

What would you do if you had access to a Rainforest?



Have you ever wondered what it would be like to take a walk through a rain forest? Well, you could have that experience if you traveled to Honduras and visited a plantation that is working with the Manos Amigas Clinic – the Santa Isabel Finca. Although the sun is strong overhead, it is in these higher elevations of the Copan Region, very near the Mayan ruins that you would enter into the shade provided by the tall green canopy of trees growing here. Here there are areas where the sun does not penetrate to the undergrowth for very long. You can feel the wetness of the humidity, experience a

passing mist provided by clouds that gently kiss your cheeks and smell the freshness of fragrances given off by the forest floor and the blossoms of plants growing overhead.

Occasionally you will enjoy the wisp of coolness that accompanies a fleeting breeze as it passes through vine covered tunnels of vegetation and if you listen carefully you are serenaded by the buzz of insects, the sound of a babbling brook and the beating of bird's wings as your feet crush some of the underlying brush, startling them from their perch, as you make your way through a winding, embracing ravine filled with foliage and vegetation – all with unfamiliar scientific names. In places you encounter areas of misty golden rays of sunshine penetrating the dense foliage, much like light coming through venetian blind slats, and exposing unique plants and animals on the forest floor.



It is in this type of habitat you find shade coffee growing in amongst the air plants like ferns, mosses and orchids thriving overhead. Strong vines wrap around some of the tree trunks, delicate clear glass winged butterflies glide through out, pausing long enough to drink from a droplet on a moisture laden leaf while leaf-cutting ants scurry about on the thin, nutrient rich forest floor munching on newly gathered foliage as though they too were having a coffee break!



In the shade of this tropical habitat, Honduran coffee thrives. On the grounds of this finca (plantation), there are 350 acres where coffee is harvested by hand. The climate and altitude contribute a deep flavor to the bean and careful local roasting ensures that each cup delivers



the rich, savory taste of Arabica coffee.

The owners of this *finca*, the Welchez family, take great care and pride in conserving the habitat, making certain that plant and animal species are identified and accounted for and that the delicate balance of nature that exists here is not disrupted so that they can continue to preserve their surroundings and maintain the conditions required to produce high quality coffee beans organically. They established a foundation which provided a local school for the community and the finca is a source of employment for many in the area. The family believe that their stewardship responsibilities also extend to the people who live and raise their families in the surrounding area.



Continuing with their desire to help others, the Welchez's have become a strong contributing supporter of the Manos Amigas Clinic in La Entrada. Guests are welcome to tour their facility, especially during coffee season (October – January) and they are planning on opening a research center at the finca so that serious students and scientists from around the world can stay for extended studies. If you are interested in working visits in the

rainforest or wish to pursue university studies, e-mail Mike Tysowsky at mtysowsky@verizon.net.