

### **Sustainability Guidelines: Brazil**

You are about to embark on a journey to the country of Brazil, known for the famous Amazon rainforest and Amazon River. The Amazon rainforest is the largest tropical rainforest in the world. There are an estimated 750 species of mammals in South America; 417 are found in Brazil. The rainforest is home to these species, and is also home to populations of indigenous people, untouched by the modern world. Brazil is also rich in culture due to the influences of Portuguese, Italian, German, Spanish, Arab and Japanese immigrants settling in the country during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### **Environmental Issues:**

Brazil's natural beauty is, however, threatened by environmental problems. The main environmental struggles that Brazil faces are the following:

- **Clearing of the Amazon Basin Rainforest:** During the 1990s, forests in Brazil disappeared at a rate of 0.4 percent per year.
- **Soil erosion and sediments in rivers and streams** is due to increased agriculture. The water table is also affected due to soybean production and the expansion of pastures for cattle-raising that reduces natural biodiversity.
- **Urban Sprawl:** In many areas of the country, the natural environment is threatened by development. Highway construction has opened up previously remote areas for agriculture and settlement; dams have flooded valleys and inundated wildlife habitats; and mines have scarred and polluted the landscape. Rapid growth of urban areas has also contributed to pollution.

#### **Environmental Initiative:**

While it seems that these environmental issues are overwhelming the country, Brazil has made movements towards environmental conservation.

In the city of *Garopaba*, a tourist destination on Brazil's southern coast, leftover food from restaurants is turned into fertilizer to be used by farmers in the region. These farmers in turn, grow pesticide-free vegetables and fruits to be used as snacks for school children. As they have been doing since 2001, families and educators gather at the end of the year in the town's main square to celebrate and demonstrate what they have learned about re-using rainwater, community gardens and holistic health practices - employing things like mock-ups and music to do so.

*The Amazon Conservation Team (ACT)* is committed to protecting the Amazon rainforest, including not only the species of wildlife, and flora and fauna, but also the indigenous people that call the rainforest home.

Current projects include the following:

- **Mapping in the Xingu:** collaborative mapping process for the entire Xingu Indigenous Park, an area that encompasses more than seven million acres. The project has brought together 14 tribes of the Xingu and this is the first time they have ever worked together to complete a project.
- **Brazil-Suriname Border Region Biocultural Protection:** protection of 20 million acres of rainforest on indigenous lands in the Brazil-Suriname border region. The project is strengthening local culture by completing parallel conservation and management plans for both sides of the border.

In 2002, *ACT* and its indigenous partners completed maps of local tribe areas of the Xingu Indigenous Park covering 1,250,000 acres.

*The Rainforest Alliance* and *Sustainable Agriculture Network* are working together to develop a system of more sustainable production of coffee in Brazil's savannahs. Brazil exports more coffee than any other country, over 28 million 60-kilo bags were sent out of the country between February 2002 and January 2003. Coffee grown under a forest canopy hosts biodiversity levels greater than all other agriculture and is nearly equal to 'real' rainforest-like environment. Shade farms provide many of the conservation values of natural forest habitat-watershed protection, soil conservation, as well as firewood, fruits, medicinal plants, and protection from the elements. The Brazilian branch of the project, *IMAFLOA*, is now working with farms that were never naturally forested. These farms would either plant trees to provide shade or their coffee production would be moved to a more forested area. The whole project is to slow the deforestation of the rainforest in Brazil.

As a visitor to this beautiful country, you can help to preserve the natural beauty and not further environmental problems. One of Brazil's main environmental issues is the loss of biodiversity. In order to preserve the wildlife, be mindful of your litter when in National Parks or anywhere on your trip; make sure to dispose of it in the proper receptacles. You are very fortunate to be staying in many eco-lodges that promote sustainability and environmental consciousness in Brazil. Be mindful of your water usage while you are abroad. Water is a precious commodity in Brazil, so use it wisely. Do not leave the water running in the sink, shorten shower time, and follow the conservation practices used by your hotels.

### **Guide to Eco-Lodges in Brazil**

**Pousada Picinguaba** looks over the bay in the Natural Park of Serra do Mar, a tropical coastal forest running between Rio and Sao Paulo. The food served in the restaurant on the property prides itself on serving local and organic produce including fresh fish and seafood from the bay and organic eggs from the local village. Pousada Picinguaba is associated with an NGO Acao Picinguaba Sustentavel (Action for a Sustainable Picinguaba). Its main objective is to promote a balanced future for the community and the nature in Picinguaba through actions with the local community. Currently the NGO is conducting classes on organic composting and solar ovens in the local Picinguaba village.