



# Entrepreneurs by Nature

Rewilding Argentina is currently involved in the first stages of developing a new nature tourism destination within El Impenetrable National Park. Since this is not a well-known tourism destination, the organization has to invest heavily in the design and construction of the necessary infrastructure to receive tourists, such as trails, signage, and camping sites. Rewilding Argentina aims at ecotourism of which the local communities can benefit. Marisi Lopez, Iberá Park Project Coordinator: "Tourism can be a powerful conservation tool, since – when done right – it can trigger a new restorative economy for the benefit of neighboring communities. Through tourism, they can become centers of a new economy."

## Programme

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Rewilding the Gran Chaco

## Goal

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Guaranteeing the long-term conservation of two parts of the Gran Chaco in Argentina that have been identified as priority areas for conservation

## Partner

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Rewilding Argentina

FUNDACION  
REWILDING  
ARGENTINA

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So far, Rewilding Argentina has built and is now maintaining one camping site and two glamping sites. The organization offers various training courses to local people: interpretive guides, wildlife sighting, first aid and tourist services.

### Setting up micro-enterprises

The infrastructure is built around the four entrances ('gateways') to the park, each linked to a local community. In this way, the resulting benefits will be distributed among the surrounding communities. Marisi Lopez: "With the 'Entrepreneurs by Nature' program we help participating communities to set up micro-enterprises that develop products and services for visitors of the park. The program supports them throughout the chain of production, by building capacity and collaborating with the marketing of their products and services."

### Additional benefits

Ecotourism has additional benefits. The Entrepreneurs by Nature program improves services such as environmental education, capacity building and training, energy, clean water and fresh food, and ensures easier access to them. When a tourism destination grows, public investments in the area will also increase, improving services like roads, internet and energy.

Another positive development is that local people can stay their hometowns because ecotourism generates opportunities nearby.

Last but not least, local communities experience that living forests and healthy ecosystems can generate more benefits for them than poaching or cutting down trees. With ecotourism, wildlife becomes the main attraction for visitors. They are willing to spend on guided tours, food and accommodation and local products. In summary, the ecosystem becomes much more valuable alive than dead.



## Reality and its challenges

Ofcourse there are also a few challenges. First, there are usually no beds to accommodate tourists when setting up a new destination like El Impenetrable. Therefore, one of the first steps is to invest in accommodation. Secondly, since the economy in these areas was never related to tourism, there is very little experience in receiving tourists. The Entrepreneurs by Nature program trains and supports local people in their hospitality skills. Thirdly, the areas where Rewilding Argentina works are usually remote and hard to reach. This often requires cooperation with the government to build or improve the infrastructure in and to these locations. Marisi Lopez: "Rewilding Argentina invests a lot in the first stage of developing a new nature tourist destination but gradually we aim at building partnerships with municipal and provincial governments so that, as the destination starts to grow, they become the main promoters and investors."

## So far

Up to now around 140 people participate in the program; among them 87 craftspeople and 26 neighbours who provide services to tourists. Others benefit indirectly from this new economy by working in construction of infrastructure and accommodation, or supplying wool and other raw materials for handicrafts. A great beginning of making El Impenetrable an amazing tourist destination has definitely been made and renewed appreciation of local culture has led to an increased pride within local communities.

