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Off the Grid Jungle Life in Costa Rica

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3 Days at Punta Mona's Eco Farm Commune

By John Early (http://www.therooster.ca/author/JohnEarly/) from **Saskatoon** on Tue, 2014-04-01 8:58am

Tags: backpacking (http://www.therooster.ca/tag/backpacking/), caribbean (http://www.therooster.ca/tag/caribbean/), costa rica (http://www.therooster.ca/tag/costa-rica/), eco tourism (http://www.therooster.ca/tag/eco-tourism/), john early (http://www.therooster.ca/tag/john-early/), punta mona (http://www.therooster.ca/tag/punta-mona/), Sustainable (http://www.therooster.ca/tag/sustainable/), Travel (http://www.therooster.ca/tag/travel/)

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I look behind me and then forward again to the trail that has continued to diminish, getting swallowed with each step into the lush green canopy. I stop in my tracks – not just because the loud growl of a gang of howler monkeys echoes overhead but because I truly can't decide to continue inland or back-track and find a trail closer to the Caribbean Sea. Yup, I am alone and lost in the jungles of Costa Rica. I really should have looked at a map.

My objective was to get to an off the grid permaculture farm along the point of Punta Mona. After a 30 minute bus ride south of the funky caribbean surf town of Puerto Viejo, you can either find a Manzanillo fisherman to boat you in or hike the 8 km along the beach and through the jungle for free. Since I had no one else to split the \$40 – \$50 boat ride with and hearing from the locals that the hike is simply `todo directo` on a beaten trail, I opted for the latter. Why bother with looking at Punta Mona's directions online? Si, Maps are for silly touristas...

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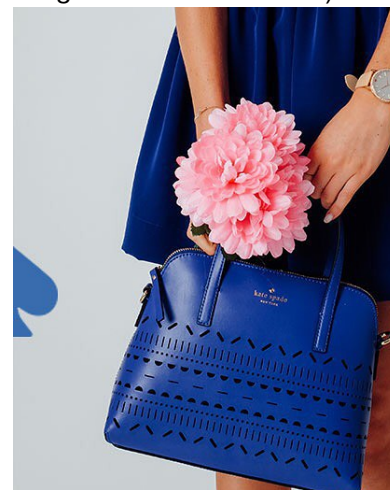
The Rooster **INSTAGRAM**



(http://www.therooster.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/IMG_1913.jpg) *The Caribbean trail between Manzanillo and Punta Mona*

As I catch my breath on the muddy jungle floor wondering why there isn't a sign guiding the trail, I see a man approaching with a machete and a propane tank over his shoulder. Now normally, being lost in the jungle and having a stranger approach you with a machete would be the start of a great horror movie. Having been in Central America for over four months now, you get used to the afternoon local marchings of a machete in or out of town (to cut trail, open coconuts, kill snakes...). His spanish was quick and mumbled but he confirmed that I was going the wrong way. Apparently I needed to back track 30 minutes, get back to the ocean and go up a hill before heading inland again for maximum another two hours. Ahh claro amigo!

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Lost in the jungle, I got helped out by this machete toting local...plus his shirt said 'Cero Accidentes'...how can you not trust that!

After over three hours of jungle hiking, two more wrong turns (following ill advice from a random shirtless German in full hiking gear) and a quick skinny dip in the ocean (because you're never really lost in the jungle until someone gets naked), I came across Jeff – one of the volunteers at Punta Mona that came out to find me, spliff at hand. I knew he was Canadian from his first sentence – not from his polite accent, but his reference of me getting lost to finding Fred Penner's Place. He then informed me that they don't have signs along the way as it is mainly private property you have to trespass to get to the farm to begin with. Jeff also tells me that if you know where you're going, or have written directions, the hike can be done in under 90 minutes...but where's the adventure in that?

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(<http://www.therooster.ca/wp-content/plugins/adrotate/adrotate-out.php?track=OSwyLDAaHR0c->

Jeff and I finally arrive to the sight of several bamboo rooftops jutting out from the thick green surroundings. Smiling faces wave while they tend to the nearby gardens and fruit trees. We pass by the water catchment system, yoga platform, chicken coupe, several ducks and the composting outhouses before arriving at the colourfully painted and tiled kitchen and communal area. The waves from the beach crash letting me know that we are back on the coast-line. I feel a bit like Leo in 'The Beach' when he finally finds his playa commune. Another volunteer, Keric, drops what he's doing in the kitchen to hug me and welcome me in "Lunch is waiting for you John!". I should have planned to stay longer.



(http://www.therooster.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/IMG_1921.jpg)

Jeff working his magic on some Breadfruit Gnocchi in Punta Mona's kitchen and the home to 'Jungle Gourmet'

Punta Mona is an off the grid, self sustainable farm and eco project that is open to both visitors and longer term volunteers. It consists of 85 acres that has been owned and cultivated by Stephen Brooks for nearly 20 years. [Stephen is also one of the founders of Envision Festival Costa Rica] In the 1990's, Stephen was looking for a place to setup a centre to teach ways of self sustainability. He was introduced to the last remaining Jamaican fisherman of the area, Padi, who helped mentor Stephen through the years. Punta Mona continues to offer retreats, workshops and permaculture design courses throughout the year.

A night's accommodation with three vegetarian meals (sourced from the farm) cost **\$65** and includes a two hour permaculture tour of the farm and access to their kayaks and snorkels. Day trips are also welcome for lunch and a tour for **\$20**. If you are lucky enough to get to spend some time on the Caribbean side of Costa Rica, make sure to spend a few nights with the smiling faces of Punta Mona!

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Ten Thrifty Things You

For more information (or to get proper directions to not get too lost in the jungle) check out Punta Mona online: <http://puntamona.org/> (<http://puntamona.org/>)

Check below for a few more pictures from my three days at the jungle sanctuary of Punta Mona.

!Pura Vida!

~j. early~

www.johnearly.ca (www.johnearly.ca)



(http://www.therooster.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/IMG_1919.jpg)

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(http://www.therooster.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/IMG_1937.jpg)

Keric checking the levels of the farm's water en catchment system. Punta Mona uses both rain water and well water.



(http://www.therooster.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/IMG_1926.jpg)

A typical jungle gourmet lunch – breadfruit chips, turmeric curry risotto, beans, pico de gallo and a farm fresh garden salad



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LISTENING STATION



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(http://www.therooster.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/IMG_1944.jpg)

The hot and wet climate of the Caribbean Side of Costa Rica means they can grow all types of fruit you've never heard of like Biriba (centre) – it blackens right when you pick it so it doesn't transport well but cut into it and it tastes like a citrus vanilla custard (left)!

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(/style/mongolie-grill)





(http://www.therooster.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/IMG_1940.jpg)

Local Tico, Beto and I on the farm tour chowing down on some fresh sugar cane. I also learnt to make warpaint using achiote seeds (commonly used in lipstick) and how to make a bracelet using the ultra strong Golden Orb spider web (the smaller bracelet on my left hand). Pura vida!

~

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About John Early

John Early is based out of his hometown, Saskatoon. His formal education consists of a Bachelor of Commerce in Marketing and Management at the University of Saskatchewan and ESC Rouen, France. However his current six years of world travels have provided his true education and reason to smile in life. From busking Aussie streets, MCing major music festivals, entertaining on Caribbean cruise ships to Tour Manager for Nintendo or working on the 2010 Olympic Torch relay across Canada; a guitar and journal have always been at hand to document and define new territory. He is currently leading 40 day trips in Thailand and Central America for Free and Easy Traveller. Check out more at www.johnearly.ca

(<http://www.johnearly.ca>)

View all posts by John Early → (<http://www.therooster.ca/author/JohnEarly/>)

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Bradley Scott Farmer · Follow · Clackamas Community College

well written love the journey you took us on in this blog

Reply · Unlike · 6 · Unfollow Post · April 1 at 8:25pm



John Early · Trip Leader / Lifestyle Athlete at Free & Easy Traveler

Thanks Bradley! I look forward to trekking out to Punta Mona again soon!

Reply · Like · April 2 at 10:58am



Sue Tjernlund · Central Oregon Community College

As a recent Punta Mona permaculture graduate, I'm thrilled to see such a great post about it and the fabulous picture of my friend Kerik!

Reply · Unlike · 2 · Unfollow Post · April 6 at 11:31pm

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Ray-Ban Introduces the NEW
Opera Glass Collection

(<http://www.therooster.ca/style/ray-ban-introduces-the-new-opera-glass-collection/>)

OOKAY and ETC! ETC! This
Thursday at HiFi

(<http://www.therooster.ca/location/calga-and-etc-etc-this-thursday-at-hifi/>)

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