



Credit: Karen Lawson

WILL YOU CONTRIBUTE TO AN ECO-TOURISM PROJECT IN NICARAGUA?

Dear NSC supporters

Many of you have bought Nicaraguan coffee or visited the country as a tourist, brigadista, volunteer or on a study tour or delegation. Now eco-tourism is growing so could you contribute? We're working with CECOCAFEN, an umbrella organisation for fair trade coffee producers, to provide eco-tourism training for farming families in rural areas. Several NSC members have taken part as guests with these families and returned highly enthusiastic. "A wonderful experience." said one. "Truly inspiring".

Eco-tourism means using local transport rather than air-conditioned mini-buses, staying with families, eating local food and enjoying the countryside; all this encourages the families to protect their land and to live more sustainably. The number of tourists visiting Nicaragua is growing at a rate of 8% annually and tourism forms a key part of the government's poverty-reduction strategy. Now small farmers can take advantage of the opportunities that have opened up.

Training through CECOCAFEN will include treatment and use of water; food hygiene, protection of flora and fauna; and compilation and dissemination of history and cultural traditions. It will also identify areas where investment is needed: improvements to houses, better cooking equipment, the construction of paths and viewing points. It's a very interesting project, but an ambitious one which needs our help to succeed.

As Juana Antonia Mendez, a coffee farmer herself, explained:

"Our programme is mutually beneficial: visitors get a low-cost opportunity to live close to nature with local families, and learn about coffee and fruit cultivation; the families diversify their income and exchange experiences with their guests. The host families use their own vegetables, fruit, milk and meat to provide food for their guests, which means the producers receive a better price for their produce."

As well as benefitting the families, some of the income is used for materials for local schools so the whole community benefits.

At present 30 families based in the municipality of San Ramon are involved in eco-tourism homestays. The aim is to expand the number to 60 families and if possible to roll out the programme to four other municipalities. After the training more families will be able to realise the potential of their farms through diversifying their activities and income by hosting visitors. They will have more resources to invest in farming sustainably, protecting the environment, and - importantly - mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change.

Please contribute to this unusual and far-sighted project by donating now. 50% of funds raised will go to the project and the rest towards our climate work this year (a speaker tour and briefing). You'll find the donation form over the page. Thank you!

Stella Embiliss

◆ DONATION FORM

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Credit: Steve Lewis

Please return this whole paper to: NSC, 86 Durham Rd, London N7 7DT. Charity no. 1106881
020 7561 4836 nsc@nicaraguasc.org.uk www.nicaraguasc.org.uk

Thank you!