

Visitor Welcome Guide

We are excited that you have been able to join our project! Thank you for bringing your passion, consideration, knowledge, and kindness to our community.

We receive hundreds of visitors every year, so in order to make every new arrival as smooth as possible we have compiled the following Welcome Guide. This information is useful for everyone spending time at the Ranch and the larger community of Mastatal.





History and Vision

We opened our doors on November 1, 2001 with the hope of creating a space where individuals could learn the importance of living more responsibly on this planet while providing an important economic boost to this small community we decided to call home. Since that momentous day, the Ranch has evolved into an organism that has touched the lives of thousands of people and inspired them to become better citizens of the world.

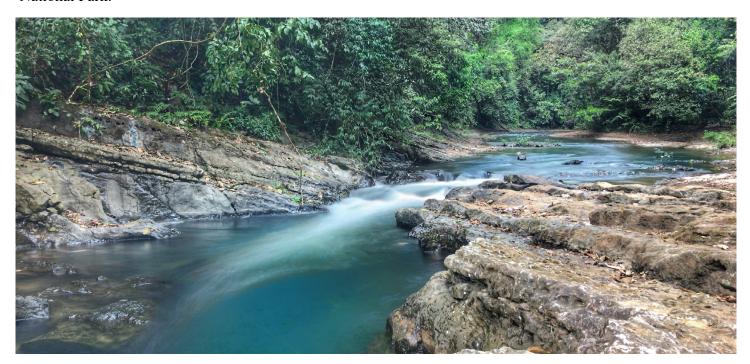
The bustling Ranch environment has been a laboratory of social betterment and learning while playing a critical role in the economic improvement of the region of Mastatal. We work and play hard as we strike a balance that allows us to be both compassionate and happy while laboring to improve the state of our world.

Philosophy

Rancho Mastatal promotes sustainable living with social and environmental justice. We advocate organic gardening and regional farming; healthy, local economies; permaculture design; holistic health; natural, vernacular building techniques; alternative energy systems; and additional educational activities to help facilitate a regenerative global community. In conjunction with town members of Mastatal we work to create and supply the majority of our social and health needs locally. We serve to educate on political, environmental, social and economic issues important to us as we create a vibrant, solutions-based community where one can share, learn and be inspired.

Ranch Amenities

During your stay you will have access to uniquely built living and recreational structures, locally sourced homemade meals, our working agroforestry farm, a well-stocked library, both educational and recreational activities, and the use of several hiking trails through our 120 hectare wildlife reserve bordering La Cangreja National Park.





Sustainability Education Center





As part of our mission we offer a number of means for individuals and groups to gain exposure and practical experience in all facets of our project.

Residential Workshops

Throughout the year we host workshops on natural building, wilderness medicine, renewable energy, permaculture design, fermentation, and much more. We keep an updated course calendar on our website and send information on upcoming workshops through our newsletter.

Tours

You can take a guided, paid tour of our living campus, including our working farm, appropriate technology systems, and unique natural buildings.

Lodging

We provide room and board for individuals, families, and groups who would like to stay as guests. Guests are housed in our beautiful hand-built structures, and have access to the Ranch facilities, waterfalls, and private reserve.

Apprenticeship

We offer a year-long highly competitive apprenticeship. Through our application and interview process we provide motivated individuals and couples the opportunity to pursue natural building, sustainable agriculture, homesteading, and community development as a livelihood. Apprentices form the heart and soul of the Ranch; they do much of the behind -the-scenes work to keep our project running.





Mastate Charitable Foundation

MCF was founded in September of 2004 to advance benevolent, educational and scientific efforts in impoverished, tropical regions of the world. MCF's current focus is in rural and wilderness areas of Costa Rica, most notably in and around the small community of Mastatal and La Cangreja National Park. The foundation promotes opportunities in education, research, community development, natural building, sustainable living, food security, and conservation as they relate to the local environment.

Based in Marion, Massachusetts, MCF is a taxexempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and is a Serendipity Project of the Marion Institute. The organization is run by a group of dedicated and experienced volunteer professionals with an intimate familiarity in rural Latin America and, in particular, Mastatal.

To date MCF has funded projects to construct a local library, offer local educational scholarships, pay medical expenses for low-income families, fundraise to help the town government pay off debt, help repair roofing after a devastating wind storm, and many more related activities.



The Community Learning and Sharing Center (CLSC)

This is MCF's most ambitious project to date. In 2010 MCF coordinated the construction of The Community Learning and Sharing Center in the heart of Mastatal. This effort involved the use of local labor and resources to both renovate a once-abandoned structure and erect a timber framed addition. The facility is now open and serves as a library, a venue for local entrepreneurs, and a space for community meetings and public workshops. MCF envisions this location as the social center of town; a place that all community members can proudly call their own.

The CLSC demonstrates dedication to a sustainable way of living and serves as a place to educate both the youth of the surrounding towns and visitors to Mastatal of ways we can improve both the well-being of our planet and the social fabric of our communities.

You can support the CLSC by using its facilities, hosting educational activities or classes in its meeting room, and by making donations of spanish language books, art supplies, or financial contributions.

Costa Rican Scholarship Fund

We strive to develop educational programs that are relevant to Costa Ricans and contribute to positive sustainable development within Mastatal. Due to the difference in earning opportunities between Costa Ricans and visitors from wealthier nations, the Ranch offers subsidized classes and educational opportunities to Costa Rican students and visitors. You can help contribute to Costa Ricans' access to sustainable education by donating to our Costa Rican Scholarship Fund. Donations will be used to help the Ranch fund or subsidize Costa Ricans who might not otherwise be able to afford our educational programs. You can make a donation in cash during your stay, or a tax-deductible donation online through the Marion Institute. Please ask us how to make a donation.



The Kitchen

Food

Meals at the Ranch are locally sourced, made from scratch, and often cooked with sustainable energy technologies. Almost all our root crops, bananas, milk, eggs, meat, tree fruits, and vine nuts come from the Ranch or neighboring farms. All of our salad greens, cooking greens, and herbs are grown organically here onsite. And, one hundred percent of our beans, rice, corn, coffee, and sugar cane come from our neighbors' farms. We make our own salad dressings, condiments, yogurt, and live culture fermented sodas and beers. Our kitchen is GMO free, organic whenever possible, and based on whole, local foods.

*Our kitchen is not vegetarian. We use regionally rendered lard (pig fat) as our primary cooking oil/fat.



Brunch is served at 10:00 am and dinner at 6:30 pm. These times may change depending on the needs of the community.

Please feel free to eat anywhere at the Main House during mealtimes. If you need a bit more privacy or are looking for a more intimate dining experience please don't hesitate to find a spot at the front of the house or in the "pit". The Ranch staff at times eats together and away from other guests in an effort to fulfill our need for some "down time" or to engage in our version of "business lunches". Thank you in advance for understanding our occasional need to remove ourselves from the otherwise extremely communal and open lives that we lead.

Red Zone

Our kitchen is a very busy space. During meal prep please avoid entering the kitchen and only use the non-kitchen sinks for any of your water needs. If you would like to join in and be helpful before meals, feel free to ask or jump in with washing dishes.

Dietary Restrictions

Please let us know of any dietary and allergy restrictions you have as soon as possible. We are able to accommodate many food needs but only with sufficient advanced notice.











House Keeping



Toilets

There are many composting toilets and an award-winning methane biodigester toilet (Bio D) on the property. The composting toilets can only receive organic material (human waste, toilet paper, and sawdust). Place any other garbage in the adjacent waste baskets. The Bio D is a flush toilet that only receives human waste and water. The Bio D has a basket for toilet paper and a separate basket for non-compostable waste.

If we are low on toilet paper, hand soap, or sawdust, please let us know.

Laundry

Please bring your used sheets and pillow cases to the main house every Saturday morning and take a clean bundle for the week. The Ranch does not offer laundry services for personal clothing. Most visitors wash clothing by hand. Alternatively, there are a number of women in town who can provide these services for a reasonable rate.

Cleaning

All structures will be cleaned weekly by our local staff. Please keep your bed tidy and confined to your personal space so we can properly clean and maintain our structures. We encourage everyone to make their bed daily; a well-made bed discourages insects from making their home in one's pile of bedding.

Shoes

Please remove your shoes before entering any of our buildings. This helps keep the floors clean, consequently reducing the need for refinishing and the cost of cleaning. You will find shoe racks at most entrance.

Trash

There is no garbage service in Mastatal. Please treat the town of Mastatal as you would a wilderness setting and Leave No Trace. We are happy to provide bags to carry out any garbage. During your stay, please consider purchasing products in town that create little or no waste.



Check in/out times

Your room will be ready for you after 2pm and check out time is 10am. Please make sure all of your belongings are out of the room by 10am. If you would like to spend more time at the Ranch following checkout please bring your belongings to the main house where we can store them. Please leave your key in the room or door.



Health and Safety

Snakes

We live in an area populated by venomous snakes. They are most present during dusk and dawn in the forest. Please use a flashlight when walking outside of buildings at night and do not go into the forest at night unless accompanied by an experienced guide. If you encounter a snake assume it is venomous and back away quickly. Inform others where you saw it.

Lightning

Dangerous lightning storms do occur throughout the year, in particular at the beginning and end of the rainy seasons. In the case of a storm please stay indoors, unplug and avoid all electronic equipment, and avoid showering or washing dishes. The storms tend to pass quickly.

Earthquakes

We are located in the "Ring of Fire" and do experience earthquakes. In the case of an earthquake please go outside away from any tall trees or power-lines. If you are indoors find a strong door-frame to stand under.

Medical Conditions and Allergies

If you have any allergies or medical conditions, please let us know immediately. If you have any minor scraps, cuts, or illnesses, please let us know so that we can make sure these do not become more serious. Remember that in our tropical climate a small cut, improperly cleaned, can become an infection.

First Aid

There is a basic first aid kit located in the Main House bathroom as well as the workshop tool shed. Please use these supplies as needed, but keep them organized for the next person in need. If anything is out of stock please let us know.

Emergencies

In the case of an emergency please let us know calmly and quickly. The nearest clinic is 30 minutes to one hour away depending on the day of the week. The nearest hospital is two hours away. For serious emergencies we will call the Red Cross and bring the injured person in our vehicle to meet the ambulance as soon as possible.

Water

Our water comes from a spring in the National Park and is potable. All taps on the property provide drinking water. We are blessed to have an abundance of water, but ask your help in conserving this resource by taking military-style showers and turning off the tap as you wash dishes and brush your teeth.



Community Relations

This means literally opening their doors to people from all over the world. In many ways, Mastatal has become a model of sustainable rural tourism development, with an economic base in family-run businesses and healthy recreational activities. The effects that visitors have on our town by purchasing illegal drugs and contributing to a party culture is putting our community at risk of developing in ways that negatively affect the entire population of Mastatal. In the last decade, we have seen significant increase in the use of drugs and abuse of alcohol in Mastatal as well as the ruinous results this is having on our neighbors and families. We need to take a stand against this disheartening development if we expect to continue to be a part of an amazing community.

As a result, we ask you to refrain from the following activities while visiting Mastatal:

- Purchasing or selling drugs while in our community
- Using drugs while in our community
- Drinking irresponsibly

Night Life

Please enjoy a beer at Seco's bar (across from our front entrance) as we often do. Though we do ask that you avoid contributing to creating a party culture by routinely visiting this establishment after dinner or staying there late into the night.



While you are here, please enjoy one-of-a-kind local products, get to know the amazing individuals and families, and explore breathtaking forests and waterfalls. Regardless of how long you are here for, your impact is large. Thank you for being a positive addition to the town of Mastatal!







Communication

Internet

The Ranch does not provide internet service, nor do we have wireless internet.

If you have brought your own internet ready device that can connect to the cell network, we ask that you refrain from using this at the Main House. We as a community have designated this as a sacred space where many of us live, work, and play without the pressure a constant connection to the internet can bring.

Exceptions to this may include administrative work, emergencies, and research that furthers our mission. Feel free to use the internet in other Ranch facilities, if your housemates/others present are comfortable with your computer use. Remember, many people have chosen to come here to take a break from the ubiquitous presence of computers.

Phone Communication

Please refrain from making and receiving phone calls and texts at the Main House. Please see above for more information about why we ask this of you.

The phone at the main house may be used to make local calls and receive calls from family and friends. For extended conversations the phone may only be used outside of normal business hours, as it is our only business line. Please use a phone card for making any international calls.

Transportation

Bus Schedule

Currently there is no bus service to and from Mastatal directly though at certain times of the year there are buses that stop 6km (4miles) at Santa Rosa Puriscal. For the most up to date timetables of these buses please refer to the Tracopa website www.tracopacr.com

Taxi

There are many locals and friends of ours that are willing to drive to various places. If you are not able to schedule a taxi ride let us know and we can help. There is a list of contacts for drivers on the following page.











Ride Contacts

Car Rides to/from San Jose and Other Country Wide Locations

Fernando Arias (mostly Spanish) email: gomastatal@gmail.com

Phone: +506-8633-2967

Grace and Martin Coto (Spanish and English)

email: decobambues@yahoo.com

Phone: +506-8839-3077

+506-8390-5657

Kellor (Spanish)

Phone: +506-8829-1091

Mariana Garita (Spanish)

email: aeroplan@ice.co.cr OR ferjovi@ice.co.cr

Phone: +506-2265-0515

Car Rides to/from Parrita/Eserillos/Quepos/Jaco

Daniel in San Miguel (Spanish)

Phone/WhatsApp Number: +506-8754-7825

Macho in San Miguel (Spanish)

Phone/WhatsApp Number: +506-8683-4492

Randal Taxi Driver in Parrita (Spanish and a little English)

Phone/WhatsApp Number: +506-8820-0901

Javier Zuniga (Spanish and a little English) Phone/WhatsApp Number: +506-8890-1462

Junior Hernandez in Mastatal (Spanish or English) Phone/WhatsApp Number: +506-8504-0497

Nick de Villas in Mastatal (English)

Phone/whatsapp Number: +506-8315-6801

Car Rides to El Cruce

Daniel in San Miguel (Spanish)

Phone/WhatsApp Number: +506-8754-7825

Macho in San Miguel (Spanish)

Phone/WhatsApp Number: +506-8683-4492



Payment

Please let us know how you anticipate paying for your stay on arrival. If you are unsure of your nightly rate, please speak with us right away to avoid any confusion.

Our preferred form of payment is cash, paid in Costa Rican colones prior to your departure from Mastatal. We also accept US dollars. Our Costa Rican bank does not accept foreign checks, or traveler's checks from a third party. If you would like to pay prior to arriving to the Ranch you have the option to send us a check to our US bank, make a direct deposit into our Costa Rican bank account or pay with a credit card via PayPal. com. (For PayPal please add 5% to cover the cost of the service.)

Sending a Check to our US Account

To send us a check drawn on a US bank prior to your arrival to Costa Rica, please make your check out to Tim O'Hara and send to:

Kevin O'Hara

37 Kendall Avenue

Binghamton, NY 13903

Making a Deposit in our CR Account

Visit any Banco de Costa Rica in country and deposit to the following account:

Account Name: Mastatal Natural Experience S.A. Bank: Banco de Costa Rica - Santiago de Puriscal Savings Account Number (Número de Cuenta de Ahorro): 270-12080-4 Currency: US Dollars.

Making a deposit in our CR Account via the Internet

(For those with a Costa Rican bank account) Please refer to the account info above, in addition:

Cuentacliente: 15202270001208041

Cedula Juridica: 3-1-1-273333

Pay with PayPal

Please use the PayPal button found on our website. PLEASE ADD 5% TO YOUR TOTAL BILL WHEN PAYING with PayPal. Thank you!





Help Spread the Word

Our project relies upon word-of-mouth advertisement to market our workshops, attract amazing apprentices, and fundraise for MCF. If you've enjoyed your experience here at the Ranch, please help us continue our work by spreading the word through your networks. Thank you in advance!







Leave a Review

Tell the world about your experience in Mastatal. Give us a review through our Facebook page or on Google Reviews.

Keep up to Date

We send out new bulletins on a regular basis on all sorts of Ranch happenings including blog entries, course information etc.... You can sign up to receive this and other occasional updates on our website or by giving us your email address directly.

Facebook and Instagram

The Ranch uses Facebook and Instagram to share photos, stories, and events with our friends and family. Please "like, follow, and tag" us and share information about our project when possible.

Photos

We always appreciate great photos for our website and marketing efforts. If you have taken any favorites and would like to share them, please email them to info@ranchomastatal.com when you have the chance.



Gift Shop



We sell a number of products and gifts in our store located in the Main House. All of these products directly support our community and make wonderful gifts for family and friends back home, please take a look! Some of the products available are:

Mugs \$10

Organic Coffee \$12

Organic Cotton T-Shirts \$20

Handcrafted wooden products Prices Vary

Herbal and Medicinal Products Prices Vary



Day Workshops

Want to learn more about our sustainability practices? We offer numerous half day workshops for guests and visitors designed to inspire and re-skill you for a more resilient world. Usually running 1.5 to 2 hours, these workshops can often be booked with short notice. Costs are \$100 for 1-4 people and \$20/person for five or more participants. Not all of these workshops are available at all times of the year. The workshops we currently offer include:

PERMACULTURE/AGROFORESTRY

Intro to Permaculture & Walk and Talk

Experience the principles of permaculture in action! From starting small to accelerating succession to energy efficient planning we will explore the practical application of these principles around our site.

Plants for the Tropical Homestead

Explore the perennial vegetables, medicinal plants, and trees crops which feed and heal us in the humid tropics.

Soil Fertility Strategies and Plant Propagation

Spend time in our nursery learning the art and science of seed starting and vegetative plant propagation; including cuttings, layering, and grafting. We will also go over how we cultivate a healthy soil in our harsh tropical climat and will focus on biomass species, biochar production, and microoganism cultivation.

NATURAL BUILDING

Dordango Making-Creating Shiny Clay Spheres

Dorodango means a "happy mud dumpling" in Japanese. These are a traditional learning art form that has been practiced in Japan for centuries. This is a great introduction to natural building that will give you an understanding about how earthen materials work. Students will learn how to polish clay with just a few simple, commonly available tools. And you'll walk away with a shiny spherical object!



Day Workshops

Natural Building Walk and Talk

A tour of the property, specifically looking at our natural structures. We will focus on the experience and knowledge we have of natural building in the tropics. We will look at site assessment, roof and foundation styles, wall building techniques, cost analysis, and building materials and equipment. We can also provide any material sourcing information.

Earthen Building: Hands and Feet Experience

This will be an introduction to earth building and materials. You'll learn about why we think natural building is important and how it can be applied on different scales and climates. And you'll get a chance to get your hands and feet dirty! You will participate in one of the current natural building projects on the Ranch and begin to understand what is involved in building a natural home.

Tadelakt: Water Resistant Natural Plaster (not for beginners)

Discover how this ancient Moroccan waterproof lime plaster is made and applied. Here at the Ranch we have multiple showers and surfaces that were created using Tadelakt. We will look at some of the Tadelakt examples we have on site, learn how tadelakt plaster is made, and then apply it on a small object which students can take home.

HOMESTEADING & FERMENTATION

Introduction to Fermentation & Lacto Fermentation

Start this introductory class by learning about the main groups of microbes responsible for fermented delicacies and traditions from around the world. Sample some of the produce we have had fermented for days, months or even years. Then join in making a batch of "Kimchi/ Kraut" in order to better grasp how we utilize this incredible group of microbes to acidify and add complexity many of our condiments.

Introduction to Fermentation & Fermented Beverages

Start this introductory class by learning about the main groups of microbes responsible for fermented delicacies and traditions from around the world. Sample some of the produce we have had fermenting for days, months or even years. Then join in making an herbal soda (water Kefir, starter culture included for you to take home) and a batch of country wine. Start dreaming up your own combinations and flavors you want to try when you get home!

Making Your Own Soap

Learn about basic soap chemistry and how to make your own soap using locally sourced oils and fats.



Day Workshops

OTHER

Invisible Structures

Learn about how the Ranch is organized, makes decisions, deals with compensation and governs and organizes itself. Since 2001 Rancho Mastatal has been working to improve on their people systems. This is an opportunity to hear the Ranch story and find out more about their organizational structure.





Our Nursery

Interested in growing your own food? Our on-site nursery can supply your home with all of the food producing species you need. The vivero exists to provide high quality, regionally adapted, and underutilized tree crops and perennial vegetables to our clients. The species we choose to propagate and distribute are the same species that we plant, maintain, and harvest on our own land. We believe strongly in the potential of perennial agriculture and are putting efforts toward breeding programs, plant trials, and re-discovering edible indigenous crops. We source seed and plant material from our site at Rancho Mastatal, the forest around us, and through our region- wide network. For more information on what plants are available and for prices please ask our resident head permaculturist Jacob Porter We specialize in custom orders of:

- select fruit and nut trees
- bundled cuttings of perennial vegetables
- medicinal and culinary plants
- support species for pollinators, erosion control, and soil building







Plan Your Stay

Our rural community has a surprising abundance and variety of activities outside the Rancho. Here is a list of ideas and details to help you plan your stay in Mastatal.

La Iguana Chocolate Tour

This tour is for all ages and will get your taste buds salivating and mind amazed at the process of chocolate. Located just 1 kilometer from the Rancho, this family run chocolate farm is a must see. Tour is offered in English or Spanish.

-Price: \$30 per person

-Time: 10 AM everyday besides Sundays. Approximately 2-3

hours.

-Phone: Vicky at +506-8317 - 5438 or Jorge at +506-8725 - 8644



We have a lot of knowledgeable and skilled individuals living and working here. See our "Day Workshops" list above. Ask a core team member to schedule a class.

Full Tour of the Ranch

There is a lot happening and transformed spaces around the property. You are welcome to explore the farm on your own, but if you would like a more in-depth tour you can schedule one with a team member. In these tours you will get a look at our living campus, including our working permaculture farm, appropriate technology systems, and unique natural buildings. Ask a core team member to schedule a tour.

Traditional Energy Healing

Kealy, an expat that has been a part of the Mastatal community since 2009 offers a variety of energy sessions ranging from chakra balancing to massage. For questions and to book an appointment

Phone: 1-202-491-6758 (WhatsApp) or +506-8411 - 6282

Email: kealyrudersdorf@gmail.com

Experience the Indigenous Zapaton Community

Gerardo offers a wide variety of experiences from basket weaving, medicinal plants, and tours of the area. For questions and to schedule an experience

Phone: +506-8736 - 2468







La Cangreja National Park

We border this incredibly pristine National Park. You can enjoy this park in many ways, here are a few ideas. A few of the locals in town offer guided trips for all these. Having been born and raised in the area they are incredibly knowledgeable about the environment, wildlife, and more. All speak English and Spanish.

Hike to the Top of La Cangreja: The most pronounced mountain you can see from various parts of the property is called La Cangreja. At 1,305 meter high, from the top on a clear day you can see the Pacific Ocean

and get an amazing perspective of where our little town is nestled. This is approximately a 19 kilometer round trip hike with a 1,000 meter elevation gain. Over half of the hike is in full sun so be prepared with plenty of water (3-4 liters recommended) and sun protection. Departure for this hike is around 5 AM, returning midday.

Price: Varies between \$20 and \$30 per person

Junior: WhatsApp +506 - 8504 - 0497 Marcos: WhatsApp +506 - 8404 - 8770 Jenny: WhatsApp +506 - 8930 - 4738

Tour of La Cangreja Park: Enjoy a walk through the jungle and possibly spot some amazing wildlife.

Price: Varies between \$20 and \$30 per person

Junior: WhatsApp +506 - 8504 - 0497 Marcos: WhatsApp +506 - 8404 - 8770 Jenny: WhatsApp +506 - 8930 - 4738

Bird Watching: In the last bird count through the park there was 250 birds spotted!

Price: \$20 per person

Marcos: WhatsApp +506 - 8404 - 8770 Jenny: WhatsApp +506 - 8930 - 4738

Night Hike: See how the jungle comes alive at night!

Price: \$20 per person

Marcos: WhatsApp +506 - 8404 - 8770 Jenny: WhatsApp +506 - 8930 - 4738

Horseback Riding: Ride through the countryside with a Mastatal farmer. Spanish only.

Price: \$30 per person

Marcos: WhatsApp +506 - 8404 - 8770









Visit our Swimming Holes

There are a few refreshing swimming holes around the area. We have three favorites. If you need more detailed directions ask any Ranch member.

Main house waterfall- There is a waterfall only 15-30 minutes from the main house. The trail for this starts behind the Food Processing Kitchen, the large bamboo structure beside the Main House. Follow this trail down until you hit the river. Cross the river and veer right, where the trail will continue until you arrive at the waterfall.

Quina- The other direction there is a nice swimming hole in the river; this is a 30-45 minute hike. This trail starts at the beginning of Jeannie's driveway.

*Both of these are mild hikes through the jungle on relatively maintained trails.

Second bridge waterfall- For a bit longer of a hike there is a waterfall up the road, about an hour's walk. The road is in full sun, but you'll get some nice viewpoints. As you walk out the front gate take two right turns and follow the road for about 40-60 minutes. At the second bridge head up river until you reach a large waterfall.

If you go out on any adventure please let someone at the Ranch know where you are going and when we should expect you back. If you plan on missing a meal please inform someone so we know whether to set food aside for you. Always go prepared with water, sun protection, appropriate foot wear, etc. Remember it begins to get dark around 6pm, and sooner if you are under the jungle canopy. You don't want to be stuck out in the jungle past daylight. The jungle offers many beautiful places to explore, please respect the land and stay safe.

Thanks for joining us and Enjoy!

