

## Tourism for Tomorrow Awards Innovation Finalist 2014



### Chepu Adventures Ecolodge

Sustainability is a mantra that beats quietly throughout every wooden beam, floorboard and rocking chair at Chepu Ecolodge in Chile. For the owners, Amory Uslar and Fernando Claude, it is a little like a religion. They practise what they preach, strive to share their ethos, and celebrate the rituals. Spreading the good word of sustainability is not a duty for them, it is a joy. And just as their joy is infectious, their business model is inspiring.

Chepu's simplicity is what works best. An eco-lodge built with sustainable materials and using only renewable resources, they maintain their sustainable status by constantly reinvesting in lessening their footprints. Part of this investment is in educating guests. And herein lies the innovation. Chepu keeps all guests informed about their use of resources. Water, for example, is a big issue here, with Chepu located on Chiloe Island, part of Insular Patagonia in the south of Chile. In response to the fact that they are off grid, they have put in place a Water & Energy Management System in order to strictly monitor the natural resources of sun, wind and rain on which they depend, but also to invite guests to join them in this process.

The owners have, therefore, designed some tools that allow guests to compare their own perception of a "short shower" with the reality. There are 7" tablet screens in each room which show minute by minute resource usage, as well as their Eco Limits, defined by Chepu as the maximum daily amount of water and energy that should be used per person. These Eco limits vary according to the season and amount of guests, and if the lodge is on grid or off grid. In the future, there will be a visual of their individual carbon footprint on the screens too.

There are sensors in every water and electric source, as well as temperature controllers, which are then connected to a central computer and the data disseminated via wi-fi to the network of tablets. There is also a screen in the main hall displaying the information for all to see. Because at Chepu, sharing is caring. And the guests do care. They give excellent feedback about these innovations, and enjoy the fact that, on departure, they are 'rewarded' if they have remained within their Eco Limits. This is in the form of a tree being planted in Patagonia by Chepu, or the financial equivalent being offered as a refund. If not, the customer is charged with the equivalent price of public grid water and electricity depending on the season.

Mainstream holidaymakers may perceive this sort of eco interaction to be turning a holiday into a guilt trip. But Chepu takes a different approach, which is pedagogical. Spiritual even. Because as you kayak in utter silence at dawn down Chepu's Puntra River, or hike through the remote evergreen forests, wetlands or dunes, you can hear nothing at all, except that mantra that never stops beating.