

RIOS TROPICALES: SUSTAINABLE ADVENTURE TOURISM

www.riostropicales.com

Rios Tropicales was founded in 1985 by Rafael Gallo and Fernando Esquivel with a simple mission that hasn't changed over almost three decades: To share the rivers and natural resources of Costa Rica, our culture and conservation values, always committed to professionalism, safety, high quality and extraordinary service.



Rios Tropicales offers sustainable adventure tourism packages in Costa Rica to travel agencies and individuals within the country and around the world. Rios Tropicales operates throughout Costa Rica offering adventure activities that allow tourists to see Costa Rica's natural richness, such as whitewater rafting, kayaking, canoeing, hiking, cycling, cultural encounters and wildlife tours.

When it comes to its mission, Rios Tropicales walks its talk by running the company and all its programs sustainably, conscientiously and for the benefit of all its stakeholders: tourists, employees, local communities and the environment. It has achieved level four (of five) from the Certification for Sustainable Tourism Program (CST). CST is a product of the Costa Rican Tourism Board and was designed to differentiate businesses of the tourism sector, based on the degree to which they comply with a sustainable model of natural, cultural and social resource management.

The Rios Tropicales Lodge is another example of how Rios collaborates with (and educates) local communities. In 1989, Rios purchased 90 acres along the Pacuare River near a small subsistence farming community. Rios bought the land from local Anibal Obando, whose large family had cut down significant tracts of rainforest to create farmland. Rios then hired the same Obando family to manage reforestation efforts and the eco-lodge, both of which they still do today. Many of the Obando children are current or former guides and staff in the larger Rios company. Several Obando family members have attended college with the assistance of Rios.

Today, the firm offers adventure tourism to individual travelers, families traveling together, corporations, and cruise ship passengers, all while promoting conservation of the environment and emphasizing education. For example, new trip development to the Cucaracho River in Upala brings their proven model of sustainability, community support and engagement through jobs, training, and education.

From the very beginning, Rafael and Fernando chose a business approach of engagement and collaboration—it was the rule, not the exception. Rios Tropicales did geo-tourism/ eco-tourism/ sustainable development as a simple matter of business to save the rivers they loved, promote and protect the areas they loved, and constructively engage with the local community members who became their friends, colleagues, partners, employees, managers, and facilitators in this dream.

Now in its third decade of operations, Rios Tropicales is focused on further integrating its sustainable business practices and environmental protection programs within its communities of operations. These practices and programs include: land protection and reforestation projects, green construction projects, environmental education programs in elementary schools, and support of local communities, including the indigenous Cabecar Indians, through employment, development assistance, sustainable agriculture, and providing markets for local products.

One of its signature projects, involving the nearby village of El Tigre, exemplifies exactly how Rios Tropicales engages with the local community and environment to promote sustainability and conservation. The El Tigre South-South Project is an international collaboration between the Republic of Costa Rica and the Kingdom of the Bhutan, involving the rural community of El Tigre,

and the newly created Association of Bhutanese Outfitters. The South-South project transformed El Tigre into a sustainable community tourism destination, providing income, jobs, education, while prioritizing conservation and protection of the fragile rainforest environment. Rios Tropicales was awarded a grant from Fundecooperacion's Programme for South-South Cooperation (PSC) for El Tigre in August 2008, and the project was finished in April 2010. The project met the goals and guiding principles of PSC: Sustainable tourism, Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity, Sustainable Chains of Production and Consumption, Gender Equity, Equality, Reciprocity and Participation.