

*Subjects of Special Interest:*

- Project objective
- At what stage is the project?
- Which are the next sections of the trail that we are going to map?

*In this edition:*

Discovering

Panama

Our People

We need you

Pioneering

Volunteers

*TransPanama Trail Project*

## Project Objective

To create a hiking trail that will enable people to hike the length of our country passing through our most spectacular landscapes, and to produce a map that hikers, with a map and compass, can follow without getting lost. A trail that will connect our regions and our people in a new way for generations to come.

**Why create it?**

-Because there are no existing maps of a trail

crossing the length of Panama.

- Because the original settlers of the area knew such a trail.
- Because Panamanians do not have good public facilities and resources to explore our country on foot: the best way to see our country.

**What for?**

- To connect personally with nature and intensify our desire to protect our environment.
- To promote the physical and mental well-being of our people.

- To educate our youth by bringing them closer to their land and their historical roots.
- To learn to work together in common goals that will generate solidarity and strengthen our national identity.
- To incorporate and extol communities that have limited access to the general population.
- To provide ecotourism opportunities.
- To create a tangible sense of participation in the making of our history.

## At what stage is the project?

Esther Arjona published an article on January 21, 2007 in the magazine Mosaico, where she expressed our intentions.

We consider this the day our project began. For one year we worked to establish a conceptual route, scrutinizing maps and interviewing people, until the 25th of January, 2008 at 9:21 PM, when we began to hike and record the trail with the three pioneering volunteers, Mariela de Jones, Arturo Bouche y

George Dandrade.

We have now marked the trail through the entire province of Coclé and a small part of the province of Veraguas (from El Valle of Antón to La Yeguada Lake).

For these sections of the trail we have already produced an electronic route via GPS, topographic profile, a list of GPS Waypoints and detailed notes with every intersection, fork, crossroads, bridges, rivers, etc.

Some sections of the trail that looked good on paper needed to be changed, adjusted, and perfected along the way.

Everything has been accomplished 100% by volunteers who have donated their time, their vehicles and also the use of a small plane.

We calculate that we have already completed 10% of the trail and that it will take us 2 to 4 more years to refine and complete it.



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*Jose Miguel Esquivel and Mariela de Jones from TEAM 6, filtering water from the Rio Grande in Cocle, to fill their canteens and continue hiking the TransPanama Trail.*



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*The rocky canyon of the Harino River.*

## **The next sections to be marked**

We are currently editing all of the information compiled by TEAMS, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 y 6 before continuing with the following sections.

Next we will mark the sections from the Panama Canal to El Valle de Antón and simultaneously from La Yeguada to the waterfall of Cerro Banco (the largest waterfall in the country).

Once we finish mapping the trail from the Canal to Cerro Banco, it will be our rainy season, and we will continue with Teams of hikers who are more experienced in the Tabasará Mountain Range.

We calculate that we will complete the trail to the Costa Rican border by 2009. Everything depends on the quantity of volunteers that support us

and the number of new Team Leaders that emerge along the way.

The second phase is the route between Colombia and the Panama Canal, which at this point is no more than a line drawn on our conceptual map and its shape will evolve as we progress.

## **Discovering our land**

The Nordic countries that endure freezing winters have a saying, "he who cuts his own wood, warms himself twice".

This saying is appropriate regarding the work being done by the corps of volunteers creating the TransPanama Trail. They are creating a legacy for future generations and enjoying, at the same time, spectacular places for hiking that they had only

seen before in dreams. A good example of this is the river El Harino, a tributary of the Rio Grande enjoyed and admired by Team 6 during the marking of their route,.

We have marked GPS waypoints of the best sites to camp on the banks of the river that form beautiful rock canyons, waterfalls, and beaches of sand and gravel similar to

those used in aquariums. Another good example of special sites identified are the hills of Chirva, that look much like the savannas of Africa.

*See photo.*



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*The hills of Chirva visited by TEAM 6 during the marking of the TransPanama, emulate the savannas of Africa with their reddish earth and miniature trees*

## Our People

As we pass through and map the TransPanama trail, we are getting to know our people, the Panamanian people, good and beautiful. They are living in a way that has been left behind by progress in a world of drying rivers and scorched earth. These Panamanians endure in silence the despair of not being able to provide their families with the things necessary to live with dignity. Nevertheless they will smile at you, offer you the warmth of their home, and will offer you whatever that they have, even

without the hope that things will change for them.

When we see these beautiful people of ours, we are anxious to complete the Trans-Panama trail and begin the next phase: teaching them how to prosper from the land without destroying it; how to provide their families without cutting down the trees, and how to obtain the necessary things to live with dignity.

This trail, belonging to all Panamanians, must bring sources of income to the people forgotten in these

remote areas where hope only appears occasionally under the periodic disguise of the politicians.

Panamá goes beyond the paved roads; beyond electric lines, processed water, Internet and cellular phones. With this TransPanama Trail, there is another Panamá to be discovered and we are opening it to you to experience. At the same time we are connecting our regions and our people in a new way for generations to come.



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*“With the only tool he owns over his shoulder, and without asking for anything in return, this anonymous volunteer interrupts his work to show us the way.”*

## We need your support

We need all kinds of volunteers, not only experienced hikers..

If camping, hiking long distances, carrying a backpack and exploring is not your thing, you can participate in other ways.

We need: People to administer our web site; people who can edit and archive the photographs of the expeditions; people to coordinate the press releases; people with 4x4 vehicles to take us and pick us up from remote sites; cartographers;

geographers; historians; people to edit the information collected via GPS; etc.

If you want to contribute to the project, for sure you have some skills that we need.

We are uncomplicated, practical people who want to make the world a better place, Are you like us? Come and make history with us.



Above- Mario Controni, AIR RECON

Below – TEAM 6



## People that are making a difference

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*"There is no trail to happiness – happiness is the trail."*

*Budah*

**Here we present the pioneers, the first volunteers that turned their intentions into actions and contributed to make a difference:**

Mariela de Jones  
Arturo Bouche  
George Dandrade  
Mario Controni  
Oris Nicholson  
Roberto Monteza  
Saskia Santamaria  
Hector Chávez

Carlina Sanjur  
Franklin Badiola  
Malinka de Badiola  
Mario González  
Susana Sambrano  
Armando Sambrano Jr.  
Armando Sambrano Sr.  
Ramiro Diaz Cabal  
Ramiro A. Diaz G.  
Francisco J. Diaz  
Jorge Arango  
Linette López  
Ingrid Chong  
David Blank

Dwight Jones  
José Miguel Esquivel  
Miguel A. Esquivel K.  
Luz Gutierrez  
Eliezer Escala  
Diomedes Díaz  
Plinio Sánchez  
Luis Pinto  
Antonio González

If I have forgotten to include anyone in this list, my sincerest apologies.



For more information on the Grand TransPanama Trail or to volunteer for the project, please visit us at [www.transpanama.org](http://www.transpanama.org) or write to the project director, and temporarily editor of this Brochure : Miguel A. Esquivel K. [mike@transpanama.org](mailto:mike@transpanama.org)

TransPanamá is a non-profit organization, powered 100% by volunteers.