



CONWAY SCHOOL OF  
LANDSCAPE DESIGN



A trip to benefit the community of Achiote

# San Lorenzo National Park, Panama



A special trip co-hosted by the Conway School of Landscape Design, the Panamanian Center for Research & Social Action (CEASPA), and Mass Audubon

*March 29 – April 4, 2007*

*\$1499 (from Panama City)*

Join friends of the Conway School of Landscape Design and newly appointed Director, Paul Cawood Hellmund along with members of Mass Audubon on a natural and cultural adventure to the San Lorenzo National Park of Panama. We will provide volunteer assistance to the community of Achiote in the buffer zone of this new national park that formerly was a U.S. Military Base. The village of Achiote is located along the Achiote Road, a world-renown birding site, where the annual Christmas Bird Count consistently exceeds 300 species in a 24-hour period, making it the No. 1 or No. 2 birding spot in the world. In addition to birds, the diversity of mammals and plants in the area is also quite impressive.

Unfortunately, most visitors to the area stop just short of the village, at the forest's edge, and the community has seen little financial benefit from tourism. CEASPA is working to help the villagers attract ecotourists, while maintaining the integrity of the village. CEASPA has purchased a small parcel of land on the edge of the village and recently built a community center that also can double as an ecotourist center - Centro El Tucán. Here visitors can get a meal, use the facilities, and purchase small crafts.

Conway School's Paul Hellmund, who was born and raised in Panama, has worked in the community of Achiote for several years. During the winter of 2004-2005, he facilitated the design and construction of an observation deck at the Centro with U.S. volunteers and local community members. Our 2007 trip will have a similar volunteer focus, working with CEASPA and local community members on simple construction projects, teaching drawing and English, and helping assess ecotourism potential. We will work at a relaxed pace, while taking advantage of the incredible resources in and around the San Lorenzo National Park. A typical day will include a half day of volunteer assistance and a half day of natural heritage or ecotourism trips conducted by local guides. No knowledge of Spanish is required.

Join us and experience travel that makes a difference. A donation will be made to the Conway School of Design on behalf of each participant.

## **Itinerary**

### **Day 1**

#### **Arrival in Panama City**

Arrive at the Tocumen airport in Panama City in the afternoon. You will be met by your tour leaders and local Panamanian counterparts at the customs gate at the airport. We will be transferred to the Country Inn and Suites in Panama City in a mini-van.

Night: Country Inn and Suites

### **Day 2**

#### **En route to Achiole**

Today we depart Panama City for the town of Achiole. After a trip orientation and overview at breakfast (8am) we will make our way across the isthmus with a couple of stops en route, including Soberania National Park and the famous Miraflores locks of the Panama Canal. We will also make a visit to a super market so that everyone has the chance to buy some extra snacks for our stay in Achiole. After lunch, we will continue along the Achiole Road to the town of Achiole. We will get settled in at the Centro El Tucán, meet our local community partners, and have a more in-depth orientation about the work planned for the next few days.

Night: Centro El Tucán

### **Day 3 and 4**

#### **Project work days**

Over the next four days we will be working in teams to help CEASPA and the community of Achiole to prepare the Centro El Tucán for future visitation. How exciting to be providers of the enthusiasm, support, and labor required to get these projects off the ground!

There is a variety of work that needs to be done, so people of all skill and age level will be able to participate effectively as a part of the great team effort. Interspersed throughout the workdays will be times to participate in various recreational activities. There are many interesting sights in and around the village of Achiole. Piña Beach and its beautiful white sands are a short drive away, as are the Chagres River and places for boating and wildlife watching. We will visit the San Lorenzo Fort, the Gatun Locks, and a local farm in Achiole where there is a small Queseria (cheese factory) and swimming spot. Naturally there will also be plenty of early-morning and late-day bird walks around the town of Achiole and the Achiole Road. The newly built Trogon Trail is a few kilometers away, which winds its way through rainforest and offers opportunities for the observation of flora and fauna. Many spectacular birds can be seen such as Pied Puffbirds, Spot-crowned Barbet, Montezuma Oropendula, Chestnut-mandible Toucan, Bicolored Antbirds, and Flame-rumped Tanager. One can also spot three-toes sloths, Jeffery's tamarin, and howler monkeys along the road near the entrance to the trail. We will be enjoying local attractions such at the Trogon Trail for half a day and providing volunteer assistance for half a day, throughout our stay. We will also have many opportunities for community interaction, including a possible home stay night.

Nights: Centro El Tucán



### **Day 5**

#### **Final project work day**

Today we finalize our group work and prepare for a small ceremony to celebrate our work accomplishments in conjunction with the town of Achiole. It will be an important occasion for all involved who have put time and energy into the planning and execution of the various projects. Hopefully our work will also help fuel the local economy of Achiole by increasing visitation to the San Lorenzo area and enhancing the quality of visitor experience. Continuous work by CEASPA will help market the Centro El Tucán to local and international operators and educational groups so that people are aware of the new services being provided by the community.

Night: Centro El Tucán

**Day 6****Return to Panama City**

Enjoy a little rest and relaxation during our last morning in Achiote. After tying up loose ends with our work projects, we will be able to take one last look at the improvements. We will say goodbye to our new friends in the community of Achiote, and depart the Centro El Tucán for Panama City in the morning. En route to the Country Inn and Suites we will visit several craft markets for those who wish to purchase a few of Panama's crafts such as moles and woven baskets. At night we will have dinner while watching a local folkloric ballet.

Night: Country Inn and Suites

**Day 7****Departure**

Flight home. We depart from the Panama City International Airport.

Trip Highlights include:

- Helping CEASPA in its efforts on behalf of the Community of Achiote
- Support for the Conway School of Landscape Design while getting to know new CSLD graduates.
- Participating in a team community development project
- Birding along the Achiote Road
- Exploring the San Lorenzo National Park and its World Heritage Site
- Experiencing travel that makes a difference

## Logistical Details

*A trip to benefit the community of Achiote adjacent to the San Lorenzo National Park, Panama  
March 29 – April 4, 2007*

### **Trip Details:**

This trip covers a wide variety of activities from urban setting to rain forest exploration. Accommodations will be rustic on this trip during our stay in the Achiote area. We will be in male/female dormitory rooms, each with 10 beds. There is a male bathroom and a female bathroom that will be shared, each with several toilets. Throughout the trip we will be driving in an air-conditioned mini-bus. The climate this time of year is generally nice with temperatures in the mid- to upper-eighties. A detailed trip packet will be provided with a suggested packing list.

### **Financial Arrangements:**

The fee for the tour is \$1499 per person based on double occupancy (2 nights) and dormitory style accommodations (4 nights). Single rates are not available on this trip. This includes: a detailed pre-trip packet including a reading list, country bird list, packing suggestions, and some background reading and conservation project information; all food, three meals per day, from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 7; all lodging for 6 nights during the tour; and ground transportation. The tour fee does not include international airfare, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, passport fees, airport departure taxes or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the group does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement may have to be charged. Flight arrangements for this tour can be made through your local travel agent.

### **Tour Size:**

This tour will be strictly limited to a maximum of 12 participants and a minimum of 8 participants. Register early in order to ensure space is available.

### **Tour Registration:**

To register for the tour, complete the enclosed registration form and return it with a deposit of \$500 per person. Full payment of the tour fee is due ninety days prior to the tour departure (December 29, 2006). If you have any questions please contact Ryan Finchum of Emerald Planet (970-204-4484 or toll-free 888-883-0736).

### **Travel Documents:**

A U.S. passport valid beyond your date of return to the U.S. is required. Currently no visas or immunization certificates are required. Those with foreign passports should contact the Embassy of Panama for details.

### **Cancellation Policy:**

Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made ninety days or more before departure date, the deposit less \$150 is refundable. If cancellation is made between eighty-nine and seventy days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made sixty-nine days or less before departure date, no refund is available except for amounts recoverable through our agents. We recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself. Trip cancellation insurance can be arranged through Travel Insured International by calling 1-800-243-3174 or by visiting [www.travelinsured.com](http://www.travelinsured.com). Insurance can also be arranged by visiting [www.csatravelprotection.com](http://www.csatravelprotection.com).

### **Responsibility:**

Emerald Planet, CEASPA, the Conway School of Landscape Design, Mass Audubon and/or their Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either

by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. They can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour. Baggage is at owners risk entirely.

### **Health Precautions:**

For comprehensive health information please contact the Center for Disease Control and Prevention on the Internet at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/camerica.htm> or by phone at 1-877-394-8747 (traveler's health hotline). The CDC information is a comprehensive listing of any disease reported in a particular region or state. Panama is included with Central America. We have not had any problems with diseases; however, you may need to discuss with your physician what is best for you individually. If you have any questions please consult your physician. For general information about Panama please refer to the Consular Information sheet: <http://travel.state.gov/panama.html>. Please check with your medical insurance provided to make sure that your insurance covers you while you are abroad. Several companies can provide additional international insurance as well as emergency evacuation insurance. See MEDEX for an example of one such provider: <http://www.medexassist.com> or 1-410-453-6300

For more information contact:

Katherine King  
Emerald Planet Tours  
1706 Constitution Court  
Fort Collins, CO 80526  
Toll-free: 888-883-0736 or 970-204-4484  
E-mail: [katking@emeraldplanet.com](mailto:katking@emeraldplanet.com)  
website: <http://www.emeraldplanet.com>