



**The Camp Via Organica Experience  
With Ecosystem Restoration Camps,  
Regeneration International and Via Organica**

**March 3rd-15th, 2019**

**The Handbook**

*“Dear Camper,*

*We live in interesting times. We can see the many ways in which vast numbers of people are suffering in many parts of the world. We can see the materialism, waste, pollution and war. We can also understand that every person and every living thing is endangered by human induced climate change. It has become impossible for us to ignore what is happening. We have been called to act for the benefit of all who are alive and future generations.*

*As individuals, no matter how hard we work, it is not possible to consider restoring the Earth ... but together we are an amazing force and if we so choose we can restore all degraded landscapes wherever they are on the Earth. Restoration needs to be at the centre of human*



*intention. When we collaboratively study how to restore the Earth our lives have real meaning. When we live our lives restoring the Earth we know we are doing what we can to redress many of the mistakes of the past and ensure that future generations will enjoy a fully functional Earth.*

*You are at the heart of this initiative. Congratulations and thank you for choosing to become a camper with Ecosystem Restoration Camps to help restore paradise on earth. We want you to have the best experience restoring with us. We created this handbook to answer most of your questions. Of course if you need any more information, contact one of our staff and they will be more than happy to assist you.*

*Let's go camping and restore the earth!”*

*John D. Liu*

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## Introduction

The Camp Via Organica Experience is a two week, hands on restoration learning journey at the Via Organica Ranch in Guanajuato, Mexico from the 3rd to the 15th of March. This experience will give you the chance to learn about the causes of ecosystem degradation in the area, and the techniques that can be used to regenerate the land. Each morning there will be a workshop on a different regenerative technique that we will then put into practice on the land in the afternoons. There will also be guest speakers coming in to give talks on various regenerative topics, and the chance for you to connect deeply with Mexican culture.

## The Organisations

There are three main organisations involved in this project. They are:

### Ecosystem Restoration Camps



Ecosystem Restoration Camps is a Dutch non-profit foundation that supports camps that act as research and training centres for the restoration of degraded ecosystems. They have been operating since February 2017, with their first camp, Camp Altiplano, training people and supporting farmers in ecosystem restoration in the south of Spain. The Camp Via Organica Experience is their second project, trialling a new approach to ecosystem restoration through working in partnership with Regeneration International and Via Organica.

The Vision and Objectives of Ecosystem Restoration Camps are as follows:

### Vision

We envision a fully-functional, peaceful, abundant, biologically diverse Earth brought about through cooperative efforts for the ecological restoration of degraded lands.

### Objectives

1. To train people in techniques for restoring land and provide practical opportunities for people to practice new approaches to landscape restoration
2. To build research, training and innovation centers to engage people in ecosystem restoration
3. To manage a flow of volunteers of all ages to restore agricultural and natural ecosystems
4. To increase the organic matter, carbon content and water retention capacity of the soil to stimulate large scale carbon sequestration
5. To improve the livelihoods of farmers, landowners and local communities around the camps

### Regeneration International



In June 2015, about 60 people from 21 nations, representing businesses, the farming and scientific communities, educational institutions, policymakers and NGOs, convened in Costa Rica to draw up a blueprint for an international movement united around a common goal: to reverse global warming and end world hunger by facilitating and accelerating the global transition to regenerative agriculture and land management.

In January 2017, Regeneration International (RI) achieved 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. Today, RI engages with a network of more than 250 international partners and a growing number of Regeneration Alliances throughout the world, including in the U.S., South Africa, India, Canada, Belize, Mexico and Guatemala.

## Our Vision

A healthy global ecosystem in which practitioners of regenerative agriculture and land-use, in concert with consumers, educators, business leaders and policymakers, cool the planet, feed the world and restore public health, prosperity and peace on a global scale.

## Our Mission

To promote, facilitate and accelerate the global transition to regenerative food, farming and land management for the purpose of restoring climate stability, ending world hunger and rebuilding deteriorated social, ecological and economic systems.

## Via Organica



Rancho Via Organica is a 40 hectare regenerative ranch, 15 kilometres away from San Miguel D'Allende in the Guanajuato region of Mexico. The farm school reaches thousands of students each year from around Mexico as well providing workshops for area residents.

### Their Mission:

Vía Orgánica AC is a Mexican non-profit organization whose mission is to promote the health of people and the planet through knowledge and practice of organic regenerative agriculture, fair trade, social justice and sustainable living.

## **The Via Organica Ranch and Store**

### **History**

Via Organica is a Mexican non-profit started in 2009. It supports a variety of educational projects related to organic regenerative agriculture, the local economy,

sustainability and natural health through Ecological Ranch and Via Orgánica Educational Center.

Vía Orgánica is part of international networks such as Regeneration International, Organic Consumers Association, Millones Contra Monsanto and Consumers International. It is a member of national coalitions such as the Sin Maiz No Hay Pais,, the Parliamentary Front against Hunger, the Alliance for Food Health and the Collective of Corn.

The store and restaurant are located in the heart of San Miguel, supporting a network of 300 small producers. It is a hub of activities with workshops, classes, meeting spaces and a rural market.

### **Location**

The ranch is located twenty minutes outside of San Miguel on Camino Jalpa, towards Queretero. Click [here](#) to see it on a map.

The store and restaurant are located at Margarita Ledesma #2 in Colonia Guadalupe in the centro of San Miguel de Allende.

### **How to get there and back**

Camp activities start in the evening of the first day, March 3rd and end the morning of the last day March 15th. You should arrive in Del Bajio International Airport (BJX) or Queretaro (QRO) by 3:00 pm by the day the trip begins and book your flight out of Del Bajio (otherwise known as Leon) or Queretero sometime after the final day after 11:30 am.

You are responsible for arranging your flights. The closest airports to the ranch are:

- Leon, Guanajuato (airport code BJX)
- Queretaro (airport code QRO).

Each airport is approximately 1.5 hour drive and pickup can be arranged from either airport with Bajio Go Shuttle for \$25 US each way. To book the shuttle [click here](#). You

can also arrive in Mexico City which often has less expensive flights and take the bus from there.

Everyone is asked to arrive at the Via Organica store and restaurant on Margarito Ledesma #2 in the Colonia Guadalupe by 5pm on March 3rd 2019. Please let us know when you are arriving so we can arrange transport to the ranch.

### Visa

You will be issued a Mexico tourist card (also sometimes called an FMT) upon arrival in Leon. The FMT is a government form declaring that you have stated the purpose of your visit to Mexico to be tourism, and which must be carried while you are visiting Mexico. Although more than one kind of Mexico visa exists, a Mexico tourist card is a simple declaration of your intention to vacation in Mexico for not more than 180 days.

## **The Activities**

- Composting
- Creating terraces
- Tree planting
- Talks from regenerative actors/thinkers
- Adobe building
- Seed saving



## **What to Expect**

### The Climate

March is in the middle of the dry season so rain is unusual but not unheard of so best to bring a light raincoat. San Miguel is located in the high desert at 6200 ft, temps are cold at night average of 45 to 50 degrees and warm and sunny in the day with an



average of 75 degrees. It's important to bring warm clothes, adobe has thermal properties and holds the heat from the sunny days but mornings are brisk.



### The Accommodation

You have the choice to sleep in either one of our adobe cabins, which are dormitory style with bunk beds and shared with up to six people, (most cabins will have two or three people in each) or you may bring your own tent. The cabins are equipped with a cover sheet for the bed, a pillow. Please bring

your own sleeping bag, towel and washcloth. The ranch is an example of dryland farming and all water is captured so we will ask people to be conservative in using water for showers and be careful in general with water use.

### The Food

All our meals are prepared from scratch using many ingredients from our organic, educational farm. Herbs, leafy greens and vegetables will be harvested daily from our gardens, and free range eggs from our regenerative poultry system. Other ingredients such as corn, beans, organic milk and dairy products, free range chicken, and many other fruits and vegetables are sourced from local organic farms and small producers.

All of our raw foods are carefully washed and disinfected. Bottled water is provided for drinking.

Organic wine and artisan and home brewed beers will be available at cost.

Come prepared to enjoy fresh handmade tortillas and a variety of delicious authentic Mexican meals! There will be organic Mexican coffee and teas at the mirador ready at 7:00 am every morning.

There is also a small stand with organic snacks, which will be available on site for campers to purchase.

## **What to Bring**

Here is a list of what to bring with you:

- Work boots/comfortable sturdy shoes
- Sleeping bag
- Thermals
- Gloves
- Towel
- Sun hat
- Sunglasses
- Natural sun-cream
- Clothes for both hot and cold temperatures,
- Swimsuit for visit to hot springs
- Books, paper/pens, playing cards, laptop etc for evenings
- A musical instrument, if you play
- Natural Toiletries

## **Contact Information**

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions at all about the experience.

Here are the contact details of the two main coordinators:

Ashleigh Brown

Business Development Manager

Ecosystem Restoration Camps

Speaks English and Spanish

[ashleigh@ecosystemrestorationcamps.org](mailto:ashleigh@ecosystemrestorationcamps.org)

+44792192289

Rose Welch

Regeneration International/Organic Consumers Association/Via Organica

Speaks English and Spanish

[rose@viaorganica.org](mailto:rose@viaorganica.org)