

Ecoforest Newsletter

Autumn / Winter 2003

Ecoforest in southern Spain - the raw food eco-community where residents also facilitate eco-education - is maturing. It is now more than 3 years since the Ecoforest Trust bought the land and a group of members moved on. Since then so many people have learnt so much through the existence of this unique project. We have had over 500 visitors, of which about 50 have completed our 2 week permaculture design courses. These courses inform and inspire people, giving them the core skills and knowledge to design and create a more sustainable lifestyle for themselves and others.

The vegan and raw food lifestyle here has been an education and inspiration for so many people. Visitors have learnt that they can take responsibility for their own health, and live a lifestyle that naturally creates health rather than illness, both for their body and the planet. Where some were cautious of this way of life before arriving, they have grown to love and celebrate it, thankful that they have discovered its benefits for themselves.

Our main focus for the coming year is to attract more members, including people with gardening or building skills, and people who have the skills, qualifications and desire to run their own courses, retreats or other events here. So you'll find much of this newsletter is oriented towards that goal.

It's now time to develop the project as a resident project rather than being focused on facilitating visitors. So this newsletter sets out the many benefits of living here, and details some of the opportunities that members can take advantage of here for personal growth and moving forward in life. Your personal problems don't necessarily go away when you change your lifestyle ... as there will probably always be challenges where ever you live. Ecoforest encourages an element of personal and spiritual development, because this is not the 'cotton wool' lifestyle that so many are used to, living in the town or city. It can be very muddy here for example for spells of time in the winter,

but many of the challenges bring the greatest benefits. And one of the greatest rewards of living here is that you have the space and the freedom from distractions to practice your own chosen path of spirituality and personal development.

Over the last 3 years, on average we have had 13 people living here at any one time, with the numbers normally lower in Winter and Summer and higher in Spring and Autumn.

So why not imagine what it could be like to ... live in a beautiful place ... close to and surrounded by nature ... with a beautiful river and delicious, highly nutritious food straight from the garden, an abundance of oranges from January to early June, and each year more fruits at other times of year ... living a sustainable life amongst a group of like minded people, working for the good of people and planet.

If you would like to try it ... then you know where to come!

The aim of the Ecoforest Trust is to create a worthwhile investment of personal energy that will bring about a unique project that benefits all people and the planet as a whole.

We welcome people to Ecoforest who wish to experience the benefits of this form of life. We encourage you to consider the possibility of living in this way – a way that is so different in many ways from the normal life, and yet which is not so far from normal as it may seem. We are open to new members, to add to the diversity of life and experience that already lives here.

Become An Ecoforest Member or Supporter

We have vacancies for all types of *Members* –for example, people who wish to live here most of the time or those that wish to have Ecoforest as a second home in the sun. We are also open and welcoming to those that wish to live here for shorter periods, perhaps for 6 months or 1 year. In particular we are looking for skilled and self-reliant

people with an ability to support themselves to live and work here at our wonderful Finca by the Rio Grande.

Resident Members: *become a resident member of the Ecoforest Community.* The idea behind becoming a Resident Member is that for a returnable deposit of £4000 (payable over a fixed time period) you are entitled to live and develop your own work here at EcoForest all year round - or for more than six months of the year at least if you wish to spend some time away. This returnable loan is then used to finance the purchase of more land and to enable the project to grow.

Guaranteed Visitor Option: The idea behind the Visitor option is that you can know that you can always get away to a simple, natural place and ecological community, where a naturally healthy lifestyle is normal. The Guaranteed Visitor Option involves making a returnable deposit of £2000, so that then in turn you are guaranteed a place when you want to come and stay at EcoForest - for up to six months of the year. So it can be like a second home in the sun for you. This money is then used to finance the purchase of more land and to enable the project to grow.

Please spend a few moments and contemplate the possibilities. If you have a little money invested somewhere, could Ecoforest be a worthwhile project to consider as an alternative form of ethical investment?

If either option appeals to you, or you would like to support us in some other way, then please read our full proposal on the Ecoforest website or write to us.

"As a raw fooder, for me Ecoforest is paradise - a real healing supportive space, where I can fulfil all my desires. I haven't been happier for a long time."

Frank, an English autumn volunteer, who will be returning to run Tai Chi courses here in 2004.

We are launching a number of options for supporters of the Ecoforest project, it's work and it's vision. This is a way you can help us significantly without having to commit yourself to living or working here, or changing your life completely. The benefits of being a supporter include annual periods of time here as a holiday visitor for free. Please

contact Veronika via info@ecoforest.org or by writing to us at Ecoforest, Apdo 29, Coin 29100, (Malaga), Spain for more information.

So please remember ... *The aim of the Ecoforest Trust is to create a worthwhile investment of personal energy that will bring about a unique project that benefits all people and the planet as a whole.*

Prema (Spanish, yoga teacher, resident summer to autumn 2003)

"Ecoforest has definitely changed my food lifestyle and my whole lifestyle in many ways. I'm leaving here but I am taking raw food with me. I have improved so much in so many ways - both in my yoga and spiritual practice have improved very much due to the food style and lifestyle here, and living in nature. I have felt like I didn't even need to meditate here - just to be here is enough. I've met beautiful people here - very inspiring. And the contact with nature - the river, birds, the earth, the elements - it's a great healing power. In general my health has improved so much here, from mental to spiritual and physical."

A New Member's Experience

Veronika has been a full member of Ecoforest since the summer. She is French Canadian, studied criminology, has worked in an interesting range of jobs, and lived in Europe for a while.

Veronika, how does it feel to be a resident member of Ecoforest?

Very challenging in the sense of being more responsible - even if not for the bigger decisions - but I feel responsible about what I am doing here and have to act responsibly towards the project ... whereas previously I could just be here as a visiting volunteer, and that was very different. It's not just because I have put money in either that I feel responsible ... it's because I have made a commitment and in many ways that's really good ... it can be difficult though, because I am part of it all now and previously when things were changing here it was not a responsibility for me.

It feels really nice to be a resident ... really nice to have a home, and I've not had that for a long time. It's a beautiful place to call home. A lot of people

come through here staying for a few days or weeks may be, and a lot of them say "*you're so lucky to be living here*" because they have to go back to their normal jobs and homes and normal life.

And raw food has become part of me and is really important and central to why I'm here. And that's a big change because when I was thinking of coming here that was the one thing putting me off! If I think about going away from here, and being away from the raw food and away from nature, I think it would be very hard. I think about how it would be if I went to another community, vegetarian or whatever, and how that would feel – difficult I think. So yeah, this is a really good place to be.

I'm going away for 5 weeks soon, back to Canada, and it's going to be really interesting to see how I cope, seeing friends and family. I've been going out meeting people with Lorenzo to restaurants ... you know, meeting nice people ... mainly alternative people ... I like the socialising part, but I don't really want to be in the restaurant ... the noise, the people and the stimulation of being in that kind of environment. Mostly I don't eat anything at all there, or I bring something with me.

I've realised since being raw how much of a central issue food is in people's lives, in society and socialising. Watching how people eat and what they eat, and feeling the effects it's having on their body in myself. You know ... fried stuff or meat. It's definitely made me more sensitive eating raw, though I don't consider myself a 'raw fooder' and don't want to get into that kind of dogmatic mindset.

What about the coming year?

Well, I feel it's really important to get more residents here. It can be difficult when there are not many people here, like in the summer it was quiet, but even then it's a good time for introspection. So to get more residents and to continue to improve the facilities and get more food growing, that's really important ... so to have some more people here with gardening experience would be great..

What about a general message?

If you're stuck in a rut or stagnating just come and spend some time here ... may be just a weekend or a week ... then I think it may help you change.

You'll be surprised how much just a weekend or a week spent here can change your life.

Living and Working Here in 2004

If you are interested in becoming a member of Ecoforest then living and working here, and experiencing the great benefits of being involved in this project, is definitely possible. If this interests you then please look at our website first or write or email to the address on the back of this newsletter.

We will not have a formal volunteer work programme in Spring 2004. We will negotiate agreements with people individually so it is clear what the arrangements are for living and working here, and so that people can be as self-reliant as possible. This will include a garden area for you to grow your own organic food, fresh and delicious, delivered by your own hand to your salad bowl!

Specifically we need people with building skills, and an experienced gardener/ horticulturist. We need people that are experienced that can work both with others and independently on the improvement and extension of the house – work of great importance to the development of the project. Those working with us gain enormously from the environment and community, the wide range of learning experiences that the project offers and the uniqueness of this place.

Veronika is seeking someone to work with her during Spring on holiday visitor support, fund-raising, running the shop and other important administration work. Steve is seeking someone to assist in preparing for and during the April permaculture course with Devin also co-teaching (ideally someone who is doing or planning to do their permaculture diploma). This will mainly involve making sure people know about the food systems and facilities, are encouraged to be on time each day for teaching and practical sessions, and other general support work. And there may be some opportunities to have a go at teaching.

And to hear what some of our volunteers think and feel about living and working at Ecoforest, you can read their thoughts interspersed throughout this newsletter.

Live Here During Winter and Spring

Winter is a great time to come and learn about self-reliance because ... you are welcome to come here and live here over the winter but you have to sort out your own food and water.

Ecoforest is a great place for people who want to get away and have an empowering experience as part of a small community. There's wind and rain ... but there's also sunshine and a 'camping-barn' type house with a wood burning stove during the evening.

As Stefan said after a wet spell during the October permaculture course ... "*that was the best rainy weekend of my life!*"

If you can handle it, you might just find that it could be a very positive life changing experience. You can grow your own food and supplement it as necessary with trips to the local town or village. You'll need to collect your own drinking water from the nearby spring. All these are very empowering experiences, learning and doing the basics of life, so you know what is needed in terms of the bare essentials. How many places are there where you can learn such useful things that we are not taught in school?!

Steve will be here for bits of December, January and February, and most of March, Gaura will be away until the end of March, Veronika will be here for New Year and part of January and then back at the end of February after a Moroccan adventure with Lorenzo – who will also be here through until they go off in mid Jan. Rob will be here most of the winter, and Gary will be here throughout.

The Costs of Living Here

Ecoforest really is a very cheap place to live. In most places you are encouraged to be something of a slave to a system that often involves working away in ethic-less jobs that do not inspire you or teach you things of value, or which somehow hold you back from doing what you really want, or from moving forward in your life.

At Ecoforest I can live comfortably on an income of around 4000 Euros a year (about the same figure in dollars, or less than 3000 pounds) ... and I could certainly live on less than that if I wasn't travelling back to England a couple of times a year for permaculture gatherings and so on, and wasn't using my van for buying food for visitors and for

collecting timber and other materials for building work here. With no vehicle, life can be so cheap!

There are no electricity or water bills here, and there is no council tax or the other overheads that add up. Also there aren't the distractions of living surrounded by little shops that attract you to buy things that you don't really need – and often those 'little' bits of spending turn out to be a lot more than you realise over a whole year.

Your food and any money you spend on emails, letters and other ways of keeping in touch with friends and family, a few trips here and there, and other incidental costs of living ... these are the costs of living here. And they are small by comparison with a 'normal' living situation.

So if you have a way of making a reasonable livelihood, which wouldn't be enough to pay your way in city life but which *would* be enough to live here comfortably, then why not check it out for yourself ... *Steve*

A Freer Existence ...

Gary (surname Freer) is an English, long term raw foodist (about 13 years) who has returned to Ecoforest for his second winter with us. So I asked him for his comments about being here and said I'd be happy with what ever comes out ... He looked down at the organic fruit in his hand ... "*Well, maggots then ...*" he said, pausing before continuing "*... judging by this very ripe chirimoya.*" (Gary is vegan by the way and so the tiny fruit fly maggots were able to enjoy life in the compost heap shortly after this discussion.)

Some time later, after a little thought, Gary came to me saying "*with the aid of some satisfying avocados ... I've managed to construct a sentence for you. How's this? I am grateful indeed for all those responsible for enabling me and others to live here in a suitable setting, with convivial companions, enjoying a more meaningful, freer existence. I was wondering whether there's a Spanish equivalent of the phrase 'nice one!' but may be I'll just settle for 'Like it!'*"

Money, Finance & Fund-Raising

The costs of running the project have come from the contributions of people living here, both financial and in work. In the last year we have been covering most of the food costs of the volunteers, but with a change in focus towards members we

intend to raise the amount of food grown here, and cut down on the number of volunteers, thereby significantly reducing the food costs of the project. This will also free up a larger percentage of the contributions to be spent on improving the infrastructure and facilities here, such as the house.

Veronika has calculated an average breakdown of costs as follows:

Food: 43% (made higher by providing most volunteer food in 2003)

Building and landscaping: 25%

Administration: 12%

Gardens: 10%

Transport: 6%

Household and miscellaneous: 4%

Ecoforest finances are stable. We are now seeking financial inputs as loans, ethical investments and donations that will allow us to pay off the original loans that allowed the Ecoforest Trust to buy the property, as well as allowing us to improve the property more rapidly, to develop our educational work and potentially to buy more land in due course. In particular we would dearly love to strengthen what is already a very special place by creating an outstanding building of beauty, practicality and inspiration, providing better facilities for all those that experience Ecoforest, and to provide a range of additional benefits for resident and visiting members who wish to live and work here.

Specific infrastructure improvements that we currently need funding for include:

- The next phase of house development and building the extension: 30,000 Euros/\$ (20,000 pounds) minimum;
- Open but covered outdoor activity space for courses such as yoga, tai chi, etc: 2,000 Euros/\$ (1200 pounds) minimum;
- Outdoor kitchen improvements: donations of good quality, robust, hand-powered kitchen equipment are welcome (new or second hand);
- Permanent compost toilet: 1000 Euros/\$ (600 pounds);
- Renewable energy systems: 1500 Euro/\$ (1000 pounds) for small-scale wind-turbine; 3000-5000 Euro/\$ (2000-3500 pounds) for major solar system improvements.

We welcome and encourage donations of any size to help us on our way, so please realise that even small amounts will help us.

We have loans to repay in early 2005 and would like to receive from those that wish to make donations or ethical investments as loans – any amounts from small amounts up to or more than 30,000 Euro/\$ (20,000 pounds) are welcomed. Because the value of the Ecoforest property has risen significantly since we bought it, this provides financial security that backs any loans that are received.

Smaller contributions paid by monthly standing order are another welcome form of gift aid, that can be off-set against tax.

All assistance is welcome – so please do contact us to discuss the possibilities for ethical investment options as fixed term loans, as donations, gift aid or in other forms.

Steve's View As A Member

Ecoforest is great ... but not perfect. It would be pretty amazing if it was, and if we got everything right first time. There are many things to do here, to improve and to develop. This has never been done before ... the closest that I've recently come across was Gandhi and his communities ...

We have things to improve in ourselves and in the place, and part of the joy of being connected with Ecoforest is that it is a place that has allowed so many people the space to work on themselves, and to benefit from doing so.

We need help and courage from people to allow the possibilities and potentialities of this place and the vision behind it to happen. Dreaming of what is possible is the first step ... but then action, commitment and belief are needed to manifest that vision. The first steps have been taken ... so this is a start. To me it feels like a lifetime's work ... to establish raw food communities, and raw ecological communities in particular around the world, and I hope this is just the start. There may be many others, and if so they will all be different. They will reflect who is living there, and they may well all work (and in some ways

not work) in different ways. Life is a learning process!

So if you have visited and have some *constructive* comments that can help us to evolve, please let us know. In particular we want to know what you think or feel people want if they are to become members, either as residents or as returning and supportive visitors. We need that information and support so that we can evolve in appropriate ways. Ideally we need to know specific actions that we can take to improve things, rather than general comments – what to do and how to do it would be very helpful.

So please do what you can to help us out. We all have lessons to learn, so please do help us to learn and grow. Thank you.

A Blockbuster Ecoforest Video

Ana from Venezuela arrived at Ecoforest in October. She's a film-maker, and having studied in London for six years, she is making a video of about Ecoforest, its residents and visitors, and the Ecoforest vision. With versions in English and Spanish, this is an exciting development that will help inform local Spanish people and organisations about our work. We also hope to have clips of on the website in due course of time, and for the video to be seen at raw food festivals, and vegan, green and natural health events around the world. So keep an eye on the website for video news.

Steve talked to Ana a little about her experience of being here at Ecoforest ...

Can you tell me why you are at Ecoforest Ana?

Exploring. Exploring and finding of my right way – a way that will take me where I am looking for. Ecoforest hasn't given me what I am looking for but it has shown me the way to get there.

Did you have expectations before coming here?

No. None. But I was scared I was going to fail ... leaving what I was doing in England, I was scared I was going to fail living in nature, and finding it was not for me ... Before it was all just intellectual ... my ideas about how to live and nature. So I realised I was something of a hypocrite - having the ideas but not living that way. And if I failed it

would have been catastrophic for me, because that belief was what I have been living for.

And do you feel you've failed?

No, not at all. I'm really happy. It's like I'm living in ecstasy all the time ... even when it rains. I don't mean it's easy when it rains, but basically I am so happy ... I don't feel Ecoforest is for me long term, but it's an important step. I even did something I never thought I could do – I've cut my hair like this (shaved, with a pony tail at the back). I've thought about it many times before but couldn't do it and then yesterday I just cut it off. This has been a way of overcoming so many fears about how people will view me, and what they think of me. And that's been a very good step for me also. I've even written an important letter to my parents, about all my experiences in my childhood and all the fears I got from them. I'm not blaming them, but I am telling them that I don't want to fear anymore, and I am asking for their help, but not their permission.

It Sounds Great ... But What Can I Live in?

If you fancy the idea of living here but are not to sure what to live in ... then remember that Lorenzo is a yurt builder. He could custom build you a beautiful yurt. So if you are interested then 'enquire within' as they say.

And if you contact the existing members of Ecoforest we can also advise you about other suitable dwellings that will fit the needs of the site and yourself.

The Ecoforest Plan

2004 to 2005

Aim:

To create an ecological community of members, living simple sustainable vegan raw food oriented lifestyles, in harmony with each other and in harmony with nature.

Ethics and Codes of Practice:

The essence of the code of practice is to achieve high ethical, practical & spiritual standards whilst recognising that in some circumstances there may be a practical need for compromise.

- To pursue compassion & non-violence in practice & communication, towards all beings & the earth;
- For all those living or staying at Ecoforest to be following a 100% vegan, essentially raw food lifestyle at Ecoforest. (This allows for the heat drying & other processing that occurs with nuts, some dried fruit, spices & so on, thereby accommodating those new to the raw food diet & those in transition. It allows for freedom of choice whilst off-site, although a vegetarian lifestyle would be expected to be maintained off-site);
- To be following vegan organic land practices, unless it is deemed necessary in exceptional circumstances (e.g. where an immediate fertilisation is needed to save dying trees where the only known alternative to use of manure would be agro-chemicals)
- In construction, landscaping & physical works to use ecological design & ecological materials where feasible to do so & without entailing excessive cost, recognising the limitations in the availability of information on ecological building & of ecological building materials in Spain at this time;
- To be highly aware & not wasteful in relation to water use for drinking, washing & garden use, in use of firewood, food & organic wastes including 'humanure' & other valuable resources, & to be cycling these resources efficiently & effectively within the site, minimising non-organic / non-biodegradable wastes.

Summarising the codes of practice, in diet, construction & land practices to be following a 'BAPNEEC / BATNEEC' approach – in other words *Best Available Practice / Technology Not Entailing Excessive Cost*.

The Vision

The vision for Ecoforest is that it becomes a home for self-managing people, living highly sustainable & naturally healthy lives.

There will be a homely atmosphere, with greatest attention given to the resident & visiting members needs, with some people 'passing through' at a reasonable but not excessive level.

People at Ecoforest will be largely self-reliant, growing their own food on individual plots for members & long term visitors, with communal plots for shorter term visitors & courses, all managed on a vegan organic basis.

The site as a whole & its various elements will be a beautiful place to live, with artistic & sculptural elements, & other human created features of beauty, as well as the existing natural beauty.

The site will be a home for a rich & diverse range of wildlife & be high in biodiversity.

The upper part of the site will be gradually growing into a forest garden system with seasonal vegetable production from autumn to early summer each year, & a constantly increasing diversity of drought tolerant fruit & soil improving, shade & beauty creating trees that are tolerant of heavy clay soils, as well as a range of trees native to the area. The seed bank of self-seeding annual plants will be building up in the soil in this area, with plants such as beans, alfalfa, clover & coriander self-seeding themselves, as well as self-seeding flowers, & with soil fertility & structure improving year on year.

The house will be extended with a newly built 2-storey section. It will be an interesting & attractive, energy efficient building, ecologically designed & built using the best available materials not entailing excessive cost (in terms of money or human energy). The improved house will include a range of facilities including bunk-room / camping barn type accommodation for visitors on courses, etc., a secure office with appropriate energy systems & phone line to manage the project on-site, a workshop & teaching room of sufficient space to comfortably provide for at least 20-30 people in a workshop / taught course situation & space for at least 12 people on yoga or tai chi style courses.

The upper part of the site will include an outdoor, covered & shaded space for tai chi, yoga & other activities outside in nature during most of the year.

The middle part of the site will be an area where different types of drought tolerant trees are growing that are tolerant of very hard & rocky soil, with a similar approach to the upper part of the site, although probably involving a slightly different range of plants due to the different soil conditions.

In time the middle part of the site might prove appropriate for the building of permanent dwellings, possibly built by members in partnership with Ecoforest, with agreements that give appropriate levels of security to both the members & to Ecoforest. In time 'the shop'

may also be replaced with a more permanent building with better facilities.

The lower part of the site will include both an intensive permaculture style forest garden food growing area & the orange grove managed on a Fukuoka style, 'natural way of farming' basis.

There will be a good range of functional areas to provide a simple & rustic yet relatively comfortable living situation, such as good compost toilets, tool & wood stores, facilities for clothes washing & drying, seasonal showers, & so on.

The dwellings on site will include good quality 'tentage' (yurts & domes), & other temporary structures. A limited number of caravans may be acceptable *if* they are beautified & integrated into the landscape.

Objectives for 2004 to 2005:

- To become a member focused project, & in 2004 to secure at least 3 new members, with a long term objective or having 8 to 12 core members living at Ecoforest as a main place of residence, with additional visiting members regularly staying for shorter periods, & to have a relatively good balance in terms of female & male members;
- To maintain a situation where on average there are 10 to 20 people living at Ecoforest at any one time, including both resident members & visiting members, as well as other visitors;
- To secure at least 30,000 Euros / 20,000 pounds to repay outstanding loans in finance from membership deposits, donations, ethical investments as loans, & other forms of finance;
- To secure a further 75,000 Euros / 50,000 pounds for project development, further land purchases, etc. in finance from membership deposits, donations, ethical investments as loans, & other forms of finance;
- To be sustaining a healthy & productive orange orchard & a system of personal & community gardens with all those living at Ecoforest to be engaged in food production for themselves, whether as members or long term visitors;
- To secure self-reliant members with gardening / horticulture, building & other practical skills;
- To secure Spanish 'Asociacion' status for the project;
- For visitors to arrive within specific times on specific days & to be at Ecoforest within a clear framework, with clarity about what to expect & what not to expect, with clear agreements negotiated individually by specific Ecoforest members according to those members needs, time capacities, responsibilities & abilities;
- For people living at Ecoforest to be supporting themselves financially, in appropriate ways;

- To be hosting a range of courses, & for this to be a primary way of bringing visitors to Ecoforest, rather than having a constant flow of visitors.

2004-2005 Infrastructure Objectives

To have:

- An outline design & plan for the improvement & extension of the house, which will be drawn up in sketch form to help gain funding;
- "bunk room" accommodation available;
- the car parking area improved with space for more parking & turning;
- a permanent, high quality twin-vault compost toilet built & in use, with 2 more compost toilets in operation (i.e. top, middle & bottom of site);
- a solar shower system available (potentially for seasonal use);
- plans for rain-water collection systems in place for collection from the house roof & the kitchen roof, & if feasible to have constructed these systems;
- an insect & animal proof 'cool-store' facility to reduce food wastage;
- information / interpretation panels & other sources of information for self-education for visitors regarding picking salads, collecting & efficient use of drinking water, etc.
- good recycling systems & storage in place;
- the orange grove managed & maintained on a Fukuoka style basis, raising fertility & soil quality each year, increasing the diversity of fruit trees, bushes & climbers, & maintaining a good level of wild food plants according to season;
- a forest garden system with personal & community gardens in place above the orange grove, between the track & the asencia, where all those living at Ecoforest are engaged in learning about & growing food for themselves;
- a tool store for building related tools near the house & a tool store for garden / landscaping related tools in the garden area;
- a dry, weather proof fire wood store near to the house;
- improved pathways, potentially with a more direct path between the gardens & the house, running closer to the chumbos & passing within easy reach of a permanent compost toilet in that area.

Other Long Term Objectives Include

- To improve the shop facilities in time, depending on availability of funds, energy & other resources.

Ecoforest News

Residents and Volunteers

Veronika has become a new fully paid up and enthusiastic member of Ecoforest, and is doing great work on our administration, as well as other work. Veronika – who is French Canadian and therefore speaks fluent French, and is learning Spanish fast - has been here since coming on the April permaculture course this year.

As well as Gaura and Steve there's also Lorenzo here for a year (may be longer), with his large and beautiful yurt, working off site some of the time and doing valuable building work on the house at other times. Rob, who came to us on the September 2002 permaculture course, is here as a volunteer and is potentially going to be living here for a year. Other volunteers include Teemu from Finland and Amanda (England) - both of whom have also volunteered here before - Ana from Venezuela, Oliver from Germany, and tai chi teacher Frank – a November arrival, after a year at Fox Housing co-op and organic farm in south Wales, who will be returning here next Spring. Gary has also returned to us from England to be at Ecoforest for the winter. Prema (previously Raki) was living here for a happy and fulfilling 5 months. In order to reduce her travelling impacts and costs she has now moved closer to her work on the coast where she teaches yoga 4 or 5 days per week.

We are keen for others to come here and become members of the project. Those self-reliant people with skills, and people with an ability to support themselves who would like to share this experience with a view to becoming a member should contact us via email or post.

Tai Chi @ Ecoforest

We are expecting to be hosting Tai Chi courses taught by Frank – a teacher of many years experience – in Spring and early summer next year. Please look out for information on the website or send us an email registering your interest so that we can send you further information when it is available.

Ecoforest Links In Engl and and Around The World

Ecoforest is keen to develop a project of some sort in England ... somewhere where members can live long term or temporarily on trips to England; a

UK base for Ecoforest activities, and a focus for information and events.

We are open to a variety of ideas that might include a Housing Co-operative, or an eco-education centre similar to Ecoforest in Spain. We are also interested in parcels of land.

We have developed a range of good friendly links in London. In particular if you're vegan or raw vegan and looking for accommodation in London then Paz is the man to contact as he has a variety of accommodation for rent, and is keen to try to get a raw vegan house together in London (contact him at houseboy@yahoo.co.uk). He also has a farm in Somerset rented by our raw food friends Paul and Martine, where Paz has offered Ecoforest the opportunity to use a barn as a base for any resident's trips to England.

Another exciting new development in England is the establishment of Shekinashram Community and Holistic Centre in Glastonbury – home to a higher than average number of raw fooders. Devin, an Ecoforest founder, and still a non-resident member, as well as a co-teacher on the April permaculture courses, is currently spending good time there, living part-time at Shekinashram, where daily lunchtime raw food feasts are open to all. Contact Shekinashram, Dod Lane, Glastonbury, Somerset or visit www.shekinashram.org / info@shekinashram.org for more information.

We have been exploring the possibility of buying land in Portugal (where land is cheaper, and the lifestyle is less development oriented than Spain), but are now feeling more drawn to spending time seeking to set up a tropical project, and to develop our links in England. Gaura has some connections with a project in Hawaii which may be explored as we gain more specific details. We also feel that India or Sri Lanka, the Far East and Costa Rica present interesting possibilities for the longer term. These potential futures will germinate and grow from the universal soil as soon as those with the passion and enthusiasm to work with us emerge from the creative void, to manifest the vision as a reality.

New Website – www.rawcommunities.com

A new website that has been launched as a combined effort between Steve (concept), Rob (design) and Teemu (who has found a good ethical raw fooder to host for the website). This

raw communities website lists the raw communities that we know of, with their location, contacts and a brief summary, as well as being a focus and potential 'meeting place' for those that want to start new raw communities. In addition we will have helpful information to support those wishing to start communities, drawing on the large amount of useful experience that has been gained at Ecoforest and within the intentional communities and eco-communities movements as a whole.

The site will also host information on raw shared houses, and potentially neighbourhoods or areas where there is a higher than average crop of raw fooders. The site has been designed to be interactive so that people can add information about their own projects to the site themselves. SO watch this space www.rawcommunities.com

STOP PRESS: we've just heard of another new site that's at www.rawcommunity.com !!! Check it out!!! The two sites will be linked and complement each other, each with a slightly differing focus.

"It's great to see old faces here and new ones, to be here at such a beautiful place and to see how it's changing. It's great to have the space to do my own thing here, to meditate and to enjoy it as an antidote to life back in England."

Phil (Warsop) also known as 'Sailor Phil' – it's Phil's third visit to Ecoforest. He's been a great friend to the project, involved in the original land hunting and having done great work for the project on the house. So 'thank you Phil'.

Rumours of David Wolfe @ Ecoforest?

Yes, there were rumours ... but we've just heard from David that he is now planning to concentrate on the home front in the US, and therefore may not be coming to Europe this year ... if there's any change of plans we'll let you know.

Ecoforest Website

Due to positive changes at Ecoforest those that have been checking the Ecoforest website will see we have redesigned it - thanks are due to Teemu for the initial design work, and then particularly to

Rob for the second phase of design work and other support work on the site.

So we are making ongoing changes and improvements to the website to reflect the nature of the project and its evolution. Thanks also to Alex for his work updating the Ecoforest website during the summer.

We plan for the website to evolve still further in a variety of interesting ways ... so keep an eye on it, and watch it grow and bear fruit.

Die Wurzel Connections With Ecoforest

Steve from Ecoforest will be talking at the Die Wurzel four day Summer Congress in Nurnberg, Germany, which runs from the 2nd to the 5th of July 2004. Steve will talk about the philosophy and spirituality of the raw food life style and will also running a 3 hour permaculture seminar on the final day.

The event should be great for both English and German speakers, as other speakers at include David Wolfe, Viktoras Kulvinskas, Shazzie, Franz Konz and Jasmuheen ... an impressive line up. The event includes talks, workshops and seminars, raw food, yoga and spirituality, and organic food market and excellent raw buffet, as well as a book stall. Take a look at the Die Wurzel website for more information (now also in English). See: www.die-wurzel.de

Steve is planning to travel over to this exciting event from England with a group of others, taking an Ecoforest display with him, so if you would like to join him on the adventure please contact him at true_charter@yahoo.co.uk

The Die Wurzel team – also known as 'the Lightship' - are also considering a second visit to Ecoforest for the Summer of 2004, which will be a wonderful time with these wonderfully warm people, working away to spread the word of natural health and spirituality in Germany.

Ecoforest Recipes and Meal Ideas

Ecoforest has produced a draft copy of its first recipe booklet. Using the working title of *Ecoforest Recipes and Meal Ideas* – a free copy for anyone who comes up with a sparkier title that we use! Quite possibly the book will be a first in the raw food recipe book field (or garden!) as it will take account of and promote more ecological and sustainable ways of growing and eating, alongside

recipes to help those in transition to eating a higher percentage of raw food.

The Finca Next Door and Other Local Land Opportunities

The neighbours with the land and house next door have decided they *do* want to sell. The property runs to around 2 hectares (about twice the size of Ecoforest) and includes a traditional house in fairly good repair and a ruin, and a similar number of mature orange (130) and olive trees as Ecoforest, a small range of other fruit trees, a plantation of younger olives and a beautiful little unplanted valley.

We also have some friends who are selling their property on the edge of Coin, where they kindly allow us to pick their fairly healthy surplus of delicious organic fruit. Their property includes a 2 bed, 2 bath, 2 kitchen house with 0.5Ha, and 3 other 0.5Ha parcels with permission to build small houses. This could be an amazing project for a group of raw fooders that want to have their own houses whilst being with raw neighbours. Contact Steve (true_charter@yahoo.co.uk) for the owners contact details – they're nice folk.

Peter, an English visitor for one week, who is active in the Vegan Organic Network, and who confirmed soon after his return to England that he wants to join Ecoforest as a Visiting Member.

"I feel very positive and peaceful about being here. I've felt physically fine and the food's been great, the people are friendly and I certainly plan to come back again ..."

Steve's Book to be Published Early in 2004

After some time in gestation, which has allowed growth and improvement in the book, Steve's book previously known as *Working With Nature* will be published by Permanent Publications in January 2004 under the title ***Eat More Raw!*** Dr Douglas Graham has written a wonderful foreword for the book and has been one of a number of enthusiastic folk that have been keen to see the book published. To quote Dr Doug:

... this book marks the beginning of a new era. It is the culmination of many years of cultural, environmental, and foodstyle

advances. Within these pages, what were until now separate and distinct fields of endeavor have come together, artistically united in a fashion that will bring the reader to newfound understandings of a bigger picture of healthful living.

As a species, we stand on the precipice of survival. We can choose to continue doing what we have always done in the past, in which case the demise of the human race is predictable. Or we can move forward, experiment, and make lifestyle modifications. Armed with better information, humans tend to make better decisions. I believe that reading this book will leave you better informed, make you a better person, and give you many of the tools that you need to emerge from the cultural cocoon as the butterfly that we all wish to become.

In health abundance, naturally,

Dr. Douglas N. Graham

www.foodnsport.com

If you wish to order a copy of the book and want Steve to let you know when it's out, contact him direct at true_charter@yahoo.co.uk, via post to Ecoforest or care of 24 Vale Close, Lower Bourne, Farnham, Surrey GU10 4NW in the UK. The book will also be able to be mail ordered over the internet from Permanent Publications in the UK (www.permaculture.co.uk) or from Chelsea Green in North America (www.chelseagreen.com). You should also be able to purchase the book from The Fresh Network, Healthful Living International/Living Nutrition and Nature's First Law.

If you are in Britain, Spain or other parts of Europe ordering direct from Steve will help him earn a little extra from the sales, which helps him and Ecoforest to continue this important work. This is an example of how one member is developing an ethical livelihood, enabling him to continue to live and work at Ecoforest.

So please also think about asking your library to get hold of the book ... or make a present of it to much loved friends or family ... it's a good way to make good quality information available to a lot more people. End of advert! Thank you.

Amanda (English, returning volunteer)

"Why did you want to come back Amanda?"

"Because I missed it. I really wanted to do a permaculture course too, and also wanted to come back to live this way ... washing in the river, living close to nature, eating in the way I want to, being with like minded people – and away from the hecticness of regular society, and the stress of it all. And it feels like to be with my family – like my true family, which I feel is the trees and the mountains and the moon, the stars and the river ..."

Feature Article

If It's Good Enough For Gandhi ...

Here's a little something from Steve which was published as the 'Star Letter' in the latest edition of *Get Fresh!* Magazine ... with a couple of very small additions.

*In the last 'all new' Get Fresh! you mentioned raw celebrities and if we knew of any others. Well, I wouldn't call this person a celebrity ... however, he has been viewed by many as one of the most admirable and inspirational people who lived in the 20th century (born in the 19th). How many people know that Mohandas K or Mahatma Gandhi was a long term raw fooder, eating a simple essentially fruitarian diet for much of his life. He was greatly influenced by the natural hygienists, and as a result considered diet and health to be one of the key areas of his 'experiments with the truth' that drove much of his life. Indeed his view of life as told in **M K Gandhi: An Autobiography, The Story of My Experiments with Truth** details much of his experiments with diet and fasting. One of the important things about Gandhi was that he saw raw nutrition as essential in pursuing a path to both physical and spiritual health, strength and purification ... however he certainly did not see it as sufficient. Four of Gandhi's fundamental values were a pursuit of truth (including and impossible without aiming for complete truth to and with oneself), the simplification of life and his needs to a basic level, a life of service to the greater good of humanity, and a life of non-violence. All of this was of course pursued as a spiritual path, and through his unrelenting pursuit of truth and service, and therefore justice, this inevitably led him into what we would call political activity (or public*

life), in order to attempt to right the obvious wrongs and injustices he saw around him.

Gandhi was clearly an extra-ordinary man. His influence for the good of humanity was perhaps as great as any other person of the 21st century. It is interesting for us at Ecoforest that one of his strongest desires was to see communities where people were living simple, sustainable lives, based on self-reliance and a pursuit of physical and spiritual health.

Having discovered this, Gandhi will remain a powerful influence and inspiration for us at Ecoforest. I commend all Fresh Network members and Get Fresh! Readers to understand the importance of simplification in ones life – freeing oneself of possessions and the influences of TV and the media (following Pete's Top Ten Transition Tip in the last mag) as this is the simplest and most powerful way that we as individuals can move towards a more ecologically sustainable life.

If we can live a life of service for the greater good then this means we are really getting somewhere – which could involve working for a company ... provided of course that it is selling 'good' products (i.e. that contribute towards creating genuine wisdom, health and/or sustainability) and is conducting its marketing, financial and investment strategies in an ethical fashion (i.e. is not active in or investing in ... well the list would be very long! And would include supermarkets for example.)

Raw food is important – but there's a lot more for us to sort out than diet ... and unless we start facing up to that and start making equally fundamental changes in other areas of our lives, we are going to be forced to deal with our lack of responsibility further down the line, and it will not be fun. At least that's what my experiments with the truth tell me.

*Please start your researches now beyond just health, and take actions to improve the sustainability and the positive effects of your life in as many areas as you can ... your work is one of the most important of those areas. So are you work for health and sustainability or are you working against them? And take a good look at how so many of the people that are writing for *Get Fresh!* and who are involved in the raw and ecological worlds have done it already, are still doing it, and how much better they feel for doing so ...*

With love to One and All, Steve

Rob – from England, a long term volunteer who first came here on the Sept. 2002 2 week permaculture course

How do you feel about Ecoforest Rob?

I'm still not sure entirely (he says, smiling) ... I'm planning to stay for quite a while, like a year. It's got it's ups and downs! It's warmer than England and I'm really looking forward to the oranges!

Personally I prefer to live in more of a co-op type situation, but what's good is the fact that it's 100% raw, it's got a beautiful river, and you can really be with nature here.

And do you feel you are learning a lot?

Oh, yes. I'm learning lots. Both about growing food and planting trees and so on, as well as life in community ... and I'm still learning a lot about diet for myself.

Life would be a easier here if I spoke Spanish though ... but I'm working on that and learning it slowly.

Oliver has been a volunteer working visitor during November. He is German and cycled across Europe to get here!

"I've travelled for 1 year, 1 month now in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France and Spain. And I've visited many communities. But I didn't find what I was looking for - a raw food community – they drink and smoke. And then for a long time, six months now since I found it on the internet, I have wanted to come to Ecoforest ... I am so happy now I have arrived here ... All the communities I went to I felt like I was an outsider because I don't drink or smoke, am vegan and raw food ... and on a bicycle. Here I am just a normal guy. Special, because who we are is always special, but how I live is normal here.

On one side I feel like I've arrived at home, my own home, and home inside myself. What's good is that there is a raw vegan permaculture community in southern Spain – it's the best climate, and it's got the river and the mountains nearby – it's a nearly perfect situation. So that it exists is really good. I still need time to work out what I feel needs to change. The language can be difficult for me to explain myself properly in English at the moment.

A last thing to say ... Ecoforest is the place to be!"

Notice Board

Room To Rent in Leicester

There's a room to rent in Leicester for a spiritually inclined person, that is vegan or a raw fooder. Leicester has one of the best fruit and veg markets in Britain. There's an excellent large organic and wholefood co-op near to the house, a good organic veggie box scheme, and the house is also in an area with a vibrant Indian population. So there are many interesting fruits and vegetables available in the local shops, as well as the spiritual influences of the varied population. If you are interested then please contact Gaura at gaura77@yahoo.co.uk

Permaculture Design Certificate Courses

The next life changing, intensely educational, entertaining and fulfilling 2 week Permaculture Design Certificate course at Ecoforest is from the 5th to 17th of April, in the glorious green warmth of Spanish springtime. It will be co-taught by Steve and Devin (Ashwood) – who with others are both co-founders and co-funders of Ecoforest.

Some of the latest comments from graduates of the autumn 2003 courses include:

"I couldn't expect - and didn't - such a powerful and mind shaking course."

"Keep it up. Don't ever stop! I have been fortunate to have many incredible learning experiences ... but none of them come close to these last two weeks. Thank you."

So if you and/or a friend or relative are interested then to avoid disappointment reserve your place now, as bookings are already rolling in!

The September course had 8 people, although it was expected to have more (sadly there were 5 last minute cancellations!). Four people completed the October full course, with an additional three people participating in the first week as an Introduction to Permaculture. This was originally an overflow course for a 'full' September course ... before the cancellations! Steve also taught a 3 month course, one day per week, with 3 people on the course - 2 volunteers and Paul, a local resident

and friend of the project. We hope to run more of this type of extended course in the future.

All this means that by November this year we will have taken 50 people through the course – an experience that gains them many things, including a Certificate in Permaculture Design, which qualifies them as Permaculture Designers and enables them to teach Introduction to Permaculture courses. More importantly the courses equip them with a vast range of tools and techniques to help them achieve a more sustainable, healthy and fulfilling life. All in all, it's a great personal development experience.

Steve is also supporting a number of people in doing their 2 year Diploma in Applied Permaculture Design – Wim, who was an apprentice teacher on the recent September and October courses, Antonio (an Italian Spanish resident) and Charlie (Spanish) who are both very active in Barcelona city and province. Steve has also supported friends in England - Aranya, who gained his Diploma in September, and Nir who is on his Diploma pathway, whilst also studying for a Biodynamics diploma.

If you want to know more about permaculture in general you can visit the website www.permaculture.org.uk - where there's also a fantastic list of hundreds of international projects - or get hold of a copy of Permaculture Magazine (www.permaculture.co.uk).

Take a look at the Ecoforest website or at Steve's new website www.permaculture-steve.net for details of courses that Steve will be teaching in 2004, including the April course, which we expect to fill fairly quickly, and which may even coincide with a visit from a certain friend from the USA ...

UK Permaculture Courses With Steve

As well as the 5th to 17th April 2 week course at Ecoforest Steve will also be teaching the following courses in the UK, if you can't make it to Spain. Please think about them for yourself and pass on the details to others you think may be interested. Both courses will involve a percentage of the course fee being donated to Ecoforest:

- 9th to 22nd May at Stepping Stones Housing Co-op in Gloucestershire, England, teaching with Emma Jackson, another raw food vegan – *this is an ideal course for vegans and raw fooders who can't make it out to sunny Spain.*

- 6th to 19th June at Plaw Hatch Organic and Biodynamic Farm near Forest Row, West Sussex, in the heart of the UK's Rudolph Steiner community and Biodynamic country. This course will focus on the great potential for integrating permaculture with biodynamics, and will also introduce healthier ways of eating and living to those that would otherwise not receive this information.

For information on all these courses contact Steve at true_charter@yahoo.co.uk, via the Ecoforest mailing address or visit the website www.permaculture-steve.net

If you can't make it to any of these courses and are interested in helping organise a permaculture course in your own area (2 week or 2-4 day Intro's) also contact Steve as detailed above.

Latest Wildlife News

Nightjars have been seen at Ecoforest and nearby, and quite a number of bat's the size of blackbirds were seen a little way up the track from us! In early November there was a spiralling column of about 30 to 40 eagles or vultures above the mountain on the other side of the valley. Other un-named sightings include 'fairy-tale' bright scarlet dragon flies with translucent gold patches on their wings in significant numbers up and down the river, and a range of owls, more heard than seen ... of which Gary excels in doing fairly accurate and very amusing imitations!

A Highly Recommended Book

I recently read Fritjof Capra's latest book *The Hidden Connections* (Doubleday, 2002). It provides a brilliant overview of problems such as globalisation and GMO's, alongside many of the key solutions. It is the first book for a long time on such issues that has given me a sense of hope and that has told many things I did not already know. Crucially it explains the nature of social movements of change and

how to work with them – which is critical for those of us that are promoting natural health and sustainability. Steve.

Ecoforest Calendar: 2004

All year: open for potential new *resident members* (long or short term) and *eco-education courses* and vegan raw food *eco-holidays* in a simple natural setting, some long walks in the area, a river to bathe in, salad food included, bring your own tent, for 20 euros per day (about 80 pounds/wk) which helps support this eco-vegan education project. Concessions may be available.

Winter 2003-04 to Early March:

Open to visitors who can look after themselves. You can grow your own food, but no food or water is provided (except oranges from January), so there's no servicing of visitors' needs.

April to June 2004: Individual Work Programme

We need mature people with skills – for example in building or gardening. Open for potential residents and holidayers - not taking unskilled volunteers. Contact Veronika or Steve for the specific opportunities detailed earlier in the newsletter. And contact us at the info@ecoforest.org address if you are interested in possibly becoming a member and have good building or gardening skills and experience, and can work in a self-directed way.

5th to 17th April 2004: 2 week accredited *Permaculture Design Certificate* course taught by Steve (Charter) and Devin (Ashwood) – please book early as demand will be high and places are limited; bookings are already coming in!!

"Find your place on the planet, dig in, and take responsibility from there" Gary Snyder.

For details of membership, ethical investor and supporter options, courses or activities contact us.

Ecoforest

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