

Surprising Partners—

Hotel Firms and Scientists Working

Together to Enhance Tourism

by Hana Ayala

In Panama, a leading-edge union of hospitality, science, and conservation is revolutionizing the meaning of hotel stewardship.

In its 1999 Readers' Choice survey for the world's so-called "best great escapes," *Condé Nast Traveler* noted that the heavily Western, U.S.-dominated list of a decade ago had expanded to include six continents and dozens of islands.¹ In other words, consumer demand for extraordinary experiences is increasingly being satisfied by hospitality operations worldwide. Among the repercussions of such a shift is the challenge of protecting and preserving those attractions' resources. For more than 25 years UNESCO, for one, has been warning about natural- and cultural-resource depletion: "The cultural heritage and the natural heritage are among the priceless and irreplaceable possessions, not only of each nation, but of humankind as a

¹"1999 Readers' Choice Awards: The Best in the World," *Condé Nast Traveler*, November 1999, pp. 227-241.

whole. The loss, through deterioration or disappearance, of any of these most-prized possessions constitutes an impoverishment of the heritage of all the peoples in the world."²

In today's increasingly knowledge-oriented world economies, the creation and distribution of wealth,

² UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (Paris: UNESCO World Heritage Center, March 1999). UNESCO adopted the World Heritage Convention in 1972; today it involves 114 signatories.

Hana Ayala, Ph.D., president of PANGEA-TCR Leadership Alliances (based in Irvine, California «hayala@PangeaWorld.com»), developed the TCR Action Plan for the Republic of Panama under the auspices of its government leaders.

© 2000, Cornell University

jobs, education, and health care will depend on the ability of a society to make use of knowledge and to convert it into products, services, and income.³ Also, I believe that the expansion and propagation of knowledge sources is fundamental to protecting a nation's heritage. This point rings loud and clear from a recent report on America's biodiversity and ecosystems, produced by President Clinton's Committee of Advisors on Science & Technology (PCAST):

We need to invest in science to understand and sustain the bounty of our nation's lands and waters and of its native plant and animal communities, which is the natural capital on which our economy is founded.⁴

In my most recent article in *Cornell Quarterly*, I described a new economic-development model being implemented in Panama that links research and conservation with a third element—tourism—and positions this TCR alliance as a source of growth, competitiveness, and sustainability for Panama's national economy.⁵ I have proposed that the hotel industry is the pillar of the science-hospitality partnership that will drive the quality and market value of leisure-tourism products. This article offers additional evidence of how that proposal is coming to fruition.

³ National Research Council, *Lighting the Way* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1999).

⁴ PCAST Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystems, *Teaming with Life: Investing in Science to Understand and Use America's Living Capital* (Washington, DC: President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology, March 1998).

⁵ Hana Ayala, "Panama's TCR Action Plan: Building Alliances for a Heritage-driven Economy," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (February 2000), pp. 108–119. The Panama model is further described in a document called the "Action Plan for the Development of the TCR Strategic Alliance for the Republic of Panama (*TCR Action Plan*)," which I formulated under the sponsorship of the Panamanian Tourism Institute (IPAT).

In a previous article I described the diverse commitments made by four hotels in Panama in support of the TCR mission.⁶ Now the number of hotel partners has grown to 15; they are listed in the box on this page.

The Pilot Portfolio of Hotels

This article profiles seven members of the pilot portfolio: it updates the commitments of the four partner hotels described in an earlier article,⁷ and introduces three new members of the TCR alliance. It examines the nature and significance of these hotels' pledges and their implications for the international hotel industry's leadership in advancing knowledge, conservation, social well-being, and sustainable development. Moreover, it pays tribute to the developers, owners, and managers of the featured hotels, whose enthusiastic embrace of the TCR mission, and translation of its ideals into action, have charted what I see as an exciting new course for the hotel industry worldwide. (I also express my gratitude to Marta Molina Douhet, advisor to the Panamanian Tourism Institute and the Inter-American Development Bank, for her assistance in promoting the pilot hotel portfolio of the TCR Action Plan for Panama.)

I give special attention to the increasing integration of the two assets I have identified as central to the distinctiveness and competitiveness of Panama's leisure-tourism potential: (1) the country's heritage endowment and (2) the pioneering research of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI).⁸

⁶ Hana Ayala, "Panama's Ecotourism-plus Initiative: The Challenge of Making History," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 5 (October 1998), pp. 68–79.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Panama-based STRI, a bureau of the Smithsonian Institution, is recognized by many as the world's leader in research in the tropics.

Panama's TCR Hotel Partners

The number of Panama's TCR hotel partners has grown to 15. In alphabetical order, they are:

Bananas Village Resort,
Canopy Tower,
Coronado Hotel & Resort,
Gamboa Rainforest Resort,
Casa de Campo Country Inn,
Hotel Campestre,
Hotel Taboga,
Kuna Niscua,
Los Quetzales,
Marriott Panama Hotel,
Miramar Inter-Continental Panama,
Posada del Cerro La Vieja,
Grand Park Hotel (a Four Points Sheraton),
The Bristol Panama (a member of Leading Hotels of the World), and
Villa Marita Lodge.

The Gamboa Rainforest Resort offers its guests an aerial-tram ride that provides a kilometer-long, guided educational tour of the rain-forest canopy.

When I first proposed the TCR model to Panama's government officials, I emphasized that the TCR Action Plan required the participation of STRI to develop Panama's heritage into international tourism attractions.⁹ I envisioned capitalizing on STRI's ongoing scientific discoveries in Panama in two ways: (1) using the Smithsonian's world renown to convey Panama's positive and distinctive image as an international leisure destination, and (2) showing-off STRI's ongoing discoveries as examples of Panama's impossible-to-imitate natural and cultural qualities and resources (i.e., heritage products). As I demonstrate in this article, this vision is now a reality, thanks to STRI's director, Ira Rubinoff, and to Anthony Coates, STRI's deputy director. This successful alliance is positioned to grow through STRI's Office of Business Initiatives.¹⁰

Gamboa Rainforest Resort

An editorial in a special "hotels" issue of *Mimar* magazine used the following quote to describe the delight of discovery as one of the most important intangible qualities of hotel environments:

...When you have leisure, wander idly through my garden in spring, and let an unknown, hidden flower's scent startle you

⁹ The essence of this proposal is related in: Hana Ayala, "Resort Ecotourism: A Catalyst for National and Regional Partnerships," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (August 1997), pp. 34-45.

¹⁰ See: Ayala, February 2000, p. 110. For more information on the rationale of STRI's endorsement of TCR, see: Ira Rubinoff, "Science and Ecotourism on the Isthmus of Panama," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 5 (October 1998), pp. 78-79; and Ira Rubinoff, "The Role of Scientific Knowledge," in *TCR Strategic Alliance: Tourism-Conservation-Research—A Report from the Conference on "Heritage Tourism for the Next Millennium" and its Symposium on "The Challenge of Experience-Management: Linking Quality with Sustainability,"* ed. Marina S. Ratchford (Washington, DC: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1999), pp. 27-30.

into sudden wondering—let that displaced moment be my gift.¹¹

In my opinion, there are few settings that can offer more rewards of discovery than that of the Gamboa Rainforest Resort. This almost-complete 340-acre resort overlooking the Chagres River (the main source of water for the Panama Canal) is nestled amid the lowland tropical rain forest of Soberania National Park. This site is characterized by great natural biodiversity, is rich with the cultural legacy of the ancient Cruces Trail, and constitutes a key part of the canal's watershed.

A great deal has changed since I first presented the TCR Action Plan.¹² Parts of the Gamboa Rainforest Resort—the so-called Scientific Village, a marina, and a restaurant—are now open to guests and visitors. The main complex (with 52 out of 100 luxury rooms, conference and meeting facilities, a spa, and other amenities expected of a luxury hideaway) was officially opened on June 9, 2000. It is not the resort's physical facilities that I wish to describe, however, even though the hotel's architecture was inspired by the no-longer existing Tivoli Hotel. (That property was built for President Theodore Roosevelt's visit to Panama, on a site currently occupied by STRI. As such it will be of interest to some readers.) The product I wish to emphasize here is the heritage aspect of the development.

The resort's developer is Herman Bern, president of Empresas Bern and Tropical Resorts International. His management team includes Manlio Vasquez, director of the Gamboa Rainforest Resort Project; and Franz Garcia de Paredes, director of finance for Empresas Bern

¹¹ Nobelist and Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore, as quoted in: Brian Brace Taylor, "The Displaced Moment: Intangible Qualities of Hotel Environments," *Mimar*, No. 25, September 1987, pp. 18-19.

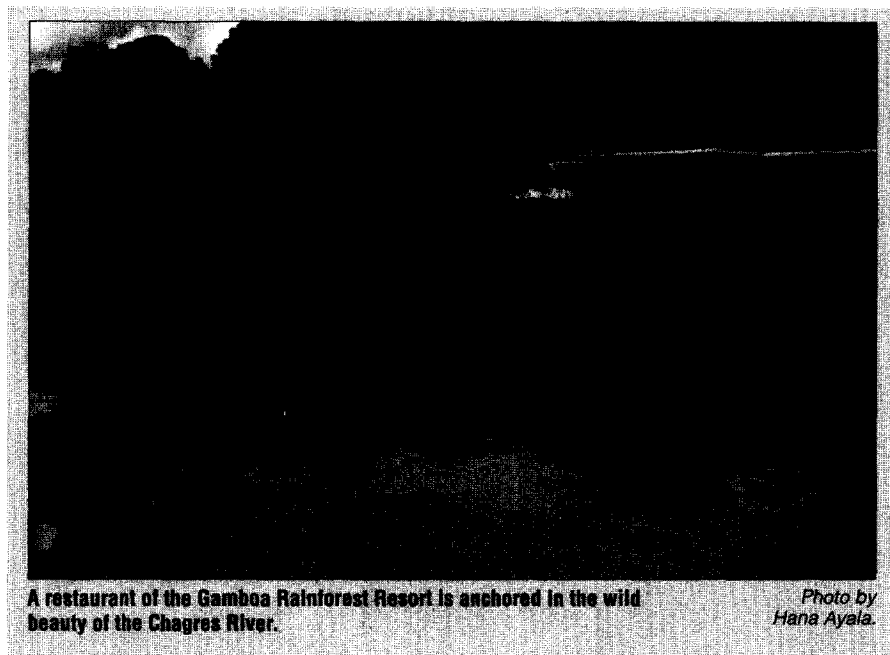
¹² Ayala (October 1998), pp. 75-77.

and Tropical Resorts International. The following descriptions draw heavily on conversations I had with these men in 1999 and early 2000.

The three-part mission of the Gamboa Rainforest Resort is to (1) incorporate into the country's economy a large part of the Panama Canal watershed without damaging it, (2) open this region in a responsible manner to both Panamanians (e.g., for jobs) and international guests, and (3) preserve it for the benefit of humanity. A resort brochure spells out the developer's philosophy:

The Gamboa Rainforest Resort has an integrated educational and research program focused on geology, pre-history, history, regional cultures, ecology, and conservation. The resort sponsors an educational speakers' program and scientific research in the area and provides a vibrant, multi-faceted collection of journeys that permit visitors to explore many destinations within the thematic cultural and ecological routes of national heritage. The resort is committed to heritage tourism, ecology, conservation, and research as a dynamic, integrated model that offers rich experiences to guests of the resort and at the same moment helps achieve regional scientific and conservation objectives.

Benefit zones. Both the mission and the philosophy extend well beyond the resort and its immediate surroundings. The objectives are credible and practical because they are rooted in strategic alliances with institutions and organizations mandated to protect and manage the nation's heritage endowment. At the cultural-heritage level, for example, the resort's commitment to help resuscitate the ancient *Camino de Cruces* trail takes the form of an alliance with the National Institute of Culture (INAC). Also, the Panama Canal Authority and the resort are working together to preserve an old lighthouse. (The lighthouse lies inside the area of the authority's responsibility and cannot be sold.) Moreover, in cooperation with the National Environmental Authority (ANAM), the resort has



A restaurant of the Gamboa Rainforest Resort is anchored in the wild beauty of the Chagres River.

Photo by Hana Ayala.

pledged to conserve 100 hectares of rain forest in the buffer zone of Soberania National Park, where a resort-built aerial tram offers a kilometer-long, guided educational experience of the rain-forest canopy. As a result of those strategic partnerships, the Gamboa Rainforest Resort is having a positive effect well beyond the boundary of the property itself. The resort's economic and conservation influences correspond to the TCR's benefit zones¹³ (including employing local workers, as explained later) and will be available to the resort's guests.

Staging area. In an effort to maximize the value of the benefit zones and, simultaneously, to fashion the resort itself into a heritage product, the resort's grounds are being transformed into a staging area for destination-experience management. This effort is highlighted by a series of exhibits, which aim at top-quality scientific interpretation and are being developed as gateways to the discovery, enjoyment, and appreciation of the area's unique heritage. These interpretive tools

include diverse exhibits on local wildlife and ecology, Panama Canal history (showing how the oceans were bridged and the influence of the canal and trans-isthmus railroad on Panama's heritage), and a model Embera Indian village.

Embera village. The model Embera village is constructed to traditional standards of an indigenous village by the Embera people themselves, who will be invited to produce and sell their handicrafts there and thus benefit from the tourist trade without having intrusions into their nearby village.

Complementing the exhibits is a web of exploration- and learning-focused excursions by land and water. Water-based trips on the Chagres River and into the canal's Gatun Lake are offered from the resort's marina—including an after-dark crocodile safari.

The investment. The resort's principal TCR-related investments are as follows: \$3.5 million has been invested in an ongoing inventory of the area's biodiversity and the development of interpretive trails and exhibits (including the aerial tram).

¹³ Ayala, February 2000, pp. 108-119.

Panama's "Resort University" and Scientific Village

At the end of May 1999, 30 participants graduated from the first six-week seminar for heritage-tourism guides, which was hosted by the Gamboa Rainforest Resort and STRI, cosponsored by the National Secretariat for Science, Technology, and Innovation (SENACYT), IPAT, City of Knowledge, GreenCom, and USAID; and involving experts in environmental communication training from the University of Idaho and Australia's Royal



These students and professors participated in the first Guide Training Program for Panama Heritage Tourism, which was hosted by the Gamboa Rainforest Resort and the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute.

Melbourne Institute of Technology. All 30 participants were accommodated at the resort's Scientific Village, and the training sessions (offered in addition to field trips) took place at STRI's research facility at Gamboa. Of the 30 initial participants, 13 were members of the indigenous Embera community and recipients of a scholarship offered by the resort. More than half of the participants have remained with the resort.

This was the first of a series of courses that the resort is prepared to sponsor and promote in conjunction with STRI, with an emphasis on training and employing indigenous guides. As with the first seminar, STRI will be in charge of designing the courses while the hotel will provide the facilities. Courses will be offered for entry-level and advanced-level positions, in a systematic effort to train interested workers in quality heritage-experience management. The advancement and sharing of knowledge will go on hand-in-hand all year round, becoming a distinctive signature of the Gamboa Rainforest Resort.—H.A.

Photo by Lidia Mann.



From left to right: STRI's director Ira Rubinoff, author Hana Ayala, and Rodrigo Tarte, academic director of the City of Knowledge.

Another \$500,000 has been earmarked for the construction of a sewage plant and for planning and design measures to protect the resort's trees. In addition, as of mid-December 1999, \$150,000 was spent to train and hire people from the local Embera community. The resort's policy of preferential employment for indigenous people, Gamboa residents, and others from surrounding communities goes beyond the context of the TCR commitment. About 36 indigenous men and women are employed by the resort as construction workers, guides, and gardeners, and others are being trained for jobs that will be available with the opening and operation of all of the resort's guest rooms and other facilities.

The STRI partnership. Under a precedent-setting agreement between the resort and STRI (formalized on January 12, 2000), Smithsonian scientists are directing the scientific development and presentation of the resort's exhibits. STRI administers and is the custodian of those exhibits, and will carry out research on the resort's property. The cost of developing the exhibits is paid by the resort, while STRI provides for the exhibits' concept design and management.

These exhibits will continuously change in response to ongoing research. Guests may witness discoveries in the making, even before the findings are published. At the same time the resort is prepared to ensure the exhibits' worth as true laboratories; therefore, if need be, an exhibit may be closed partially or entirely for a day or more for exclusive use by scientists.

Through this unusual alliance both parties are committed to advancing the cause of scientific research, conservation, and environmental education in the area of Gamboa through a series of joint endeavors. For example, the resort

will sponsor STRI scientific internships. Under the guidance of STRI staff members, interns will work on projects that enhance their professional development as well as on interpretative projects that are useful to the resort (e.g., the science-based exhibits). The resort also will promote among its guests and visitors a coordinated voluntary-donation program to benefit STRI.

Capacity building. The agreement also paved the way for the expansion of an existing educational activity, the Guide Training Program for Panama Heritage Tourism, the first course of which already took place at the resort's Scientific Village (see accompanying box on page 46). Adjacent to the main resort complex, this *Villa Científica* consists of 25 villas with 86 one- and two-bedroom tropical wooden apartments built in 1930s' "Canal Town" architectural style. Two of these refurbished villas have been dedicated for exclusive use by STRI, to accommodate visiting scientists.

The resort also plans to pursue agreements with universities from around the world. The goal is to encourage a flow of research projects, guest lectures, and other activities to further enhance in value the area's heritage resources while expanding the guests' choice of educational activities. Special attention will be paid to the complementary influences among STRI's research activities, guide-training courses, and the studies and lectures by visiting professors, students, and other scientists.

A guided tour offered by the Gamboa Rainforest Resort takes guests along one of Panama's 23 heritage routes,¹⁴ the Route of the Treasures of the Americas, to another TCR partner hotel, the Canopy Tower.

¹⁴ For a description of Panama's 23 heritage routes, see: Hana Ayala (February 2000).

Canopy Tower

This "eco lodge" rises above the heart of the semi-deciduous rain forest of Soberania National Park, which provides habitat for more than 300 bird species throughout the year. This unusual hotel is a former U.S. Air Force radar installation.¹⁵ It offers a stunning, 360-degree view from its top-floor observation platform—overlooking the rain-forest canopy to the Panama Canal's Pacific entrance, for instance, and the Culebra Cut, the narrowest stretch of the canal.

When I first introduced this TCR project and the visionary behind it,¹⁶ I was presenting a dream that had not yet materialized. I unveiled pledges shaped by discussions that the Canopy Tower's president, Raul Arias de Para, and I had over how best to strengthen this steel structure's new life as a guardian and benefactor of a precious heritage reservoir.

The product. Now, this up-and-running resort project is all about that dream come true. It is about a distinctive blend of hospitality, interpretation, and tangible benefits for conservation, research, and local communities. The Canopy Tower's seven rooms (each with a private bath and a direct view into the surrounding rain forest); its upper floor with a dining area, library, and hammocks hung so as to take advantage of the breathtaking panorama; and its open-air observation deck that affords bird's eye vistas of the entire area offer guests incredible visual and acoustical experiences. The rain only enhances the magic of this singular, ever-changing experience of being quite literally in the middle

¹⁵ This USAF radar tower is one of many military installations that, together with more than 80,000 acres of rain forest in the former Canal Zone, reverted to Panamanian control by December 31, 1999, in accordance with the 1977 Panama Canal Treaty.

¹⁶ Ayala (October 1998), pp. 77, 79.

of multiple layers of the rain-forest canopy, and among its many animal and bird inhabitants. This unusual eco-resort provides an unforgettable, irreproducible experience without harming a single leaf.

The rewards. Not surprisingly, this exclusive lodge has already attracted worldwide attention.¹⁷ According to *Travel & Leisure* magazine, this former U.S. radar tower outside Panama City is one of Latin America's most talked-about places to stay.¹⁸ In the fall of 1999 *Audubon* magazine identified "the world's ultimate outposts" from among the hundreds of so-called eco-lodges that have sprung up in tropical jungles, cloud forests, savannas, and other wilderness settings around the world.¹⁹ The Canopy Tower was one of those chosen. In selecting the finest, *Audubon* measured the eco-resorts' ability to prove that nature-based tourism is not just good for business but also good for the environment, the native population, and the native culture as well.

The difference. Writing about this particular TCR project fills me with joy and gratitude. Raul Arias de Para has been one of the most fervent supporters of my vision for

¹⁷ Media coverage of the Canopy Tower has been extensive. For example, see: "Bird Watchers on a Flight Path to Paradise," *Financial Times*, February 27, 1999; "In Panama, Change of Heart," *St. Petersburg Times*, June 6, 1999; "Panama Converting Canal Zone for Tourism," *New York Times*, August 29, 1999; "Ein Mann Sieht Grün," *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), December 21, 1999; "Panama Plans to Turn Bases into Hotels for Ecotourists," *Wall Street Journal*, January 11, 2000; "Birdman of Panama," *Architecture*, April 1999; "Beyond the Zone," *Outside*, September 1999; "Panama's Rite of Passage," *National Geographic*, November 1999; "Panama 2000," *Condé Nast Traveller* (U.K.), December 1999; and "Panama on Its Own," *Civilization*, December-January 2000. Television coverage has included: Jim Lehrer's News Hour (PBS), ABC Nightly News, and CBS Nightly News.

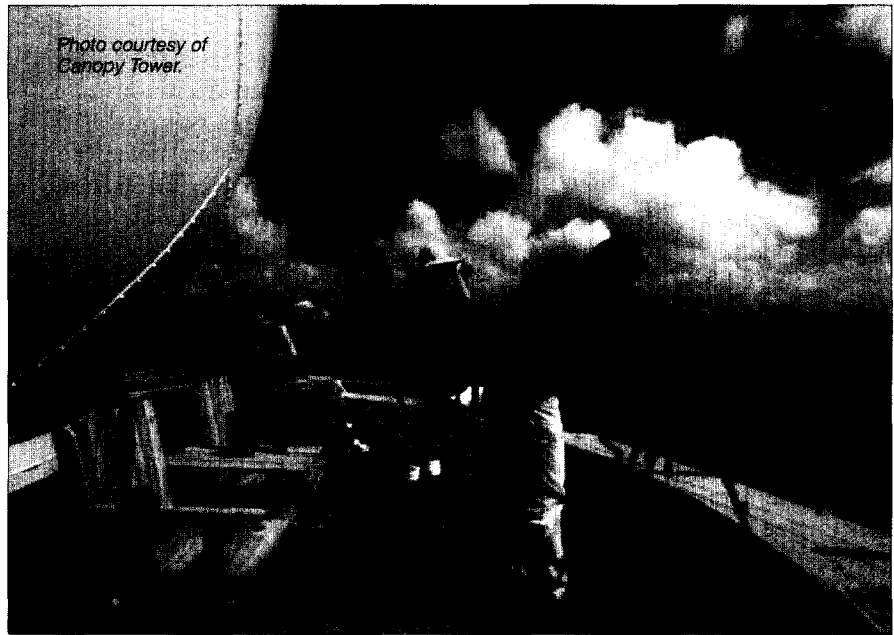
¹⁸ Kimberly Brown, "The Ultimate Army Surplus," *Travel & Leisure*, December 1999, pp. 124-125.

¹⁹ Alex Markels, "The World's Ultimate Outposts," *Audubon*, September-October 1999, pp. 111-114.

Making Research in the Canopy a Reality

The Canopy Tower is uniquely positioned to facilitate scientific exploration because it can provide unparalleled visual access to the world of the rarely explored rain-forest canopy. Indeed, that is already happening. In the fall of 1999 the hotel conducted a monitoring program of three species of raptors that fly over the Isthmus of Panama in their annual southern migration: Broad-winged Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, and Turkey Vulture. Virtually the entire North American populations of these species, numbering millions of birds, pass through Panama en route from their breeding grounds in North America to their wintering grounds in South America. One of the objectives of the study, which is a continuation of a project begun in 1998 by STRI and Clemson University, is to determine the importance of the canal zone's forest areas as overnight roosting sites for these migratory raptors.

The actual bird count was done—with the Canopy Tower's sponsorship of some \$3,000—by expert bird-watchers from the Panama Audubon Society and students and instructors from the University of Panama. The results were compiled and made available to organizations in the United States that monitor this natural phenomenon. This program of monitoring hawk migrations, which the hotel intends to carry out every year, is just one of several initiatives to benefit science and education that entails providing complimentary lodging for visiting scientists and expert birders (at a cost this far of some \$4,000).—H.A.



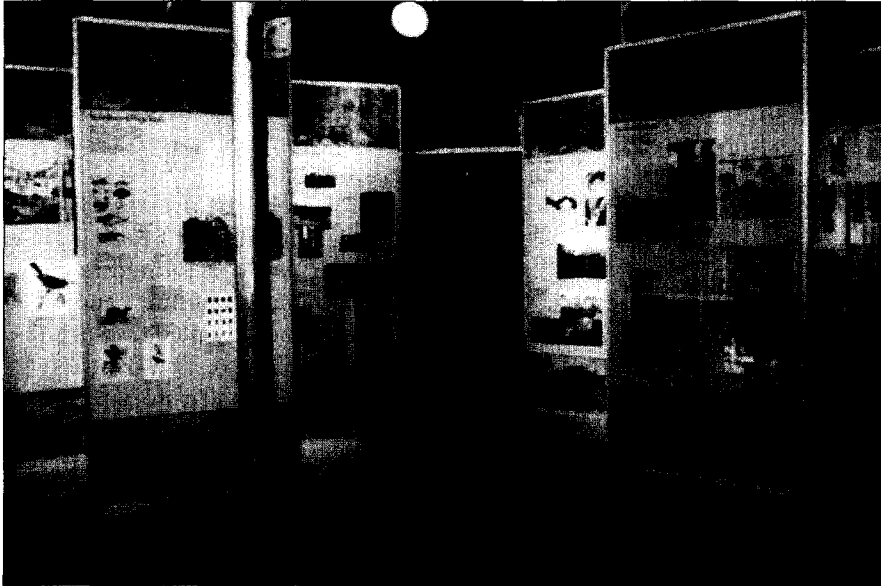
The Canopy Tower's observation platform may well be the world's best spot for bird-watching.

unlocking the hotel industry's potential to become a leading patron of conservation and research, not only for humanitarian reasons but because it makes good business sense.²⁰ When I asked him to put a dollar amount on his TCR commitment, Arias wrote to me: "I had been spending, investing is a better word, all these funds—convinced it was a good business decision, more so than a contribution to conservation. This goes to show you that the synergy between the business of tourism, conservation, and scientific research is real indeed!"

²⁰Raul Arias de Para—who has been a banker, politician, and real-estate developer—was instrumental in coordinating the inaugural presentation of the TCR Action Plan's pilot hotel portfolio at an international conference in December 1998 (see: "TCR Portfolio of Projects," in *TCR Strategic Alliance: Tourism—Conservation—Research—A Report from the Conference on "Heritage Tourism for the Next Millennium"* and its Symposium on "The Challenge of Experience-Management: Linking Quality with Sustainability," ed. Marina S. Ratchford [Washington, DC: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1999], pp. 49–60; for Raul Arias de Para's presentation, see pp. 57–58). His passionate and intuitively business-smart love of nature has been an inspiration to many of us involved in TCR projects.

With an investment of only \$1,500 (as of January 2000), the hotel developed an educational botanical trail. An additional \$8,000 was spent on the maintenance and security of the Old Plantation Trail. That dirt road, which more than 50 years ago led to a cacao plantation owned by the Panama Canal Company, is one of the best areas in Panama for bird-watching and hiking through the rain forest. Moreover, after passing through about four miles of mature forest growth, this path connects to the Cruces Trail.

The hotel's active involvement in the surveillance of the tropical environment of Soberania National Park does not stop at the Old Plantation Trail. The Canopy Tower's own rangers regularly patrol the surrounding forest, thus complementing the efforts of ANAM's few park rangers. For example, the resort's rangers detected a poachers' camp, which was reported to the park authorities, and the culprits were thereafter apprehended. The hotel's rangers also contributed to the res-



STRI has loaned its traveling exhibit "Parting the Green Curtain: The Evolution of Tropical Biology in Panama" to the Canopy Tower. The exhibit has been installed on a semi-permanent basis on the resort's ground floor.

cue, on three different occasions, of several tourists who had gotten lost in the forest.

Four individuals from communities adjacent to the park are employed by the hotel. Two of them are illegal-hunters-turned-guides. As Arias emphasizes, their absence from poaching activities means the survival of countless deer, pacas, pecaries, and other animals that would otherwise have been killed. As of January the two guides received \$14,100 in wages from the Canopy Tower, which also provided \$2,000 for their training.

Bonding with STRI. STRI has loaned its exhibit on "Parting the Green Curtain: The Evolution of Tropical Biology in Panama" to the Canopy Tower. The exhibit has been installed, on a semi-permanent basis, on the resort's ground floor, with the set-up cost of \$500 contributed by the hotel. Since its creation in 1989, the exhibit has been displayed in several cities and universities in Brazil, as well as in Argentina, Peru, Mexico, and Costa Rica.

The exhibit's panels have proven their ability to draw international interest and, combined with the original and authentic features of the Canopy Tower's heritage product, constitute a distinct attraction for visitors and tourists. These panels describe a broad spectrum of topics that are related to the real experiences awaiting the Tower's guests—such as "Evolution of Tropical Biology," "Dynamics of Tropical Forests," "Armies of the Forest Floor," "Browsers in the Tree Tops," and "Caring for the Tropics." In his introduction to the panels, STRI's George Angehr writes:

Life on Earth is at its most extravagant in the tropics. Diversity is the hallmark here; it peaks in the luxuriant rain forest and the labyrinths of the coral reef. With warmth and moisture combining to provide a prolific nursery, nearly uncountable plant and animal species have developed intricate relationships of exquisite complexity—predation and parasitism, attack and defense, competition and cooperation... but tropical nature is not only a key to scientific understanding. It is also an invaluable storehouse for undiscovered medicines, foods, and other

resources, and its teeming exotic life is a source of wonder and delight. Protection of this legacy for future generations must be a pressing concern for humanity.

Indeed, protection of that legacy is a concern for the Canopy Tower, too, as underscored by the hotel's initial investment in excess of \$33,000 in the TCR partnership—an impressive sum for an operation with just seven rooms. Moreover, the Canopy Tower's efforts are complementary with those of the nearby Gamboa Rainforest Resort, which shares some of Panama's heritage trails and, of course, a great concern for protecting the canal's watershed and its rain forests.

Panama City

There's a role for urban centers, too, in the TCR concept. For example, with its international airport, Panama City is the principal point of entry for international travelers. This capital city's cultural and natural heritage represent important links in several of Panama's TCR Heritage Routes. The city's hotels, which now cater nearly exclusively to business travelers, can become the gateways to conservation- and science-promoting heritage itineraries. Among the city hotels that have expressed an interest in the TCR Action Plan, the Bristol Panama well illustrates this premise.

The Bristol Panama

Speaking at the TCR Action Plan's first international conference in Panama, I described the ruins of *Panama Viejo* ("Old Panama") as an opportunity for a TCR partnership that could generate substantial leisure tourism while also preserving an important historical site.²¹ During the closing session of the conference, top officials from The

²¹ Hana Ayala, "A Bridge to the Millennium: The Ideal and the Promise of a Heritage-driven Economy," in *TCR Strategic Alliance: Tourism—Conservation—Research*, pp. 13–20.



The elegant Bristol (above; photo courtesy of The Bristol) and, below, a view of its beneficiary—Panama Viejo, the oldest Spanish settlement on the Pacific (photo by Hana Ayala).



Bristol stepped forward to pledge their support for developing conservation and research projects at Old Panama.

The asset. *Panama Viejo* (also known as *Panama la Vieja* and now a part of Panama City) was founded by conquistador Pedrarias Davila in 1519, making it the oldest Spanish settlement on the Pacific. Its location at one end of the road that led to Portobello, on the Atlantic side of the isthmus, gave *Panama Viejo* stra-

tegic commercial significance. It is estimated that by the middle of the seventeenth century its population had climbed to 10,000—a formidable figure for colonial Spanish America.

In 1671 the city was destroyed by English pirate Sir Henry Morgan and was never rebuilt. The settlement's cathedral, which was built in the early 1600s, is the Old City's best-preserved building. Moreover, the extensive complex of

ruined buildings and ancient infrastructure that is exposed adjacent to the modern city is of great historical significance and, as such, is now a historic site under government protection.

The hotel. The five-star Bristol Panama, a member of Leading Hotels of the World, is located in the heart of Panama's business and financial district. By pledging to preserve *Panama Viejo*, The Bristol's owner, Alberto Vallarino; its director, Fernando Duque; and the hotel's managers can mobilize the resources and influence wielded by its guests toward research-guided heritage conservation—to the benefit of all Panamanians and visitors.

The partnership. To achieve its goals, The Bristol signed a cooperation agreement (*convenio*) with the Old Panama Foundation, official caretaker of *Panama Viejo*. The bulk of The Bristol's contribution will take place directly at the hotel. This "in-house" component includes an annual gala dinner for the foundation and its supporters; courtesy accommodations for archaeologists, historians, and other experts, and for both national and international corporate and individual donors; free facilities for press conferences to announce the foundation's important achievements; and the wide distribution of those news reports to all media, at the hotel's expense. In return, hotel employees and guests will enjoy archaeological displays in the lobby and guided tours of the site conducted by the foundation's archaeologists and technical personnel. The hotel's support will be systematically acknowledged in all promotional events and other activities of the foundation.

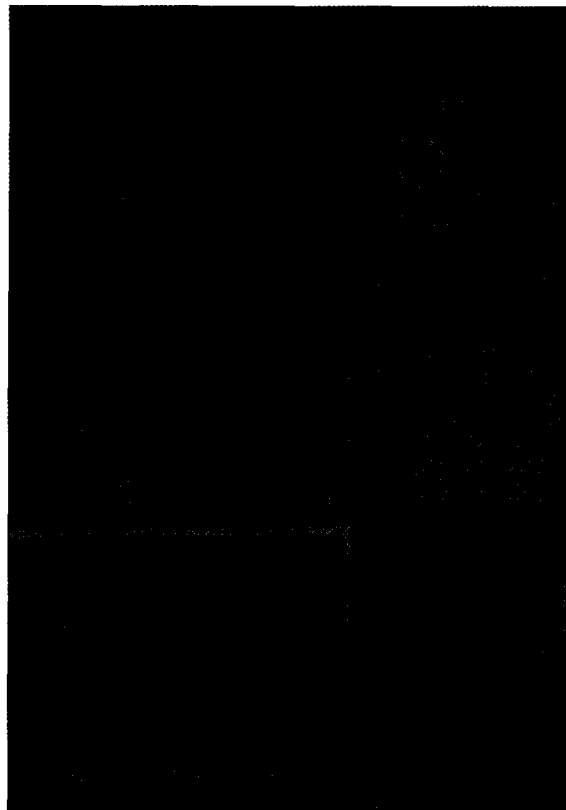
The rules and the stakes. In the TCR model, patronage of a heritage resource does not imply that a hotel has any ownership rights or decision-making power

over that resource. What a sponsoring hotel gains is the prestige of contributing to protect a natural or cultural legacy—the type of prestige that can be turned into market appeal. Moreover, patronage enables the hotel actively to participate in ensuring the viability of the attractions that motivate prospective guests. The hotel also gains the opportunity to be intimately associated with the heritage asset, and to enhance its stature in the eyes of the public with each and every conservation accomplishment or scientific breakthrough of which the hotel is an integral part. An example of how this works is provided by the Miramar Inter-Continental Panama.

Miramar Inter-Continental Panama

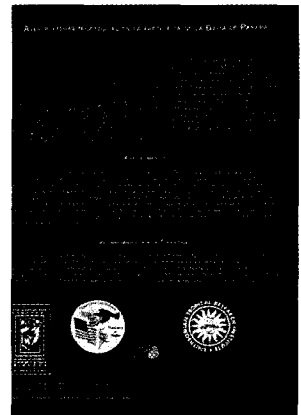
When I first reported on the Miramar Inter-Continental's endorsement of the TCR Action Plan, I emphasized the flagship nature of the hotel's pledge to protect an exceptional ecosystem that stretches eastward for over 70 kilometers from Panama City along the country's Pacific coast.²² The targeted area is a wetland habitat of mangroves and mud flats that is visited by over 80 percent of the shorebirds that migrate from North America. The Miramar joined in an international, multi-institutional effort to bring worldwide recognition and protection to those wetlands and was an enthusiastic partner at an early stage of this task.²³ The goal is to get this special site, dubbed the Bayano wetlands, placed on the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance (as explained later).

Tangible benefits. By now the Miramar's owner, Herman Bern,



An attractive display (left) in Miramar's executive club spells out the resort's pledge to help safeguard the region's wetland ecosystem.

Below, the Miramar sponsored the Spanish translation of a booklet on migrant shorebirds and their threatened habitat. The English-language guide was produced by the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary.



former general manager Louis Philippe, and current general manager Glen Champion have demonstrated that a hotel's support can energize a conservation effort through more than just financial contributions.

The Miramar has been donating \$500 per month to the Panama Audubon Society (a chapter of the National Audubon Society), which coordinates the team effort to protect the Bayano wetlands, with a special emphasis on the critical 30 kilometers of wetlands adjacent to Panama City. "Will Panama's extraordinary bird-migration spectacle endure?," asks a joint Audubon-Miramar brochure—produced in both Spanish and English and sponsored by the Miramar—which appeals for additional donations for the shared cause.

The hotel also paid to translate into Spanish a richly illustrated booklet on the shorebirds of the

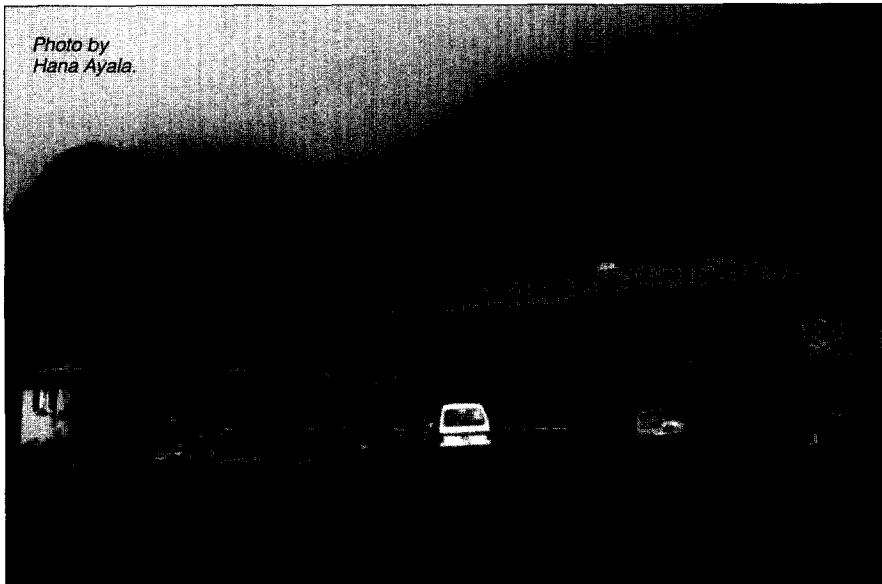
Upper Bay of Panama, the original English version of which was prepared by the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William & Mary. The booklet and the overall conservation-cum-research plan for the Ramsar-site-to-be were formally unveiled last July at a dinner for 200 invited guests and hosted by the Miramar. The Audubon Society's members, STRI's scientists, business leaders, students, and nature lovers intermingled at this celebratory event, which was heavily covered by local media.²⁴

I'm convinced that the fact that this event took place on the premises and under the auspices of the prestigious Miramar Inter-

²² Ayala (October 1998), pp. 70–74.

²³ Working together toward this goal are the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William & Mary, Panama Audubon Society, ANAM, STRI, *Fundacion Natura*, Legacy Program of the U.S. Department of Defense, and the Miramar Inter-Continental Panama.

²⁴ "An Extraordinary Conference" boasted a full-page article in *El Panama America* newspaper, which called the conference an extraordinary cultural, scientific, and tourist event. See: Andres Villa, "Una Conferencia Extraordinaria," *El Panama America*, July 28, 1999, p. c4.



Hotel Campestre, a midprice country inn, opened in 1945 as a "luxury mountain resort." Today it is investing in and building toward becoming a patron of wild-orchid conservation and purveyor of cultivated orchids (the proceeds from which will fund more research and conservation measures). For example, the hotel financed and sponsors an interpretive trail, which starts at the hotel and immediately heads into the nearby forest. The trail ends on the hotel's grounds at a building that is being refurbished to house an orchid research and "in vitro" reproduction laboratory and exhibit. The resort is situated in the crater of an extinct volcano ringed by a mountainous panorama and packed with vegetation, petroglyph sites, an Indian market, and a museum with pre-Columbian artifacts and other historical items.

Continental had a lot to do with the impressive guest list and media coverage. The hotel's involvement has been an important factor in raising the private sector's and the general public's awareness of the great economic and conservation value of Panama's wetlands and of the research that is urgently needed to protect those resources.

The Miramar is at the forefront of an effort to develop a management plan built on consensus and teamwork for the wetlands of the Upper Bay of Panama. In December 1999 the Miramar arranged for a meeting involving some of its own managers and the leaders of the Panama Audubon Society, ANAM, and *Fundacion Natura*.²⁵ The participants were unanimous in their

²⁵ *Fundacion Natura* is a Panama-based, non-profit organization, the purpose of which is to advance environmental knowledge, to promote conservation, and to contribute to the sustainable development of Panama. This foundation is also the beneficiary of a \$25-million ecological trust fund (FIDECO) established in Panama with donations from the Government of Panama, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Nature Conservancy. Using the earnings from the FIDECO fund, *Fundacion Natura* awards grants to researchers and others, thereby providing a permanent source of financing to support the conservation of natural resources and the protection of the environment in the Republic of Panama.

endorsement of the plan and in a commitment to work together to ensure the success of this plan and of its next stage, which may also involve the Canadian International Development Agency. This follow-up stage will include a sociological analysis of the local communities to determine how best to organize a community-based ecotourism project on the Bayano River. A management plan for the entire wetland, stretching from Panama City to the Rio de la Maestra, will then cap the multi-stage team effort.

Ramsar wetlands. Finally, there is an opportunity for Panama and the Miramar to influence conservation and win followers far beyond Panama's borders. Panama's City of Knowledge will be the seat of a Ramsar Regional Center for Training and Research about Occidental Hemisphere's Wetlands. Within the Americas, 23 countries are signatory members of the Ramsar Convention; however, less than half of those countries have active management plans for their wetlands. The City of Knowledge, in partnership with the Miramar and representatives of the international hotel industry, could use this regional center to spread the hotel-sponsored Bayano wetland model in additional important settings, for example, in Venezuela's Llanos, Belize's coral reefs, and Florida's Everglades.

Hotel Campestre

Lorenzo Hincapie, the owner of Hotel Campestre, is also president of the *Fundacion Natura*'s board of trustees. A passionate believer in the TCR partnership and a supporter of the TCR Action Plan since its conception, Hincapie is developing a heritage product that, like the Miramar's, has the potential to inspire international action while nourishing conservation, research, and sustainable development in Panama.

The setting and the hotel.

Hotel Campestre is situated in the Anton Valley—the crater of an extinct volcano ringed by a mountainous panorama and packed with vegetation, petroglyph sites, a well-known Indian handicrafts market, a museum stocked with pre-Columbian artifacts, and a host of other attractions. The hotel itself has a distinct ambience. This midprice country inn, which opened in 1945 as a “luxury mountain resort” and christened Hotel Pan-Americano, still captivates guests with its rustic flair.

At 800 meters above sea level, the area is pleasantly cool, making the valley’s verdant forests a must-see destination for wild-orchid lovers. About two years ago, on my way to this hotel, I stopped at the market. There I saw a wide variety of wild orchids for sale, fresh from the forest and for a mere dollar apiece. At that moment the purpose of my trip was redefined.

I immediately switched gears and approached Hincapie and the hotel’s general manager, Ricardo Arango, with a bold proposal: To distinguish the Hotel Campestre as a patron of wild-orchid conservation. Moreover, I added, it should be done through educational tourism, research, and local people’s training and employment in heritage interpretation and orchid cultivation. These men embraced the idea.

The action plan. The Hotel Campestre’s orchid-protection program now is well under way, and is being carried out as a TCR pilot project. A major component of this transformation is an interpretive trail, starting at the hotel and immediately plunging into a mosaic of forest environments through which it winds, offering visitors endless opportunities to relax, to learn, or to contemplate. This path is being developed as an educational discovery trip across an ecosystem rich in

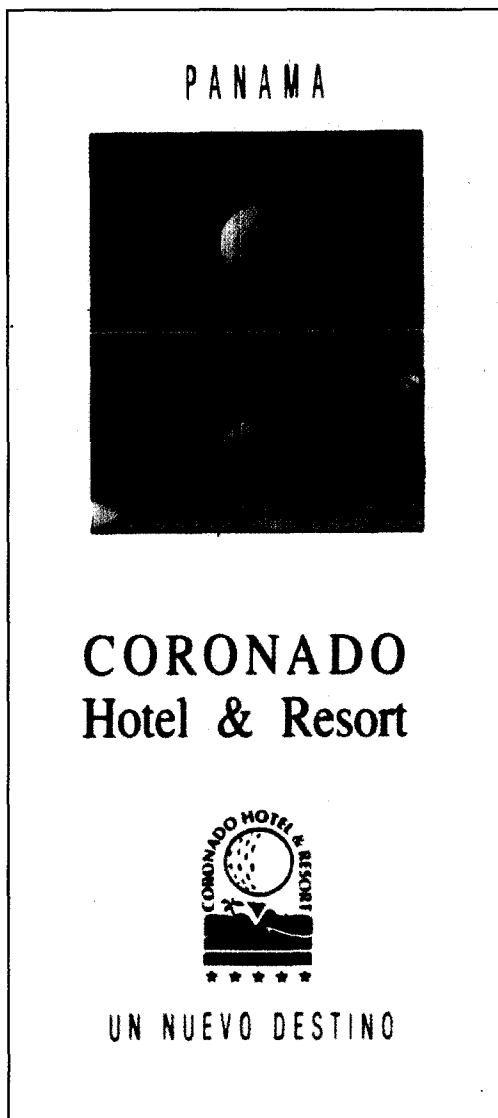
native plant and animal life—including wild orchids, wondrous “square trees” unique to the area, and a great variety of birds and butterflies. It is being further enriched with additional specimens of native orchids and other indigenous plants, at the cost of \$6,000 to the hotel. The hotel is also investing \$7,000 to prepare the trail for visitor use with minimal intrusion into the natural environment, and another \$4,000 in an exhibit of frogs native to the area.

The trail ends on the hotel’s grounds at a building that will be refurbished to house an orchid research and “in vitro” reproduction laboratory and exhibit, complete with a display of cultivated orchids for sale, the proceeds from which will fuel more research and conservation measures. Hincapie estimates that it will cost the hotel \$100,000 to complete this project. His goal is to devise the orchid laboratory, orchid exhibit, and frog exhibit under the guidance of STRI’s scientists and then invite STRI actively to use those facilities on the basis of reciprocity of benefits, similar to the Gamboa model. To achieve that objective, an agreement to formalize such a strategic partnership between Hotel Campestre and STRI is in the works..

A crucial component of Hincapie’s efforts is to involve and benefit as many local people as possible. He has chosen a young man from the local community to help him in that effort, Roberto Muñoz Sedeno, who is now both the hotel’s deputy manager and director of heritage interpretation. Under the hotel’s sponsorship, he will lead and coordinate the training of local men and women for the new jobs that are being generated through the hotel’s transformation into a TCR destination.

Along with ANAM, Hincapie is also exploring the possibility of

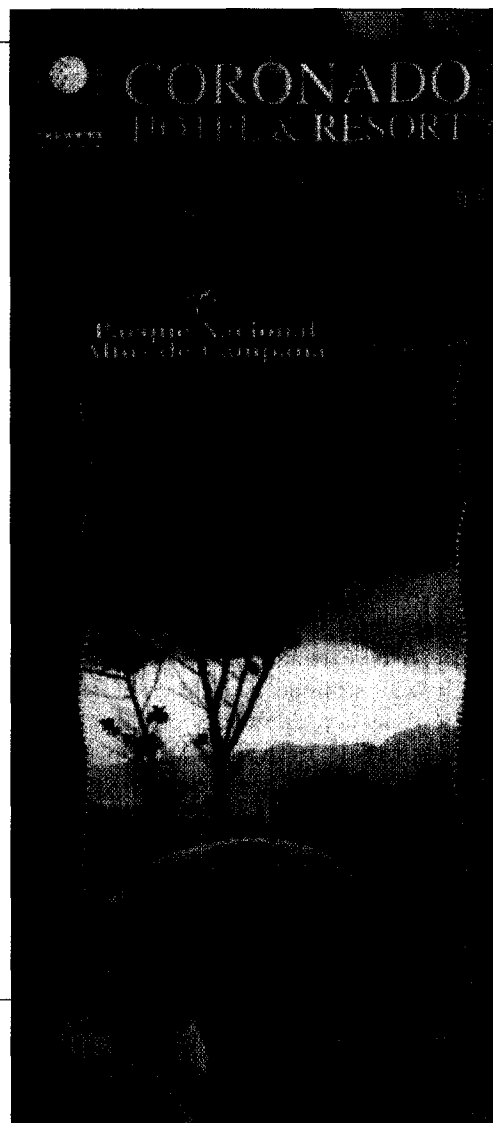
The Hotel Campestre is investing in wild-orchid conservation. It embraces that role through its support and financial contributions to educational tourism, research, and local people’s training and employment.



Coronado Hotel & Resort

◀ Before and After ▶

The Coronado Hotel & Resort has completely recast its image from being a "sun and sand" type of resort to one that has an extraordinary location not too far from a major national park. For example, the resort's new brochures celebrate the nearby national park's beauty and accessibility for hotel guests. As explained in the article, those brochures include wonderful photographs from Altos de Campana, while the accompanying text provides substantial information about the park's geology, topography, climate, hydrology, and life zones.



establishing Cerro Gaital as a protected area. This new sanctuary would comprise a range of forested hills of great scenic beauty and biological diversity, and which form a backdrop for Hotel Campestre. Hincapie envisions yet another educational trail, complementing and further expanding the orchid-conservation theme and likewise with a goal of raising funds for the new protected area's conservation and research.

Hotel Campestre's patronage of wild-orchid conservation promises to change the distinctiveness and market worth of its leisure product.

Yet another example of how a TCR pledge can strikingly change a resort's identity is provided by the Coronado Hotel & Resort.

Coronado Hotel & Resort

Cornell Quarterly readers may recall that this five-star resort is a founding member of the pilot hotel portfolio of the TCR Action Plan for Panama.²⁶ The principal beneficiary of this hotel's TCR participation is Altos de Campana National Park, with its largely treeless slopes facing the Pacific. The park's Pacific-view

landscape stands in sharp contrast to the lavishly green, forest-carpeted Atlantic slopes, a comparison that some travelers will be happy to note. In addition, Altos de Campana National Park constitutes one of the richest reservoirs of Panama's biodiversity.

Altos de Campana already has excellent interpretive trails developed by STRI and complemented by a STRI-written guide to enhance the educational experience. STRI, therefore, is the perfect ally for the Coronado Hotel & Resort.

By now an agreement between STRI and the Coronado is being

²⁶ Ayala (October 1998), pp. 74-75.

developed that will formalize the commitment of the hotel's owner, Roberto Eisenmann, Jr., to sponsor a scholarship program for scientists and students to conduct research within the park. Moreover, together with the park's administrators and in cooperation with ANAM and IPAT, the hotel will fund improvements to the park's overall interpretive "infrastructure," including signs and look-out areas.

The new Coronado. The 15 kilometers separating the Coronado Hotel and Resort from Altos de Campana National Park and Biological Reserve are virtually nonexistent due to the bond that the hotel has forged with the park. For example, the hotel's new brochures celebrate the park's beauty and accessibility for hotel guests. Those brochures include striking photographs of the beauty and colors of Altos de Campana's landscapes and inhabitants, while the text provides substantial information about the park's geology, topography, climate, hydrology, and life zones. For example, one brochure describes how the park's mountain range is an important zone of convergence and transition of the flora and fauna of North, Central, and South America.

The Coronado's guests are made aware of the park's proximity and are invited to experience the area for themselves. The invitation explains how the hotel is part of the Tourism-Conservation-Research Action Plan, how the plan is working to promote heritage tourism in cooperation with scientists and researchers, and how those scientists and researchers will help the guest understand Panama's biological and cultural heritage.

An appeal to contribute US\$5 to the "Fund for the Development and Conservation of the Altos de Campana National Park and Biological Reserve" is presented to the guest as an opportunity to take part

Looking beyond Panama to the Amazon

While savoring the natural spectacle of the Chagres River from the site of the Gamboa Rainforest Resort, I cannot help thinking about the future of the Amazon ecosystem. Twice before I have touched upon the subject in *Cornell Quarterly*.¹ The Amazon forest is viewed as Latin America's strongest card to attract funding and expertise for world-class research that would enhance the regional economy. Yet the importance of scientists' involvement for satisfying leisure travelers' growing demand for authenticity and learning seems overlooked in the hotel industry's assessment of the Amazon region's potential for tourism development. The science and hospitality sector's perspectives aside, an ecotourism megaproject is now being launched jointly by the Government of Brazil and the Inter-American Development Bank to protect the Amazon ecosystem through tourist appreciation. Nevertheless, these initiatives and assessments ought to be integrated. The magnitude and urgency of the task of protecting the Amazon basin's heritage calls for a bold approach that gives special attention to motivating the international hotel industry to capitalize on the Amazon's spectacular potential to provide heritage experiences that cannot be replicated anywhere else in the world. The TCR model identifies investment in conservation and scientific research as essential tools for enhancing the competitive strength of hotels and hotel industries that cater to heritage-centered tourism. The unique combination of a world-renowned resource base and the world-class discoveries this base is guaranteed to generate make the Amazon an attractive opportunity for those hotel projects that are prepared to build a competitive edge through the conservation and research value of the resources that they easily could sponsor within their benefit zones.

In the Amazon region, the viability and sustainability of a tourism-driven economy will depend on tourism professionals' ability to include the region's many superlative—but ecologically and culturally sensitive—heritage resources in the very definition of the local tourism product, without subjecting them to tourist traffic and, also, without depriving them of the benefits of the industry's sponsorship. The TCR model transforms this challenge into a business opportunity, on the premise that a major component of the "tourism, conservation, and research" values of any heritage resource is its belonging to the natural and cultural identity of an area or region. Consequently, a heritage-focused hotel project can gain a great deal of competitive strength through interpretation-mediated "borrowing" of landscapes and cultural sites that are related to the nature and culture of the hotel's setting but not necessarily part of the guest's actual travel itinerary.

The South Pacific island region, with its daunting natural and cultural diversity, adds support to this approach and its applicability beyond the Amazon. The *Vaka Moana: Ocean Roads of the Pacific* program, launched within the United Nations World Decade for Cultural Development (1988–1997), draws attention to the historical, cultural, and ecological links among the Pacific peoples and their shared heritage—which includes natural resources, traditions, and all forms of art with the common theme of the sea. Those themed cultural links of tremendous tourist interest and research value greatly complemented the myriad of natural themes that have always pervaded the South Pacific. Together, those themes convey a powerful image of an "ecological theater" that intertwines natural and human ecology and sets the stage for integrating natural and cultural research and interpretation into the competitive strength of the region's tourism product.²—H.A.

¹ See: Ayala (August 1997), p. 40; and Ayala (February 2000), pp. 109, 111.

² Hana Ayala, "The International Resort Industry, Heritage Conservation and Sustainable Development: Towards an Unprecedented Partnership," *Insula—International Journal of Island Affairs*, Year 4, No. 1 (September 1995), pp. 32–47.

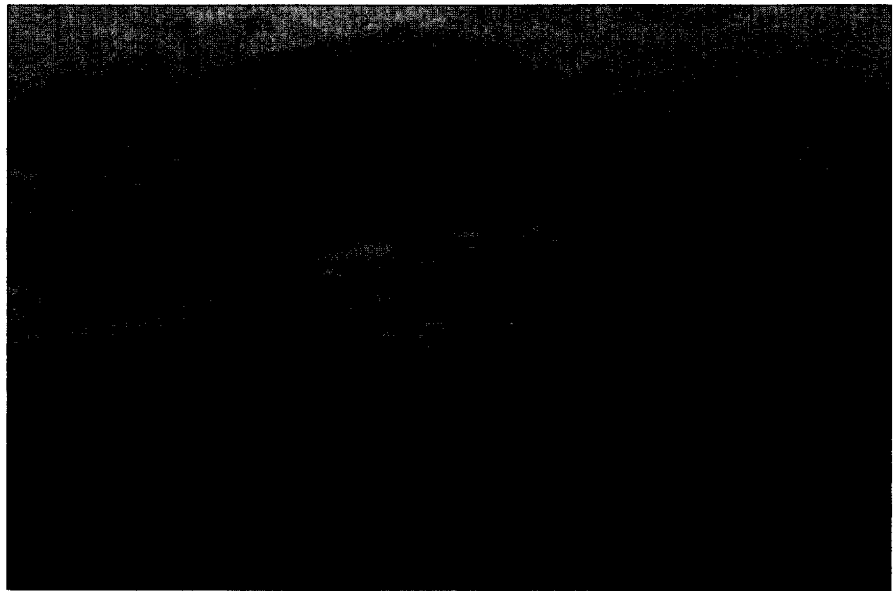
in protecting this important natural refuge. This solicitation comes in many forms: as a note in the hotel's brochure, as a separate leaflet, on a lovely triangle of photographs that adorns the guest suites' tables, and as a page in the hotel's "guest information" book placed in every room. The appeal concludes with the explanation that the guest's voluntary contribution makes the individual a member of the "club" of the park's co-sponsors.

The plea for contributions was introduced in December 1999 and, this far, it has been successful beyond imagination. According to the hotel's administrative director, David Sanchez, 100 percent of the guests have participated.

Owner Eisenmann summarized the Coronado's new mission as follows: "From now on our business effort will be made with a superior national and universal objective as part of a new virtuous circle: hospitality—knowledge—tourism—research—conservation."²⁷ He has been a generous supporter of the TCR philosophy since I first unveiled it in Panama, and I wish to acknowledge that with gratitude.

Eisenmann is keen to capitalize on his hotel's prime location on the prominent cultural route *Camino Real*, along which were established the principal colonial settlements in Panama. The site now known as Coronado was also a rest stop on the ancient trans-isthmian routes of contraband, and still thousands of years earlier supported settlements of native Americans who migrated between the two continents. Eisenmann hopes to extend his hotel's beneficial influence to the archaeological, historical, ethnic, and cultural dimensions of the national heritage because of the possibilities this approach introduces for creating

²⁷ Roberto Eisenmann, Jr., "Coronado Hotel & Resort," in *TCR Strategic Alliance: Tourism-Conservation-Research*, pp. 49–50.



Posada del Cerro la Vieja is participating in the conservation of a regional biological corridor (photo by Alfonso Jaen/Posada del Cerro La Vieja).

employment in the most economically marginal settlements.

This is an issue close to Roberto Eisenmann's heart. As an adviser to Panama's President Mireya Moscoso on the country's social agenda, he has given a tremendous boost to the TCR Action Plan through his belief that quality tourism that sells enlightenment and genuine experiences may be the most effective means of overcoming poverty in some communities. Alfonso Jaen, owner of the Posada del Cerro La Vieja, shares this belief.

Posada del Cerro La Vieja

Built in the style of spacious old-country homes, the Posada del Cerro La Vieja sits high in the mountain range of the Cordillera Central. Nine major rivers originate near the hotel; from there they flow either to the Pacific or Caribbean oceans. Both oceans can be viewed from a nearby peak. The attractions accessible to guests include an "ecological spa," petroglyphs, a waterfall, and a hike and riverboat crossing to the Caribbean, as well as an abundance of birds, insects, butterflies, and other tropical-forest wildlife.

This area is an integral part of the Meso-American Biological Corridor, known also as *Paseo Pantera* (Path of the Panther), which comprises an interconnected network of wildlife corridors that span from Panama's Darien rain forest to the Maya Forest of Southern Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala.

The fragility of a singular region. STRI's Anthony Coates praises *Paseo Pantera* as the most imaginative pledge to biodiversity conservation ever made by a country or a group of countries. But he also warns about the terrifying rate at which Central America's forests are being cut down—88 acres per hour; about how many conservation "rules" are incompatible with the lifestyle of the indigenous people who inhabit the Corridor's parks and reserves; and about the alarming destruction of natural resources and local cultures by peasant farmers—due at least in part to poverty, lack of education, and lack of agricultural knowledge.²⁸ The *Paseo Pantera* project urges the development of

²⁸ *Central America: A Natural and Cultural History*, ed. Anthony Coates (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997).

alternative economies that would mitigate against those threats by mixing ecological tourism, sustainable agriculture, and responsible uses of the natural resources. Alfonso Jaen, owner of Posada del Cerro La Vieja, has come up with an original interpretation of such an alternative economy. In his model, the tourism establishment becomes the engine of a sustainable economy through investment in conservation, research, and community development.

Capacity building. In one year as an active member of the TCR Action Plan, the Posada has invested over \$140,000 to benefit the local peasant communities while protecting an important link of the Meso-American Biological Corridor. Of this total, \$4,700 went into an ongoing program of forest regeneration. In the community of Vaquilla, the hotel made an initial investment of \$25,000 in a project to develop—in coordination with local non-governmental organizations—a “didactic farm for adults,” which will teach sustainable agricultural practices on a seven-hectare parcel. A complementary accommodation facility was built for \$16,000 on the Posada’s property, which is adjacent to the didactic farm. In collaboration with the *Fundacion Natura*, the hotel initiated an agroforestry project that motivates local farmers to cultivate coffee in forested areas—the natural habitat for coffee plants. The shade provided by trees can actually increase productivity by reducing the need for herbicides relative to plantation-grown coffee, making the trees partners in an economically beneficial yet ecologically benign activity. To assess the needs of local communities, a series of seminars attended by the area’s community leaders was organized at the Posada, at a cost to the hotel of \$800 per seminar. Moreover, the Posada has donated \$6,000 and raised an addi-



The peaks of Cordillera Central and other geological formations are easily observed and enjoyed from Posada del Cerro La Vieja (photo by Hana Ayala).

tional \$54,000 for the construction of a church and a meeting hall in the community of Vaquilla. At the Posada’s request, the German Embassy in Panama provided this community with an \$18,000 electric-generating plant. An invited group of students from the University of Buffalo (New York) was hosted by the Posada for a week, during which they engaged in voluntary social service. Finally, the Posada’s managers have earmarked or spent some \$7,000 worth of voluntary work hours on the preparation of grants and proposals to international organizations to request additional funds to supplement the hotel’s own sustainable-development efforts.

As STRI’s Olga Linares put it, the biological corridor took more than 60 million years to develop, and it’s taking less than a century to destroy it.²⁹ But there is hope, and the Posada del Cerro La Vieja has fueled this hope with an initiative that, by itself, will save only a small link of this lifeline; but as an inspiration to other hotels along this grand regional resource, the Posada’s example of success could elevate the entire *Paseo Pantera* to a showcase

²⁹ Olga F. Linares, in: *Central America: A Natural and Cultural History* (Foreword), *op. cit.*, pp. vii-x.

TCR alliance. The exposure and praise that each participating hotel could harvest from such a high-profile success story are obvious.

There Are No National Frontiers to Learning—Japanese proverb

The world over, new hotels and resorts are breaking ground in delicate and information-rich natural and cultural settings. Together, those harbors of hospitality provide an unparalleled system through which research funding and expertise could flow into the developing world, which could inject economic justification into the protection of this planet’s heritage, and which could convert the guardianship of humankind’s most irreplaceable possessions into a thriving job market that benefits the neediest. Those lofty goals converge in an ideal partnership, but there is nothing idealistic about their content. They represent a well-grounded, well-researched, and proven business perspective for a powerful industry that will increasingly be driven by travelers’ thirst for knowledge. It is my hope that the hospitality-science alliance for Panama is just the beginning of a global shift toward a TCR-type model for hospitality development. **CQ**

**Surprising Partners:
Hotel Firms and Scientists
Working Together to
Enhance Tourism**

by Hana Ayala

pp. 42-57

This report is an update of this journal's series of articles on Panama's Tourism-Conservation-Research (TCR) Action Plan. In the current installment, seven participating hotel and resort properties are profiled in terms of their individual TCR projects, their partnerships with other institutions and organizations, and the amount of money that they've invested in the program thus far. The featured hotels are: Canopy Tower, Coronado Hotel & Resort, Gamboa Rainforest Resort, Hotel Campestre, Miramar Inter-Continental, Posada del Cerro La Vieja, and The Bristol Panama. Alliances or partnerships have been formed by one or more of those seven operations with many different organizations, including: STRI (Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute), Panama Audubon Society, Clemson University, Old Panama Foundation, the College of William & Mary, ANAM (Panama's national environmental authority), and Fundacion Natura (a Panama-based, non-profit organization dedicated to advancing environmental knowledge, promoting conservation, and contributing to the sustainable development of Panama). Total investment thus far is in excess of \$4,000,000. Individual projects include, for example, \$3,000 to monitor raptor migrations, \$4,000 in courtesy accommodations for scientists, \$5,000 for forest regeneration, \$16,000 for hiring and training poachers-turned-guides, \$25,000 to set up a "didactic farm" for teaching sustainable agricultural practices, \$100,000 to build an orchid research-and-reproduction laboratory and exhibit, and \$3,500,000 for the ongoing inventory of the area's biodiversity and the development of interpretive trails and exhibits, including an aerial tram.

FOCUS ON RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT

**Diners' Perceptions
of Quality, Value,
and Satisfaction:
A Practical Viewpoint**

by Haemoon Oh

pp. 58-66

A survey of 107 patrons of a fine-dining restaurant indicated that expectations of value to be received is a chief criterion in the decision of where (or whether) to dine out. The study tested the customers' intentions both before the meal and immediately after dining. Respondents answered questions designed to assess the extent to which three factors contributed to the purchase decision, those being quality perception, satisfaction, and value (i.e., what the customers received in exchange for what they gave up). All three have importance in the purchase decision, but compared to value, quality and satisfaction had only modest strength. That does not mean marketing managers should disregard quality, for that appears to be an element of value. Moreover, satisfaction plays a mixed role. While satisfaction does not seem to have a strong effect before the fact, diners rated it as a strong factor immediately after the meal. Apparently that effect fades over time or becomes a part of the customers' value equation (value received for money and time spent). That finding may be a caution to marketers or restaurant managers who judge their success based on exit surveys.

Brief

...