

# Experience Eco-technology First Hand – Stay in an Eco-center

Centro Ecologico Sian Ka'an or CESiaK on the Caribbean coast of Mexico is an ecotourism center that doubles up as an institute for imparting education on sustainable development in highly sensitive tropical ecosystems. The center utilizes the funds generated from fishing, tours and accommodations towards environmental education and conservation programs that run within the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve. The center operates entirely on technologies that have proven to be ecologically responsible such as systems for wasteland management, solar power generation, harnessing wind energy and rainwater collection. It is powered entirely by wind and solar. The resort has two nurseries that breed native plants and also conducts biological research and educational outreach programs.



CESiaK has elegant and comfortable accommodations that maintain high standards of environmental protection. The dining and the kitchen areas have been so designed that they maximize comfort and minimize impact on the forests surrounding the area. The main building which houses the learning center has been erected on the remains of the site's former hotel.

Paths wind out from the central building through the dense palm forests to individual campsites. The spacious tents at the campsites are fully furnished and built on raised platforms to prevent any disruption to hydrological and ecological processes.

The entire center has been designed keeping in mind the importance of sun and wind which provide electricity and control the climate. Both these elements are the fundamental parts of CESiaK's design philosophy. The center combines traditional building practices, latest technology and contemporary architecture to be able to harness the power of the sun and the wind for creating an ecologically sustainable comfortable space.



Following are the guiding principles behind CESiaK's design:

1. Build no more than necessary

Continuous effort has been made to use natural landscape in place of plantings and plantings in place of hard construction. Palms have been used to provide shelter from wind and privacy from view. Trees have been utilized to support hammocks.

2. Restore and maintain the coastal dune ecosystem

The coastal dune system is necessary to maintain the limit of the sea and separate it from the land. It confines the sand to the beaches and protects interiors from salt and wind. The fact that the tent platforms are elevated above the ground stilts allows the guests to relish the sea breeze ventilation and amazing views of the sea. It also negates any impact on vegetation and ecological balance.



3. Demonstrate practical environmental technology

As a part of guest's experience, guests get to interact with, use and get exposed to a variety of environment friendly technologies. Showers and sinks of the accommodations are run on rain water and the resulting gray water is recycled for use in flushes of toilets. The waste water from flushes then goes through septic system and sculpted wetlands. Subsequently it flows through a drip irrigation system to nourish young seedlings.

4. Every path is a lesson, every building a classroom

One of the fundamental goals of CESiaK is to impart education without any formal lectures. The founders of the ecological park believe in the power of experience to guide the guests on the path of learning at their own pace and direction. The entire biological reserve has signage to educate the visitors without trying to turn nature into a standstill portrait at a museum. Those who wish to have a deeper knowledge can opt for guided tours or read educational pamphlets.

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