live here, so call us (+52 999 328 7237) before arriving to unlock the blue gate as there is no service on the Saskab Road. The casa is 0.5 km up the dirt road inside the gate.

IMPORTANT
Remember to call us to confirm when you will arrive as we need to unlock the gate.

CONTACT US
Ecosystem Restoration Community
Leader: Paul Morris
Email: planethealer1@yahoo.ca
Cell/mobile number: +52 999 328 7237
Blue gate, east side, km 6.1
Molas-Yaxnik Road, south of Merida
Mérida Municipality, Yucatan, Mexico