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Pura Vida

adidas in Costa Rica

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Earlier this year, five of the adidas, the international adidas freeride crew, travelled to Costa Rica seeking unique photo spots. Together with photographer Haruki 'Harookz' Noguchi and two Costa Rican guides from Big Mountain Bike Adventures, Ben Boyko, Richie Schley, Alex Reveles, Pierre-Edouard Ferry and Niki Leitner embarked on a 10-day road trip through the lush outdoor paradise.



"THERE MUST BE SOMETHING HERE."

We just can't see it yet," Ben Boyko moves around to get a better view. Richie Schley nods his head, "This spot is too great to not shoot here." The two are on top of a mountain in the centre of Costa Rica. An open field surrounded by thick indigenous forest. The view is amazing; clouds swirling about the mountain tops, a desolate tree, and warped boles covered with light green moss give the scenery an almost mystical touch. Boyko stares at the lone tree. Suddenly he turns

around with a big grin on his face. "I know what we'll do! You see this stump? We can build a hip into it and build a landing using the log over there." Richie is skeptical, "I don't think this is gonna work. The gap is way too big." But Ben is hooked, "Harookz and I have been building a hip gap that is a lot bigger than this one. Believe me, we can make it work. So let's get going. We must ask Paulo if we can build here."

Paulo Valle is their local guide, he is Mr Freeride in Costa Rica. Nobody knows as

many freeride spots and trails as he does. To quickly find what they are looking for, the adidas have hired Paulo and his driver Nene for their 10-day photo trip. Paulo seems to know every farmer, every landlord and every lumberjack along the way. He even convinces two lumbermen to come down with their excavator and help Ben position the log for his landing. "The guys have five minutes," Paulo says. "They don't want to get in trouble with their boss, so you must be fast."



BEN BOYKO



RICHIE SCHLEY AND BEN BOYKO

While Ben, Richie and Harookz are busy building the perfect hip in a perfect setting, Paulo takes Alex Reveles, Niki Leitner and Pierre-Edouard Ferry for another scout round looking for a potential dirt jump spot. "I think I found something," Alex points to a brown blotch in the valley that stretches below them. "That looks like a dump with lots of dirt. Maybe we can build something there if the landscape around is okay. I would like to get a closer look." Paulo nods in agreement, "Okay, let's go. That is Providencia, where we will sleep tonight."

Providencia is a tiny hicksville with barely a dozen houses amidst Costa Rica's Central Valley. Lush green mountains frame the small village that never sees tourists. Paulo, however, seems to know every inhabitant personally. "I am here very often," he says. "We built a few mountain bike trails in this area which I will show you tomorrow."

"STOP!" Alex opens the door of the car, "This is the location I have seen from above." The spot turns out to be a former fishpond. "I believe this could work," Niki says. "The dirt is great. If we build a run-in into the pond and a kicker on the other side we can use the dirt on the right and the left to build a landing. A few hours and we will have created a perfect dirt jump spot in the middle of nowhere. Do you think they let us dig on these grounds?" Niki gives Paulo a questioning look. "I don't think this will be problem," he replies with a big smile on his face, "because I think this land belongs to the brother of our landlord."

The adiridas team is accommodated at 'Cabinas Richie', the only guest house in the village. Only a few minutes after their arrival the two apartments look like they've been hit by a bomb. Bikes, armour, helmets, bags,

backpacks and photo equipment pile up in the small rooms. Boyko has dumped the contents of his bag onto his bed. "That way I can find whatever I'm looking for faster," he grins and disappears into the bathroom. Inside he starts swearing as the shower disgorges only cold water. "Don't crank up the water so much, then it will be getting warmer," Paulo yells through the door. Costa Rica has plenty of water, but in order to get a hot shower in the outback one has to outflank primitive technology. On the beach cold showers wouldn't be so much of a problem, but high up in the mountains where it almost freezes at night, they can cause the most laid-back people to swear.

"AT FIRST I WAS LAUGHING ABOUT ALL THE WARM CLOTHES WE GOT," Alex says as he puts on his outdoor jacket. "But now I am relieved that they were in the package." At the dinner table in Providencia's only restaurant-bar 'La Flor', a concrete brig without heater, they all wear hats and jackets. Guillermo serves rice and beans, the classic Costa Rican dish that is served at any time of day. For breakfast, Costa Ricans eat rice and beans with omelet or eggs, for lunch and dinner with chicken or fish. The guys have gotten used to it and dig into what's on their plate. They are starving. Boyko, Schley and Harookz have spent all day on top of the mountain building the hip. Because of the unique scenery and the great view at this spot Harookz is hoping for a cover shot. But a lot of work still lies ahead. Harookz is raving: "The sunset tonight was mind-blowing. Tomorrow afternoon I want to do some trail shots up there. The light, the clouds and these rugged, moss-overgrown stumps are awesome. I am sure we will get some amazing shots. However, the hip we have to shoot in the morning, for that we need a different light. We can do that the day after tomorrow."

BEN BOYKO



Paulo nods his head, "That's great, because that means we can go for a ride tomorrow morning. By the way, I have spoken to the brother of our landlord and he is fine with digging up his old fishpond. You can build your dirt jump there." Niki and Alex are stoked. "Then we start first thing tomorrow morning and skip riding," says Alex.

The next morning they start building with the help of little David Retana, the son of the landowner. By the afternoon, Pierre-Edouard Ferry and David's friend Bernie join the building crew. News that some international mountain bike stars are building a dirt jump for a photo shoot in Providencia has already become talk of the town. It is a welcome change for the kids who shovel tirelessly and lug bucketfuls of dirt. "Can we watch when you are doing the shoot tomorrow?" Bernie asks. "Of course," says Alex. And David adds: "Can we also bring our friends along?" Alex, Niki and Pierre start laughing. "Man, this is your piece of land, we are just guests. You can invite whoever you want."

The next morning Richie, Ben, Harookz and Paulo leave at 7am. The stunt that Boyko, Schley and Harookz have built in just three days is massive and merges perfectly with the surrounding nature. Their timing could have not been better. The photo spot is in the light, surrounded by all shades of sparkling backlit green. Ben grins from ear to ear, "I told you we could make it work." He pushes his bike up the hill. After a few speed checks he tries his first jump and lands it. Then he nails one perfect table after the other. Harookz is thrilled. "That is a cover shot, thanks dude! Come on Schley, now it's your turn." Richie still seems a bit skeptical, but he gives the hip a try. After a few hesitant attempts he finds the right speed and enthuses Harookz with his style. Driven by the result he sees on the small camera display he pushes his bike back up to nail a few more jumps for different perspectives. "This location alone was worth the trip," Harookz raves. "I hope that we have good light in the afternoon so that we can also get some great shots of Alex, Niki and Pierre."



RICHIE SCHLEY, DEVILS PEAK

In the afternoon half the village has gathered around the dirt jump to witness the adiridas photo shoot. Some of the kids have brought their own cameras to capture the happening. David and Bernie proudly present their new shirts and caps that they received in return for their great help. To provide the guys with plenty of room, David's father has laid over two fences. "The people here are amazing," Alex says. "I don't think we would have received this kind of support elsewhere in the world." While Harookz fetches his camera gear, heavy gusts pick up. The wind gets worse, but the guys don't want to have worked for nothing but it means shooting without practice. "I'm ready whenever you are," Harookz shouts. "When you get a lull, just start to ride." In the end, the guys only have a three-minute window with less wind. Despite the time pressure, they nail all of their jumps. Alex presents 360's and Tables, Niki shows some stylish Cans and Pierre finishes off with his distinctive Tuck No Hander.

HAROOKZ IS SATISFIED. "I have some good shots of everyone now, so you can relax."

After a little stopover in San Isidro, the biggest city in the South of Costa Rica with a 7:1 ratio of women to men, the adiridas reach Savegre where Paulo shows them the best freeride trail of the trip. It starts at an altitude of 10,500 feet on top of an inactive volcano, one of the highest peaks in the country. The descent takes about one and a half hours. At the very beginning a technical rutted-out trail with lots of stones and roots gives the group a good shaking, but then the trail gains more and more flow and leads the guys through thick jungle and past giant trees. "That was by far the best trail I have ever ridden," Niki raves. "The scenery, the flow, the jungle – the whole experience was incredible." It's understandable that the guys urge Paulo to ride the trail a second time.



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RICHIE SCHLEY



ONCE AGAIN the adiridas have to pack their car. Finally they are heading for the most desired destination of the entire road trip: the Pacific Coast. After a busy week of building and shooting all that's left on the agenda are lifestyle shots and surfing. After a five hour drive the team eventually arrives at Playa Hermosa in Puntarenas. It is already pitch-black outside. The guys can't believe their eyes. The small hotel La Felicidad is located right on the beach. The tide is out. The moon reflects in the shallow water and it is still warm outside. A mere hour later Ben, Richie, Alex, Niki, Pierre and Harookz sit around a campfire on the beach chilling out with a few beers. "I have never before seen such a beach," says Niki, "I never expected that mountain biking would take me to such an amazing country." Boyko nods his head in agreement, "Yip, we are really lucky. That was a cool week - the best 'work trip' I've ever been on. Must be the good company..."



DOWNSIDEUP



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