



## **Policies and Sustainability Efforts - Hotel Guayabo Lodge:**

### ***History of Guayabo Lodge:***

The property in which is the hotel Guayabo Lodge originally belonged to famous the ex- President of the Republic of Costa Rica José Figueres Ferrer, known like 'Pepe Figueres', who directed the declared civil war of the 1948 against an electoral fraud. Figueres became famous because it abolished the army, consolidating therefore the image of peace and democracy that enjoys Costa Rica nowadays.

With the passing of time, the property came to be owned by a nephew of the president, Mr. 'Guyi' Figueres, whose family created the Guayabo Lodge in 1985. The Lodge was under the same administration as the Blanco y Negro Farm, where it was located. The small Lodge, of only four rooms, was well known because of the beauty of scenery and the simplicity of its handling.

It was in 2002, that a famous environmentalist, M.Sc. Miguel Cifuentes, then Director the IUCN Offices for Central America (International Union for the Conservation of Nature), located at CATIE, Turrialba, recommends the Ferreira-Lok family the purchase of this small hotel. Following Miguel's recommendation, Mrs Rossana Lok decides to buy this Lodge and begins to develop it like an ecological project that will be nourished by and benefit the community from Santa Cruz, and would heighten the cultural values of the zone.

Since her husband, Dr. Pedro Ferreira, was by that time the Director General of CATIE, an institute with clear environmentalist goals and vision of sustainability, and since Mrs Lok herself had been a professor of Sociology at the same institute, the conceptual bases for this work were strong and it was quite natural to pursue these environmental and social goals when designing the policies of the Lodge.

Looking backwards, we can proudly say that the most important results of the last years are not only the growth of the company, its image and its clientele, but the contributions to the well-being of the community of bordering Santa Cruz.

Several of our employees, some mothers of several children and female leaders of family without a masculine support, that had difficulties to pay the rents of their houses, are nowadays the owners of their houses.

The Lodge has cooperated with permanent jobs, training, loans to the employees, donations of materials for construction, equipments and furniture for the houses, equipment and scholarships and construction materials for the schools where the children study, support to the Church and its programs, support to the Santa Cruz Association for Development, etc., etc.



The Lodge is also the most important client of many businesses and suppliers of this small town of Santa Cruz, the bakery, the supermarket, verdulería (vegetables & fruits store), the hardware store, etc.

It has also been pioneering in supporting and developing the recycling of solid residues in Santa Cruz, proposing to the Association for Development to join the Municipality of Turrialba and the Hospital of the CCSS's recycling campaign 'TURRIAMBIENTE' by organizing the first satellite recycling campaign for Santa Cruz and by financing the prizes to grant to the best recycling efforts.

It has systematically supported the schools of the region, not only schools of Santa Cruz but also of most of the Turrialba province, and has used his influences to canalize donations and support from commercial partners.

It has supported to the Home for Elders of Turrialba (Asilo de Ancianos) and to the Church of Santa Cruz with donations in money and goods and materials.

It has been and ally and supporter for the development and environmental conservation committees of this area. It is the central gathering place for the environmental committee of the Biological Corridor Santa Cruz-Guayabo and a Founding Member of the corresponding Association.

It has been the central gathering place for the meetings of the Rural Tourism development project of CATIE-CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency), led by a Canadian expert M.Sc. Linda Vaillancourt.

It is founding member of the Turrialba Chamber of Tourism and the Turrialba Volcano Chamber of Tourism. It is also a member of CANATUR, the National Chamber for Tourism and the Association Holland Hotels of Costa Rica.

It has been granted the 'Declaratoria Turística' status by the ICT and is applying with pride to the Certificate of Tourist Sustainability of the same Institute.

### ***Finca Valle Escondido (Hidden Valley Farm).***

Due to the limitations of space that the hotel has within the Blanco y Negro farm in Santa Cruz and the desire to cooperate with the conservation in the zone, the company Azalia Turrialbeña S.A., proprietor of the hotel, decided to buy a property in the zone known as Las Abras, in the skirts of the Turrialba volcano.

This property, of eco-touristic character is a dairy farm which also encompasses a conservation area of secondary forest of approximately three hectares of size, as well as areas of forest regeneration.



It is the home of the *Crepidophryne epiotica* toad, of diurnal habit, that according to the INBIO, National Institute for Biodiversity, is a threatened species of extinction of the tropical very humid forest.

This species is considered as one which is threatened with extinction and is protected by law 'Ley de Conservación de la Vida Silvestre No. 7317', and 'Ley Orgánica del Ambiente No. 7554' and 'Decreto No. 26435-MINAE.'

Source: INBIO: <http://darnis.inbio.ac.cr/ubis/>



This photo was taken in 2009 by guide and biologist Rosa Coto, in the Valle Escondido Farm, when guiding a group of French tourists.

This toad was identified by experts of INBIO, Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad as a species in danger of extinction.



*Crepidophryne epiotica*  
Toad

The Valle Escondido farm is located in the edge of the Buffer Zone (Zona de Amortiguamiento) of the Turrialba Volcano national park, where it preserves the humid forest of high altitude with its fauna and characteristic flora, including the 'Pava de Monte', the 'Jilguero' and the Quetzal.



### ***Certification for Sustainable Tourism.***

*The CST - " Certification for Sustainable Tourism " is a program developed by the ICT (Costa Rica Tourist Board) to certify hotels and touristic organizations as sustainable enterprises from the environmental and social point of view and with regards to its relationship with the client.*

*The ranking is from one to five "green leaves", indicating the level of sustainability of the company.*

*Costa Rica stands out as a pioneering country in promoting the sustainability certification of the tourist industry and has obtained excellent results thanks to the efforts of the Costa Rica Tourist Board.*

*Similar certification systems are used in other countries and counts with the endorsement of TIES (International Eco-tourism Society).*

### **Efforts and sustainability policies of the Guayabo Lodge:**

#### ***1. Gardens:***

Being the owner of the hotel the author of a book on 'Home Gardens' (awarded a prize as best book printed by CATIE, year 1996), the love for plants and gardens is reflected in all corners of the Guayabo Lodge. They show an enormous diversity within the space available.

Mrs. Lok and her husband, Dr. Pedro Ferreira, made the decision of opening to the CATIE Botanical Garden, previously a closed area and collection for research. The garden was dedicated to the famous Costa Rican botanist Jorge Leon Arguedas to honor his contributions during the creation of this magnificent research garden.

This garden receives nowadays thousands of national and foreign visitors per year and, in particular, thousands of children and Costa Rican youngsters, many of which get to know for the first time the wonders the biodiversity of the flora of this country.



The majority of the plants, trees and shrubs of the garden of the Guayabo Lodge are of the zone or belong to the Costa Rican flora, and the most outstanding trees or shrubs have been labeled to allow the tourist to become familiar with the biodiversity of the region.

The property owns in addition organic 'kitchen' gardens that provide products for the restaurant, in particular herbs for sauces and spices. Among them you will find three types of basil, 'ajín', fennel, mints, tropical oregano, rosemary, lemon grass and 'cebollín'.

Everything in the property is cultivated organically, using only nontoxic natural fertilizers and avoiding chemical pesticides. The organic fertilizers come from the 'compost', where organic residues and 'boñigas' of the goats are processed through the 'vermicultura' (red earthworms).

The hotel has elaborated a small manual of the plants and trees of its garden to share with tourists especially those interested in gardens.

It also offers a diversity of books and manuals that are lent to the tourist interested in learning about Costa Rican flora and gardens.

## **2. Biodiversity.**

As was previously mentioned, the Guayabo Lodge, through its property Finca Valle Escondido in the outskirts of the Turrialba volcano, 2000 meters above sea level, protects a species of toad threatened to extinction, the *Crepidophryne epiotica*.

The Lodge also cooperates with diverse initiatives of environmental conservation, in particular with the Bird Monitoring Program of CATIE and with the Biological Corridor initiative (Corredor Biológico Norte, Santa Cruz-Guayabo -CBNSCG). The Lodge hosts the monthly community meetings of the CBNSCG and is a founding partner of the respective Association for the CBNSCG.

In order to support the CATIE's Bird Monitoring Program, recently the Lodge has contracted the services of ornithologist Herman Venegas who has elaborated an inventory of birds in the Santa Cruz area.

In addition, the Guayabo Lodge has promoted and sent to the CATIE garden, along with CR Tours Ltd., numerous groups of tourists who have participated in the identification and marking of birds and in the study of bats of the zone.

## **3. Facilities.**

The Guayabo Lodge was designed and constructed using selected material aiming at having minimum impacts on the environment - concrete instead of wood whenever it is possible, and wood of fallen or dangerous trees or timber from mature forest plantations when necessary.



Much of the wood used for furniture or construction has been bought from very reliable sources: the sawmill of CATIE and the one of Agricultural Diversification in Turrialba, in particular the teak, eucalyptus and treated pine.

Another source of timber has been provided by trees that have fallen or have been sawed because they constituted a danger for telephone cables, people or facilities of the Lodge.

The use of the natural light has been maximized in all our facilities. In addition, ventilation of spaces by means of openings was maximized, allowing the passage of air and controlling the passage of insects.

The laundry area owns a zone for drying of towels, sheets and clothes, with clear plexiglas ceilings under which the clothes are hung to dry using the solar heat and avoiding to the maximum the use of the electrical dryer machine.

#### ***4. Environmental protection.***

The Guayabo Lodge is located within the Blanco y Negro farm pasturelands. Within this beautiful area of pastures, the property of the Lodge is an oasis for biodiversity and for the birds of the place.

The fruit trees, flowers and ornamental plants provide a propitious habitat for resident and migratory birds.

More than 120 bird species have been identified by ornithologist Herman Venegas in the area, contracted by the hotel for this aim, and the list of species has been given to the monitoring bird program of CATIE as a contribution of the Lodge to their efforts.

This list is at the disposal of the clients in the Lobby of the hotel, as well as the list of resident and migratory birds that might be seen at the CATIE headquarters in Turrialba.

We contribute with the environmental protection efforts of the Biological Corridor initiative, being the Hotel Guayabo Lodge the monthly meeting place for community gathering and discussion.

Dr. Ferreira, in representation of the hotel, is also Founding Member of the Association of the Biological North Corridor Santa Cruz-Guayabo.

We have strived to provide information that aims at informing and educating our clients and personnel in issues related to environmental protection of the fauna and the flora of the country, and the directions to follow when visiting a national park or protected area.

We share with our clients informative books on the fauna and flora of the country and we promote visits to botanical gardens, national refuges of wild life, parks and private reserves.



During the 2000-2008 period, when Dr. Ferreira was Director General of CATIE, the Botanical Garden of CATIE was opened to the public. Mrs Lok was key in designing the footpaths for visitors within the garden and to the enhancement and creation of facilities for visitors. The Guayabo Lodge promotes the visit to the Botanical Garden of the CATIE and to the Lankester Garden, a magnificent garden for orchid lovers, owned and managed by the Universidad de Costa Rica.

The hotel has strived to protect the fauna and flora in the Turrialba volcano area, in particular to put an end to the practice of hunting birds for commercial purposes. We ask our personnel and request our customers not to take to plants or animals and not to feed wild animals when visiting national parks or protected areas.

The hotel avoids acoustic, water and air contamination. The usual practice of burning of residues has been prohibited and smoking inside the hotel is also prohibited. Guayabo Lodge is part of an initiative led by the CR Ministry of Health to promote a 'free of smoke' hotels and restaurants.

The hotel natural reserve may be visited by interested clients. This reserve is located at an altitude of 2000 meters. The neighboring forests are visited by the quetzal, the 'pava de monte', 'jilgueros' and many other birds. The hotel organizes Tours to the property allowing the client to enjoy the high-altitude tropical forest with its tree- ferns, bromeliads and orchids. The client will also see old lava rivers, remaining of ancient eruptions.

#### ***5. Social responsibility - Support to the community.***

The Guayabo Lodge has provided continuous support to the schools of Santa Cruz and many others in the Turrialba county. It has also contributed donations to the Home of the Elders (Asilo de Ancianos) of Turrialba, to the Church of Santa Cruz, the Association for Development of Santa Cruz, to the organization of community fairs and cultural celebrations and to charity events, to organizations of young people, to cultural groups, to the families of the employees of the hotel and to different people in times of need and struggle, to the local police and to numerous projects of public interest.

It has urged his clients and commercial partners to cooperate and has succeeded in using its influences and contacts to obtain donations and gratuitous contributions for community works. In particular, visitors and groups of students who have lodged in the hotel have contributed to community projects. We have thus painted classrooms and donated a computer to the School of La Patora, donated a computer and printer and materials to the School of Las Abras (Turrialba volcano 2000 m altitude), we have contributed to the improvement of public bus stops shelters in Santa Cruz, we have contributed to finance scholarships, to improve libraries and the infrastructure of the many schools including those of Calle Vargas, Santa Cruz, Noche Buena, Alto Varas, Mollejones, San Joaquin, Pacayitas, El Sitio, Tuis, Tayutic (Platanillo), Jose Ma. Castro Madriz (Pejibaye) and Los Alpes.





## **6. Rescue of cultural values.**

Guayabo Lodge and CR Tours Ltd., Charlotte, NC, the USA, have designed two unique tourist programs with the aim of rescuing and spreading cultural values of the country, the Black Heritage Tour (BHT) and the Tropical Cooking School Tour (TCST).

For the first program, the owner of the hotel, Mrs Rossana Lok, anthropologist of profession (Doctorandus, Universiteit Leiden, Holland) designed the Tour to rescue and to spread the Caribbean black culture. She counted on the support of influential personalities of the Black community, like Mr. Lazel Lonis and Mr. Roy Barton.

Towns of black tradition of the Caribbean were visited, putting an emphasis on history, cooking traditions and recipes and cultural values.

The BHT is sold successfully through CR Tours Ltd. and it has been in place since the year 2008.

The second program heightens the values of the Costa Rican tropical cuisine, and its beginnings are similar to those of the BHT. It has been organized by Mrs Lok under the auspices of CR Tours Ltd., Charlotte, NC, the USA.

The program has involved diverse American and Costa Rican Chefs. In particular famous Chefs like Tiffany Derry (see Master Chefs Program, at Bravo Chanel or Sony Entertainment Television).

The hotel has supported other diverse cultural manifestations. The local dance group ACOYTE of La Pastora, a neighbor town, and the group of folkloric dance Heliconia, of Santa Cruz, have received financial support and opportunities to act on the part of the hotel.

The theater workshop for children and adults and the presentation of the work the Ogrito, to be presented by the Genesis Theater Group, in Santa Cruz from the 28 to the 31 of October, will take place with support of the hotel Guayabo Lodge, altogether with ECOLE EXPERIENCE, ACTUAR, Authentic Tourism and the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The hotel also has supported other local manifestations of importance, like the Feria del Queso (Cheese Fair).

## **7. Recycling.**

Guayabo Lodge is pioneering the recycling efforts in Santa Cruz de Turrialba.

Ever since the present owners took possession of the Lodge, recycling has been a priority. Solid residues, glass, plastic, cans and paper-cartons are sent to CATIE for recycling. Organic residues are recycled through composting or by feeding animals (ducks, goats, etc.) in the property.





When finishing its activities as Director of CATIE, Dr. Ferreira negotiated a formal Agreement between the Lodge and CATIE, which was signed by the new Director, the Costa Rican Dr. Jose J. Campos, to be able to continue contributing glasses, plastics, tins and cardboards to the recycling programs of CATIE.

These residues have been donated to a charity institute Hogares Crea, creating therefore an opportunity for the youngsters which are part of this rehabilitation program, to generate resources by selling the recycled materials. The Agreement was renewed per indefinite time in September of 2010.

The hotel has a registry of the weights of all the recycling of solid materials sent to CATIE, including the weight of glass bottles, cardboard, tins and plastics. This registry and the process of storage, packaging and weighting of residuals is into the hands of an employee, neighbor of Santa Cruz, Mr. Gerardo David Brenes.

The organic residues are not weighed, but instead, they are used directly to feed the goats and ducks, and to prepare organic composts that are used as fertilizers.

Recently, in August 2010, when the Municipality of Turrialba, announced its first program for recycling, TURRIAMBIENTE, Dr. Ferreira - in name of the Guayabo Lodge- decided to support this initiative at a district (Santa Cruz) level. For this purposes, he presented the initiative to Association for Development of Santa Cruz and to the Committee of the Biological Corridor Santa Cruz- Guayabo, and the Association of Guides of Santa Cruz. As a result, the initiative 'SANTA CRUZ RECICLA' was approved and the first campaign pro-recycling of the District began.

It is important to underline that a previous and commendable initiative of the young guides of Santa Cruz, who organized a campaign to collect solid residues through the Primary School of Santa Cruz was also quite successful.

#### **8. *Waste and sanitary waters.***

The Lodge has installed three new cement tanks to deal with sanitary and residual waters (sewage), using last generation technology. These tanks are recommended by the National Association of Engineers and Architects and are built and sold by TANQUE 10. The treated waters are finally sent to a drainage of about 40 meters in length underneath the gardens of the Lodge.

These septic areas, tanks and underground drainages are properly are labeled,

The Lodge works with environmentally friendly detergents, soaps and shampoos.

Effective microorganisms (ME - Earth University) are periodically poured into to the toilets, pipes, and different septic tanks. The EM® have been widely used in the treatment of organic residues, sewage waters, and also for drastic reduction of plagues (flies), elimination of annoying scents



produced by the decomposition of excrete and urine, and has been approved by several and important countries, among them the United States, whose department of agriculture included to all the present microorganisms in the EM®, within the category of G.R.A.S. (Generally Recognized As Safe, SAFE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT).

### ***9. Saving of energy and water.***

The Guayabo Lodge maintains a monthly registry of electricity and water consumption. These statistics are compared with the number of tourists who enter per month to the hotel and form the basis of our energy and water saving program.

The same show that the consumption increases or falls according to the volume of tourists, but also that the consumption per capita diminishes when the volume of tourists increases.

Our campaign for energy saving is in charge of a civil servant, member of the community of Aquiares de Turrialba, Mr. Orlando Jara, that also is responsible for the maintenance and inspection of electric appliances and for the solar paddles for the heating of the water.

The hot water for the bathrooms is heated by means of solar panels, a system that uses the electrical power only when the panels do not supply enough hot water. The electrical system of the tanks is unplugged when the occupation is low as part of our energy saving program.

Fluorescent lamps for energy saving have been installed inside the Lodge and small solar lights for illumination of external pathways are also our part of the energy saving program. We also use light sensors to control the electric lights in our entrances.

The use of conventional lamps has been diminished to the maximum.

The water saving campaign and the inspection of tubes and equipment facilities that use this element, including water tanks, pipes, etc., are in charge of one of our employees, Gerardo David Brenes, neighbor of Santa Cruz.

We ask our guests and employees to please turn off the lights of the vacated rooms, to make a rational use of hot water and to reuse the towels. To the employees, we also recommend to avoid excessive use of electric dryer machines, and instead, to hang the clothes in the drying area.

The use of day-light has been maximized in our facilities by installing large windows. In addition transparent plastic laminate ceilings are used to take advantage of natural illumination, eliminating the use of artificial lighting during the day.

The advances of the saving campaigns, as well as those of the recycling campaigns are discussed during the monthly meetings with our personnel.



#### ***10. Restaurant.***

The restaurant of the hotel maximizes the use of organic products. For example, we use organic certified cacao to make desserts and organic certified banana vinegar for our salads and other plates. This vinegar comes from a community project in the Caribbean.

We also buy certified organic vegetables from APOT, the Association of Organic Producers of Turrialba, whose creation and growth received strong support from CATIE when Dr. Ferreira held the position of D.G.

But we are also using non-certified organic products of reliable local sources. Wild blackberries from Oscar, a neighbor of the La Pastora, organic lemons of the zone, guavas and cas (sour guava) from our property and the trees of the region, tree-tomatoes from our property or the vicinity, palm hearts and pejibayes from CATIE's gardens, yuccas, plantains and bananas collected and sold by neighbors of Santa Cruz, grown with no pesticides, eggs of the hens produced by our neighbor, Silvano Pereira, whose hens are maintained with remainders of their kitchen, spices and condiments from our own garden.

The organic milk of our goats is used to make pies, desserts, creams or cheeses. The organic cheese comes from our property, finca Valle Escondido. We also organically grow ducks in the gardens of our hotel.

Nevertheless, a supermarket or source of organic products that can fully provide our kitchen with certified organic products does not exist in the nearby. The Lodge has decided not to travel to Cartago or San Jose to buy these products, because we firmly believe that we must support local sources. On the other hand, daily travelling to San Jose encompasses negative environmental effects due to emissions of gasses by our cars.

The menus of the hotel offer typical and international plates, but still in international plates we always try to use tropical and regional ingredients. This type of fusion cuisine allows the tourist to get to know and to valorize products and preparations of the typical cuisine of the country.

This includes the use of pejibayes in soups or salads, green plantains in patacones, mature plantains prepared 'en miel', cheese tortillas, tamales, dulces de chiverre, etc.

Our kitchen personnel have the food manipulation diploma of the National Institute INA and must observe strict rules of hygiene in the kitchen. Also they must follow energy and water saving rules.

They are people of the nearby towns that have been trained by the owner (Mrs Rossana Lok) throughout the years. The quality of the kitchen is excellent, as much so that different American institutions use this hotel as a Cooking School their tropical cuisine courses abroad.



The water of the restaurant (and rooms) is periodically tested by means of a semi-monthly bacteriological analysis performed by an authorized laboratory. The physical and chemical parameters of our water are periodically analyzed by the Santa Cruz Aqueduct Association.

Nevertheless, it is known that the water of Santa Cruz, who is excellent in all characteristics, has a low pH, i.e. high acidity. For this reason, the drinking water that we serve to our clients in our restaurant is bottled water, 'Cristal' of the Distribuidora La Florida, which also is available free for our clients in dispensers throughout the hotel.

#### **11. Personnel.**

All our personnel come from the surrounding local communities and the majority lives in a diameter of distance of 5 kilometers of the hotel.

The hotel has supported to these families with its policies in different ways. Support with money, that is given or loaned without charging any fees or interest rates – to support buying a piece of land, build or enlarge a house, pay costs related to the study of the children, costs related to divorce or abandonment of domicile on the part of the father, deceases of relatives, etc. -, support providing construction materials or equipments, equipment for the house - beds, armchairs, furniture in general, kitchen implements, computers, printers or animals like pigs or goats, gifts like bicycles, machines for field work, clothes, shoes, etc.

Several of the families of workers of the hotel and whom in the past use to rent their houses, today are proprietors of their own houses or have enlarged their houses significantly.

The owner and manager of the hotel Mrs Rossana Lok and its family live in the same area of the hotel, the town of Santa Cruz, and know and support the needs of the community, its schools and their church, and are widely respected by the community.

The hotel Guayabo Lodge has supported the training of its personnel constantly, allowing them to attend courses of the INA or providing in-service training opportunities (case of several cooks) and has always offered or paid the transport to the premises where the classes were offered.

#### **12. Protection to the childhood and youth.**

The hotel has a strict policy with respect to the protection of childhood and youth against the sexual abuse in accordance with Law 7899 of the Republic of Costa Rica.

The Lodge provides an environment free of prostitution and drugs. It protects the employees of the hotel as much as the clients.

The hotel has signed the Agreement for the implementation of the Code of Conduct of the Touristic Sector, a project developed by ECPAT, co-financed by UNICEF and supported by UNWTO.



In Costa Rica support to this project is under Foundation PANIAMOR of the government of this country.

Guayabo Lodge is member of The Code.org, which promotes socially responsible tourism and protects children from sex tourism.

### ***13. Equal Opportunities for Disabled People.***

The hotel strictly fulfills Law 7600 and Decree 26831-MP of the government of Costa Rica, with respect to the equality of opportunities for disabled people.

In particular, the hotel has prepared two rooms with facilities for disabled clients and has also created appropriate public bathrooms apt for people in wheelchairs.