

Enjoy a bit of life in the slow lane

A day trip to the Gaia commune in Navarro, two hours from Buenos Aires, is an eco-friendly getaway for families.

By Ande Wanderer

For the Herald

Those interested in getting out of the city, learning about sustainable and communal living, and enjoying a healthy vegetarian lunch could do no better than land in Gaia, an eco-village a couple of hours outside of Buenos Aires near the town of Navarro.

Founded in 1996, the 20-hectare community is situated on the grounds of a former dairy farm. A handful of friendly full-time residents including founders Gustavo Ramírez, and his partner, Silvia Balado (who are also raising a son in the community) and their frequent visitors stay in comfortable eco-friendly mud houses.

Three on-site windmills provide electricity (even Internet access), and food and water are heated with solar power. A laborious method of using compost for electricity is also in place, although for now, the windmills provide sufficient energy. Fruit and vegetables practically grow themselves in the rich soil which doesn't even require tilling thanks to traditional sustainable agricultural practices, which include using waste as fertilizer.

Although residents enjoy modern conveniences, they have no need for outside electricity, water or gas lines. This method of living, called 'permaculture' is a 30-year



Housing at Gaia is made of mud that stays cool in the summer and warm in winter.