

## RESPONSIBLE ECOTOURISM POLICY

Santa Lucía is a community-based organization formed by local campesino families who manage their own resources. We have three basic aims: to conserve and protect the cloud forest belonging to member families; to develop sustainable sources of income for the members of Santa Lucia; to benefit directly or indirectly the residents in neighboring areas.

Our motivation for conserving the forest and for benefiting the local community, is that it is our forest and our community.

Santa Lucia is developing ecotourism as a means of achieving this mission. As such, practising responsible tourism is not an 'add-on' for Santa Lucia, but an intrinsic part of what we do. We believe that responsible ecotourism should not only encompass a 'do no harm' policy, but that it obliges us to actively conserve our natural environment and to work for the benefit of our local communities.

As part of what we do to ensure the quality of our policies and practices we are working towards the 'Certificación para Pequeñas y Medianas Empresas Turísticas' accredited by the Asociación Ecuatoriana de Ecoturismo and Rainforest Alliance.

Our responsible ecotourism policy has three components: *Environment, Community, and Visitors*.

### ENVIRONMENT

As part of our commitment to conserving Santa Lucia's cloud forest and our commitment to improving the surrounding natural environments:

- We do not allow deforestation, hunting or removal of plants from the Santa Lucia Reserve.
- We have completed a four year reforestation project and are now planting endangered species of trees in areas of secondary forest.
- We have a Conservation Monitoring Programme to study the forest and its flora and fauna, to determine any potential effects of human activities, to monitor climatic change, and to inform our management and conservation of the reserve.
- Where possible, we grow and/or buy organic food to help towards protecting farmers and the environment from harmful chemicals, and to safeguard the health of tourists and our workers. We maintain an organic garden as well as an agro forestry project which includes organic bananas, coffee, and sugar.
- Where possible, we buy environmentally friendly products and supplies and never use products derived from endangered species.
- We practice the hierarchy of waste policy of minimising, reusing, recycling and disposing safely of waste . Additionally, we work with other organisations to improve local recycling and waste disposal facilities.
- We minimise contamination of the soil and water at Santa Lucia by using compost toilets.
- We use minimal energy (there is no electricity at the ecolodge.) We have a solar panel for recharging batteries.
- We seek creative ways to inform, educate and involve our members, visitors, and the wider community, especially children, about conservation and what they can do to help the environment.

## COMMUNITY

As part of our commitment to our members and other members of the local community:

- Santa Lucia is directly managed by its members.
- We provide jobs for our members and for other local people. We only engage outside support when specific expertise is not available locally. Our staff is currently 100% local residents.
- We seek to develop in ways that are labour intensive in order to provide further local employment.
- We provide extensive training and capacity building to enable local people to carry out their work competently and to take up positions at all levels in the organisation.
- Where possible we buy from local farmers and shops and use local businesses.
- We are conscious of the possible negative impacts of tourism on the local community and seek to minimise these effects by, for example, keeping our groups of visitors small.
- We work in partnership with other local organisations and members of the wider community to achieve long lasting benefits for local people.
- We support other community ventures such as a women's cooperative and other community-based ecotourism projects.
- Through our highly successful volunteer programme, we provide educational opportunities for children in the community; including environmental education, after school programmes and English classes.

## VISITORS

As part of our commitment to our visitors:

- We offer visitors an opportunity to get an authentic taste of rural Ecuadorian life while experiencing, enjoying and learning about Santa Lucia's Cloud Forest.
- We offer tourists the opportunity to contribute to genuine community development and conservation efforts.
- We provide honest, educational and (we hope) interesting information about what visitors should expect and what we can offer, about the local environment and about local cultures.
- We take care to ensure that the ecolodge is always clean and comfortable.
- We take the health and safety of our guests seriously.
- We offer a quality service with the personal touch.

As part of our visitors' commitment to Santa Lucia, the environment and the local community:

- We ask that visitors respect the forest and follow the norms we provide, and that they are respectful of their host community, the people and their culture.