

The world's largest labyrinth lives just outside Tamarindo

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It takes a full hour to complete Ronald Esquivel's labyrinth, La Senda, which is strategically built over two energy centers in Guanacaste.



La Senda labyrinth is the largest in the world.

They say it's the journey, not the destination. A cryptic cliché, perhaps, but for practitioners of meditation, the adage holds true. An ancient meditation tool, labyrinths are the physical embodiment of this saying, and people use their journeys down this path to quiet their minds.

The trip to La Senda, the world's largest labyrinth, is a journey in itself. Located 20 minutes from Tamarindo, Santa Rosa is not a travel destination. It is barely even a town. Like most barely-even-towns in Costa Rica, directions are all given from the nearest soccer field, from which La Senda is nearly 4 kilometers of dusty, bumpy road.

While the location is mildly inconvenient, those willing to make the hike will soon find themselves smack in the middle of pure Guanacaste jungle bliss and, upon arriving at the farm, in the welcoming presence of Griet Depyere, the labyrinth's bubbly Belgian owner.

Depyere did not buy her property, Finca Anapasati, with the intention of building a labyrinth. She got idea

while exploring the premises during a reforestation project.

“We discovered two energy centers on the property,” she said. “I just felt that this was the right thing to do with them.”

It was biologist Sergio Salas who found the energy centers with a dousing rod, and later suggested building the labyrinth. Depypere and Salas called in architect and labyrinth designer Ronald Esquivel, who drew up the labyrinth using rules and traditions from sacred geometry.

Nearly a year and \$20,000 later, Esquivel’s designs began to take form. Salas and Depypere decided to use cacti to create the paths, bringing in truckloads of caldera and prickly pear and planting them on more than one acre of cleared of land.



Griet Depypere is the owner of the labyrinth.

The effect of their labors is an overwhelming sight. After a short hike through the woods, labyrinth seekers will suddenly find themselves in a clearing exuding the ceremonial wonder of an Indian burial ground.

Eventually, the prickly pear cactus will grow to form solid walls between the other cacti, but for now it is easy to weave between the lines without taking the 3-kilometer walk along the path. The cacti are clustered in spirals around the two energy vortexes, with another point on the line between them creating a third center. At ground level, the circular mass of cacti looks like an alien landing marker, but aerial photos show the obvious spiral path.

“As an architect, I have always been very interested in the energy of form,” said Esquivel. “A spiral, or a spiral labyrinth, is an expression of transformation.”

For centuries, labyrinth walkers have used the spiral paths to bring about personal transformation. For Depypere, walking the labyrinth gives her a chance to clear her mind and focus.

“We are like machines,” she said. “We will be brushing our teeth, but our minds will be thinking of hundreds of things. Walking the labyrinth lets you be there in that moment mentally and physically.”

Walking the labyrinth creates what Depypere describes as a “profound silence,” quieting the hundreds of thoughts caused by the distractions of daily life. Numerous studies have shown decreased stress levels in subjects after walking a labyrinth, and several organizations are beginning to study the benefits at schools and hospitals.

La Senda takes an hour to walk, passing through each of the three centers and exiting through the same point as the entrance. No other labyrinth in the world allows for such a long meditative experience, but for Depypere it is not the size of the labyrinth that matters.

“Europe has great cathedrals built around famous labyrinths,” she said, “but what we have here is special, too. Here it is nature that creates the cathedral.”

Going there

La Senda is open year round at any time upon reservation. The farm is only accessible by car or transfer. Entrance to the farm is free, but a \$20 donation is appreciated in order to help with the upkeep of the labyrinth. Visit www.lasendacostarica.com for information on group rates and specials.

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