

**TO DO! 2005**  
**Contest Socially Responsible Tourism**

**Award Winner**

**POSADA AMAZONAS**

represented by:

**Mrs. Maricela Marichi**  
**Comunidad Infierno, Madre de Dios**  
**Mr. Kurt Holle,**  
**Rainforest Expeditions, Lima**  
**Peru**

**Rationale for the Award**

by

**Dr. Christian Adler**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

POSADA AMAZONAS is a four-star lodge situated in the primeval forest of the Peruvian Province of Madre de Dios. The lodge was initiated by Eduardo Nycander, the manager of the firm Rainforest Expeditions. It was developed in close cooperation with the indigenous community of Infierno. The lodge was founded in 1998 and is owned by the members of the community. For the last few years it has proved to be a very successful enterprise in some respects.

On behalf of the Institute for Tourism and Development (Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung), the appraiser travelled to Madre de Dios in order to assess the entry of POSADA AMAZONAS for the TO DO! Contest 2005 on the location. In accordance with the insights and knowledge gained, and in appreciation of its objectives, working principles and activities, it is recommended to award the contest entry with the TO DO! prize at the ITB 2006.

## **2. GENERAL CONDITIONS**

With 500,000 to 600,000 travellers per year Peruvian tourism is concentrated in the city of Cuzco (3,400 metres above sea level, 300,000 inhabitants) in the highland of the Andes. "The main attraction is the ancient Spanish town itself with its numerous monuments and relicts from the Inca era, above all the Inca town of Machu Picchu, both of which are among the World Heritage sites. Further attractions are the locations of Pisac and Ollantaytambo in the Urubamba valley, which also sports Inca sanctuaries (the so-called "Sacred Inca Valley"), the picturesque indigenous villages of the Quechua on the highland of the Andes and the high alpine mountains, as well as Titicaca Lake with the Uros (ethnic sub-group of the Quechua) living on reed islands. Some 70,000 visitors hike along the Inca Trail every year, a trail leading from the Urubamba Valley to Machu Picchu in a two to four day trip. An additional 600 tourists per day visit Machu Picchu via Agua Calientes.

Only a very few travellers go to the Peruvian rain forest regions east of the Cordillera bordering Brazil and Bolivia (Amazon tributary zone). Yet, in the eyes of all-inclusive tour operators, this region boasts an added attraction: Peru programmes can be rounded up with a "jungle" stay and the possibility of wildlife observation. A two to four day short stay is adequate for this kind of programme. The travellers spend the nights in jungle hotels along the rivers Madre de Dios and Tampopata, which can be reached via the airport of the small town of Puerto Maldonado. For this reason, the clients of POSADA AMAZONAS are mainly composed of short stay guests travelling with an all-inclusive tour operator.

Tour operators and travel agencies must make reservations since the lodges are only accessible with hotel owned boats. Tourists travelling on their own are rather rare, also because these accommodations are in the high-priced category.

## **3. POSADA AMAZONAS**

### **3.1 History of the Project**

Rainforest Expeditions is the owner of three lodges in the provinces of Madre de Dios and Huarez. It is a purely Peruvian enterprise headquartered in Lima. Before POSADA AMAZONAS was even conceived, Rainforest Expeditions ran the so-called Tampopata Research Centre, some eight hours upstream. This lodge is held in high esteem by international and scientific customers and attracts an increasing number of guests. From the airport the Research Centre can hardly be reached in one day. This is why Eduardo Nycander got the idea of building another lodge on the terrain of the community of Infierno instead of

accommodating tourists in lodges which do not belong to the enterprise. This plan was implemented with the participation of the local people. The community was interested in this idea.

The community of Infierno (the name means "hell") is a product of a national restructuring process. Due to the thinly scattered population and the small number of indigenous people, the so-called "EseEjas", all inhabitants of an area of 10,000 hectares were randomly resettled to one community in 1976. Among them were also immigrated "Riberenos", settlers originating from the High Andes who are already second and third generation settlers in the region. Mestizos, too, belong to this heterogeneous community whose common element is the subsistence economy. The people's livelihood comes mainly from the so-called "slash-and-burn-cultivation". Maize, potatoes, yucca and a great variety of tropical vegetable and fruit species are cultivated. The indigenous people hunt and collect Brazil nuts. Fishing is done together with the other ethnic groups. Some time ago the people felled trees and sold them, some settlers were digging for gold. True, the people harvest enough to feed themselves, but that is about all they have. Their living standard is very simple. They live in small, scattered farm houses (chacras) which are constructed with local material and thatched with palm leaves or covered with corrugated iron sheets. The meals are prepared on open fires in separately installed kitchens. Before they got to know POSADA AMAZONAS they hardly had any possibility to improve their standard of living, to enhance their personal development, or to obtain qualified training.

In May 1996, Nycander and his company Rainforest Expeditions concluded a contract with the community running for twenty years. Since then the community of Infierno is the owner of POSADA AMAZONAS. Among other things, the contract stipulates the distribution of the net profit between the community and Rainforest Expeditions with a ratio of 60:40 for the duration of the contract. After the end of the contract period the community is entitled to 100 percent of the profit. Also, the duties of the community members are laid down, such as the protection of the environment (no hunting, no logging). In the beginning Rainforest Expedition was entrusted with the management of the lodge.

Due to a donation amounting to US-Dollar 310,000 by the Peru Canada Fund, a credit of US \$ 90,000, investments through Rainforest Expeditions and the work of the people of Infierno the construction of the lodge could be embarked upon. It was opened in 1998.

### **3.2 The Lodge**

POSADA AMAZONAS is situated about two hours away by boat from the airport of Puerto Maldonado, upstream on the Rio Tampopata. The lodge is always connected with the office of Rainforest Expeditions in Lima via satellite and the internet.

#### **Building structure**

POSADA AMAZONAS is comprised of several well-lit, rather big buildings constructed on stilts and connected through bridges. The lounge is a lofty house, thatched with palm leaves and with wide open walls. The visitors enjoy comfortable hammocks and easy chairs. There are four tracts with 30 rooms, each furnished with up to three beds. In addition, there is a big restaurant, a kitchen tract and one building each for staff and guides. The guest rooms are lofty and very spacious with a private bathroom with toilet and shower (only cold water). There is practically no wall on the side facing the dense undergrowth of the rain forest which is just 10 metres away from the house - all the noises from the forest can be heard, especially at night. But the noise from the adjacent rooms can also be heard since the walls are made of reed mats. In the middle of the room one finds one or more beds, each of which is furnished with a mosquito net. The guest can sit in a hammock, enjoy the view of the rain forest, read a book and simply listen to the sounds of the nearby forest. There are no doors, only curtains.

Outside people and staff who are not working in the guest room tract are not allowed to stay in this complex.

### **Service**

There is no electricity, neither in the restaurant nor in the guest complex. During supper time, a number of kerosene lamps are lit to light rooms, floors and bridges. The mosquito nets are taken down to cover the beds. Care is also taken of small things: A candle and a lighter can be found on each bedside table. During the day, the fan will comfort the guest with a fresh breeze. The kerosene lamps are silently extinguished from the outside at 10.00 p.m. In the morning, the staff fold up the mosquito nets. The beds are made while the guests are having their breakfast. Breakfast is served between 5 and 9 a.m.. "Almuerzo" is served at noon and in the evening, at 7 p.m. the "cena", the main meal is served, including soup and dessert. Fruit juices, coffee and tea are served with each meal. The meals are delicious, but the kitchen is too simple to meet the standard of the lodge. There is a bar with alcoholic beverages in the restaurant and a souvenir shop with T-shirts and handicraft products from the Infierno community.

The water is drawn from a well on the compound and is pumped up to two high water towers. But the lodge cannot do quite without any power. The generator mainly serves the kitchen. It runs, out of earshot of the guests, and it also charges up the batteries.

### **Price and capacity**

Room and board cost US \$ 90 per day, all inclusive.

There are also special packages, i.e. 3 days/2 overnight stays at US \$ 205, 4 days/3overnight stays at \$ 295. Thanks to the excellent performance and the intensive marketing through Rainforest Expeditions, the Lodge accommodated 6,155 guests in 2004, with altogether 14,441 overnight stays, which corresponds to 70 percent of capacity utilization. The assessor was told that in 2005 some 2,000 guests were on the waiting list.

### **Guest Satisfaction**

In the period from 1999 to 2004 guest satisfaction was at a remarkable average rate of 93 percent. Where the expectations of the guests were not met, this had less to do with the services offered, but rather with the fact that the guests did not have the chance to observe wildlife to the extent hoped for. On rainy days for example, you won't find parrots at the "Claylick" (a kind of steep bank). Some guests also criticised humidity, mosquitoes (during certain months), the cold water in the shower and the noises from adjacent rooms. Moreover, some of the guests arrive with personal anxieties in view of the unaccustomed "jungle" environment, something which also influences the evaluation sheet handed out at the end of their stay. But the staff of the lodge, the guides and the information offered through them are rated very positively throughout.

### **Organisation**

All operations – room occupancy, boat arrivals, departures, guided tours – are marked on big boards (which the guests cannot see) and are constantly updated. Each staff member knows exactly what his tasks are. Travel groups come and go, changing almost daily. Therefore, the logistics are quite complex but everything functions perfectly and smoothly.

The management of Rainforest Expeditions is characterised by an excellent documentation offering high transparency to everyone entitled to relevant data. All processes in relation to the lodge, all historic, economic and social developments and their dynamics are recorded and accessible and therefore are within easy reach even for outside people. The appraiser was allowed to examine all documents requested. All inquiries were answered using printed computer tables and diagrams. Sitting on a rustic table of a maize farmer (and member of Infierno), in front of an even simpler straw hut, it is quite amazing to get a detailed bookkeeping sheet of Posada. Like any other person, the appraiser was able to understand from the internal details on this piece of paper that the enterprise is strong and sound. The entire project is well researched and thought about. Amanda Stronza has even written a doctoral thesis on the social impacts of the Lodge: "Because it is ours, Community-Based Ecotourism in the Peruvian Amazon, 1998".

### **3.3 Tourism Offers**

Guests are welcomed at the airport of Puerto Maldonado by the guides and taken to a nearby office building in a vehicle that was converted from a lorry to a bus. Staff of the lodge check their reservations and take relevant vouchers. The staff also takes care of the luggage to be transported. The guests are then taken to the "port" of Infierno at the Rio Tampopata where they board a covered boat similar to the local type of a dug-out (with a 60 HP engine). The two hour boat trip is very picturesque and conveys a first impression of the rain forest which stretches right up to the river banks. Stops are made on the way to give information, if e.g. parrots, owls or other birds can be spotted. After mooring, the guests have to walk some 10 minutes to reach the Lodge. In the lounge they will be offered fruit juices as a welcome. The guides will be assigned according to the guests' languages and group membership. One guide is responsible for up to 10 persons. Individual travellers will also get a guide. The guides speak English, and some only Spanish. After that the "Rules of the House" are presented so as to minimise the danger of fire and ecological damage by the guests.

During his short stay, the visitor will be able to enjoy a well-balanced sightseeing programme: On the first day, for example, a hike to the "Canopy Tower" in the late afternoon: After a 20 minute walk one reaches a 35 metre high, lean steel tower in the middle of the rainforest. From the top, one has a wonderful view of the rainforest's leafy canopy and of the meandering Tampopata River. Parrots are flying around, weaverbirds are nesting and many other things. The guides offer knowledgeable explanations, also with regard to the trees and other flora. Early in the morning of the second day, a guided tour will take the visitors to the "Claylick": This is a kind of steep bank (with distinctive geological features) where a great number of parrot species congregate to pick clay - for reasons that have yet to be clarified. The birds can be observed from a nearby hidden shelter so that they are not disturbed. Later in the course of the day the visitors can hike on well trodden trails through the rainforest, to a Kapok tree, a 400 year old giant tree. Downstream, one can visit the Ethnobotanical Centre with medicinal plants cultivated by the Shaman of Infierno.

On the third day, guests are woken up at four a.m. to travel upstream at dawn. After half an hour's hike a so-called lake is reached, a cut-off meander of the Tampopata River. Helpers row the tourists across the lake on a small catamaran. Different species of birds can be observed, and with a little luck one can also see giant river otters which have their habitat in the lake.

These are some of the highlights around the lodge. The departure is on the fourth day. Additional services can of course be booked: Lectures, workshops for the production of handicrafts, etc.

#### 4. APPRAISAL OF THE PROJECT

Assessing the activities of POSADA AMAZONAS with **the eight TO DO! criteria for socially responsible tourism** leads to the following valuation:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Involving of the different interests and requirements of the local people through participation</b></p>
---

Members of the Community of Infierno were given the possibility to participate in the development of an economically successful enterprise and to take it over in the long run.

From the very beginning, the lodge was conceived of as a participatory project. The community of Infierno is the owner. During the first 20 years, the community is linked up as a partner with the commercial enterprise Rainforest Expeditions. During the contract period, net profits are split up between POSADA AMAZONAS and Rainforest Expeditions in the ratio 60:40. After the end of the contract period, the community is entitled to a 100 percent of the profit.

The community is increasingly involved in the management of the Lodge, since Posada is intended to be fully managed by the community of Infierno. For this reason, selected trainees of the community are continuously getting capacity building courses through Rainforest Expeditions. These trainings will enable them to offer good services in a lodge and to work independently. The sectors operations, food and beverages, personnel, maintenance and transport are already managed by the community. Rainforest Expeditions only handles the sectors finances, marketing and sales.

The Control Committee is comprised of 10 elected community members. There is equal representation of members of different cultural groups (EseEjas, Ribeneros, Mestizos), and it meets twice a month. In these meetings all pending problems are discussed and decisions are taken at the Committee's own authority. Moreover, an indigenous administrator was assigned to deal with the daily routine in the lodge and to control processes. He is accountable to the Committee. Another person holds the position of Director and he is at the same time the contact person for Rainforest Expeditions. In this way care was taken even during the planning phase that the interests of all community members are safeguarded.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengthening the awareness among the local people with regard to the chances and risks of tourism development in their everyday economic, social and cultural life</b></p>
---

A great number of activities, some of them being quite unusual, were undertaken to raise the awareness of the people about chances and risks of tourism development.

Two full-time positions were created and filled with indigenous "communicadores" (communicators). Care was taken in hiring one employee of each cultural group. There are ethnic tensions between the EseEjas and the Ribeneros with the result that only one group member is accepted as a "communicador" for one particular group. The job of these "communicadores" is to visit each household and to inform the community members about the newest developments of POSADA AMAZONAS. They visit around 40 to 50 families per month. The families' opinions on different issues are recorded, such as: the question on what percentage of the profit should be reinvested, what their view is on the dynamics of tourism, which positive or negative impacts they observe, which other changes they see, etc. The "communicadores" present their findings to the Control Committee and get another agenda every month. This procedure turned out to be a very good instrument for information dissemination and opinion poll.

Because of the distance between the community and POSADA AMAZONAS, community members who are interested in the issue of tourism development are invited to the lodge to get a first-hand impression. They spend two to three days as guests, participate in the programmes offered and watch their sons and daughters as they work in the lodge.

Through financial means of a foundation, an exchange was organised with members of other indigenous communities which also manage a lodge at their own responsibility. During this so-called "Trueque Amazonica" ( a Quechua word meaning exchange of goods and knowledge), community representatives of Infierno met with representatives of the Kapawi ethnic group (Ecuador) and the Chalalan (Bolivia). In addition to many detailed issues, their discussion centred on the common question: "What have we learned from the Lodges, what things do we do now that we never did before?" Unfortunately, communication among the groups was not continued although this would surely be possible through the Internet.

**Participation of broad local population strata regarding the positive economic, social and cultural effects of tourism.**

Each of the 154 families of Infierno benefits from the economic success of the Lodge. Following the decision of the Control Committee, US \$ 25,000 from the annual net profit of the Lodge amounting to US \$ 110,000 in 2005 were reinvested in POSADA AMAZONAS, and in communal projects, respectively. US \$ 85,000 were distributed to community members, which means: Each family got a bonus of around US \$ 550 (US \$100 are roughly 338 Soles (S./)). This is a big amount of money by local standards. This increase in income was used for individual, private improvements in the standard of living, such as: House repair, purchase of new furniture, purchase of a boat engine, financing of fish ponds, etc. Communal projects financed with the profits from the Lodge are: Computer Centre and purchase of six computers, financing a computer teacher, lightning rod, radio and communication system, kindergarten, expansion of the school library, office material for the school, etc.

A criterion to get the bonus is the participation in the "Faena" system. This means that each person has to be involved in communal life within his or her capabilities and physical strength. Involvement in this context means being prepared to take up communal services, mutual assistance, being present in communal meetings and assemblies. In this way, even old people or physically impaired persons, who are not able to take up a job, or women who take care of their families, can benefit from the economic success of the Lodge.

The allocation of jobs is based on the rotating principle, a system which shows a great social responsibility. After having received specific training, each community member is able to find a job in the Lodge. But each employee is only allowed to work in the Lodge for two years. After that he has to leave the lodge so that someone else from the Community can get the job. In the two years of their employment they have acquired enough experience. They leave as qualified workers and will thus easily find another employment. This rotation system does not apply to guides whose training is more time consuming and expensive.

**Guarantee of the attractiveness of jobs in tourism for the local people by improving working conditions in relation to payment, social security, working hours, education and training**

For the sectors of hotel management and guides, a detailed training course is offered. Some 369 persons have been trained in the last few years. While other tourism enterprises in Madre de Dios mainly hire qualified staff from outside, Eduardo Nycander from Rainforest Expeditions wanted from the very beginning to employ only local people. He recruited staff

from among the simple farmers who know how to read and write, but who otherwise only master shifting cultivation. Through training measures he enabled these people to cope with all tasks that have to be done in a hotel. During the planning phase for POSADA AMAZONAS the following measures were contractually agreed between Rainforest Expeditions and the community of Infierno.

Once a year the community members of Infierno are asked to apply for a job with POSADA AMAZONAS. The Control Committee shortlists their applications. Only community members are allowed to participate in this procedure. A two-week course is then offered covering general themes, such as: Information about tourism, clients, service, environment, and about different working sectors in the Lodge. Those candidates staying on receive in-service training. Rainforest Expeditions has worked out manuals for the most essential working fields, giving information on hotel management, quality and hygiene standards and details on each single assignment. The enterprise as such is also described in detail. And so is the working methodology of Posada so that the staff knows that they do not only work for their own gain but also for the sake of the community. Manuals exist for the crucial working fields in the kitchen, service and maintenance of rooms, for the bar-tender, boatman, etc. Only candidates who show their willingness to learn and demonstrate reliability in their work are employed. So far, 64 waiters, 64 boatmen, 52 room attendants, 41 cooks or assistant cooks, 21 laundry women, eight bakers, eleven bartenders and one chef of maintenance have been trained.

The training for guides is more complex and is done in several stages. Candidates must also come from Infierno Community and must be at least 18 years old. The Control Committee selects 8 to 12 candidates who take part in the first one-week course. Four to five trainers give introductory lessons referring to the biology of the rainforest, explain terms such as biodiversity, ecosystem or conservation of the environment. The candidates are tested in each subject. The best four candidates enter the next level of training.

This course runs for two months and is carried out by Rainforest Expeditions. During this course, the candidates are prepared for their later assignment as communicators for special expert knowledge. They learn about eco-tourism and ecology, and deal with classifications in flora and fauna. A First-Aid training course is rounding up the training.

The two best candidates in the final examination are employed in the next level of training as bar tenders. This should give them the possibility to get an impression about the visitors. They learn how tourists behave, the way they talk and what they are interested in. At the same time they learn the basics of the English language. This training phase runs for six months. The candidates are concurrently used and paid as guides for Spanish-speaking groups.

Candidates who excel in their performance are given the opportunity to go to Lima for at least three months to study English at a language institute.

Those who have completed their language training are employed as trainees in the group of trained, bi-lingual guides and receive an adequate salary. After a year's work the new guides have ample practical experience and routine. They can then undergo special training, e.g. as ornithologist (for bird-watching which is quite popular with tourists), or for an expert in reptiles or insects.

In its function as editor, Rainforest Expeditions also published a guide for the Tampopata Research Centre and the POSADA AMAZONAS ("Guia Interpretativa del Tampopate Research Centre y Posada Amazonas"). The guides use this manual in order to deepen their knowledge in this context.

Sixty-three candidates finished the first level of the training for guide, 28 managed to become Spanish speaking guides, and seven passed all levels of training and have become bi-lingual guides. The training costs for a local guide are high, amounting to roughly 3,700 €. This training is paid by a Foundation which serves as the financial bedrock for these measures. In order for the foundation capital not to diminish, the staff's training is financed on a credit basis. After their training they have to pay back half of the costs from their salaries in instalments. The other half is covered by Rainforest Expeditions.

There are presently 20 employees on the payroll of POSADA AMAZONAS. In addition, there are about 10 guides constantly present at the Lodge who are remunerated on a daily basis. Rainforest Expeditions offers further jobs in their own resorts, Tampopata Research Centre and Refugio Amazonas. The salary of a laundry woman, kitchen help, waiter or room attendant amounts to € 200 per month, the cook is paid roughly € 340 (€100 are about 424 S./). Work and vacation periods are contractually stipulated. The guides earn more, depending on the length of their employment. Up to one year: €14 per day, one to three years: according to performance and quality of assigned tasks €18 to 27 per day. The guides decide on how many days per month they want to work. Accordingly, a monthly salary may amount to about € 800 (tips not included). Guides who have worked for more than three years get a fee of € 23 to 35 per day. Top guides can thus earn up to €1000 per month. All employees get free board and lodging as well as free transport. They are automatically entitled to the yearly bonus as well as to benefits which are paid out twice a year. As to social security for employees, the legal requirements as valid in Peru are complied with. Unemployment insurance and contributions to a pension scheme are paid by the employer. A case in point: In Madre Dios a worker earns €100 to 150 per month. Since only few of them are employed on a permanent basis they work on an hourly basis without getting any social benefits. A teacher thus earns € 175 to 225 per month.

From their income POSADA AMAZONAS also pay the members of the Control Committee and the “communicadores” as well as the computer teacher of the school in Infierno.

The training system as practised at POSADA AMAZONAS is outstanding: it promotes the people through a holistic, detailed and sustainability-oriented approach.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Reinforcement of the local culture as well as the cultural identity of those living in tourism destination areas</b></p>
--

For years, the EseEjas have been told that their cultural traditions were antiquated and outdated. They were ashamed when they spoke their own dialect instead of Spanish.

The interaction with tourists, the fact that they are involved in decision-making processes in the lodge and that they have become owners of a flourishing economic enterprise has boosted their self-confidence. As a consequence, self-assurance and pride of their own cultural identity have developed.

Long-held positions were thoroughly questioned in a process of self-reflection and analysis. Discussions took place on one’s own cultural heritage, the social relationships with the ethnically diverging co-owners of the Lodge (Riberenos, Mestizos) and about the foreigners. As a consequence, the EseEjas have become aware of the value of their own ethnic origin. The recollection of the past is now seen as the best way leading towards a rewarding future.

Through the lodge, the local population also got involved in issues such as biodiversity, nature conservation, environment-compatible waste disposal and the ecological importance of the forest.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Avoidance or minimisation of social and cultural damage caused by tourism in destination areas</b></p>
--

POSADA AMAZONAS was built in an uninhabited, isolated region. It can be reached from the village of Infierno in one and a half hours by boat. Everyday life in the village will not be disturbed through guests from the Lodge since a visit to the village is not listed as a regular programme item.

The activities offered by the Lodge leave the culture of the local EseEjas totally undisturbed and concentrate exclusively on the flora and fauna of the rain forest. Yet, the encounter with the local staff opens up insights into the local mentality and offers possibilities for personal discussions.

If guests really want to visit the village, the Control Committee has to give permission beforehand. If the permission is given the group will be accompanied by a guide from the Lodge and a representative of the community. This is done so as to avoid visitors committing a gaffe.

**Projects and measures entered into the contest must be in line with the principles of environmental compatibility**

Eco-tourism has contributed to the preservation of the rainforest at the river Tampopata to large extent.

The approach as a whole of Rainforest Expeditions is oriented towards the maintenance of ecological balance and bio-diversity. Scientific studies were undertaken to explore various animal species and to evaluate the influence of tourism on the fauna. The effects caused by the great number of visitors are negligible. Rainforest Expeditions supported the researchers through transport, board and lodging.

The community of Infierno also enhances the protection of the forest. The community members were prohibited to hunt on communal ground and to fish with nets. Logging was regulated. The community employs two wildlife-scouts. They are held to control the region and to survey the animal population. The guides, too, are made more sensitive to this issue and they pay attention to any changes.

**Implementation of measures or mechanisms which can guarantee the economic and institutional sustainability of the project**

The present annual capacity utilisation of POSADA AMAZONAS is about 70 percent. Therefore, the profitability of the enterprise can only be slightly improved (e.g. through increase in prices, additional services). So far, all the people participating in the enterprise have used the income gained in a way that prevented high profits from causing drastic changes in the indigenous community of Infierno. The payment of salaries and bonuses generates a sound and cautious economic development of the commune. If the status quo could be maintained, the sustainability of POSADA AMAZONAS could certainly be guaranteed.

A threat might be the anticipated effects in the region through the construction of the "Transamazonica", a route connecting the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific. For this reason, the community of Infierno tries to get an official Eco-Tourism Concession so as to prevent this route from crossing their territory. Further upstream, Rainforest Expeditions wants to encourage an additional four indigenous communities to build lodges similar to that of POSADA AMAZONAS. The idea behind this plan is to form an alliance which will function as a buffer zone to this highway between POSADA AMAZONAS and the Tampopata National Reserve.

Another kind of threat to POSADA AMAZONAS could be intercultural tensions between the EseEjas and the Riberenos. There have been such conflicts in the past, also with Rainforest Expeditions. For the success and sustainability of POSADA AMAZONAS, it is absolutely necessary to come to a smooth cooperation of all parties concerned, in the spirit of

partnership. With the Control Committee and the “communicadores” a crucial prerequisite was created for this to happen.

The people of Infierno should have a look at Madre de Dios or other Peruvian provinces. The insight gained, namely to recognise that the true value of POSADA AMAZONAS, lies in the fact that they are offered a chance for their personal further career which they would hardly find elsewhere.

The last step in the process of capacity building, i.e. training measures for the transition of all management positions to the local community, must be further pursued. According to Rainforest Expeditions “It is important to implement a strategy that will produce leaders with a degree of cohesion to the community fabric. We have secured funding ... to develop a two year program where twenty to thirty individuals will benefit from a curriculum specifically designed for community leaders from a Bolivian university. Thus, after two years we hope to have a handful of committed and trained individuals with the capacity, commitment, and fibre to handle both the organisational challenges of the community as well as its commercial opportunities.”

## **5. CONCLUSION**

With POSADA AMAZONAS, an eco-tourism concept was realised that one can rarely find elsewhere. A private entrepreneur conjoins with an indigenous rural community to enhance the idea of nature preservation. And this becomes a case in point that shows that personal business interests can be linked to the requirements of a participative tourism model. The original business motive was not primarily material gain but the conservation of the threatened environment.

POSADA AMAZONAS provides the evidence that such an enterprise can be very profitable, not only in terms of economy, but that all partners concerned greatly benefit from it - above all the private entrepreneur. To put it clearly: POSADA AMAZONAS combines the principle of self-interest with altruism.

The example also shows that an indigenous community - after some capacity building - is well capable to run a tourism enterprise.

The realisation of POSADA AMAZONAS has been and still is complex but the results achieved are exemplary.