

## **Making Ripples Ripples Field Trips**

by Amanda Bancroft

Since the beginning of Ripples in the fall of 2011, we have made over 20 site visits to places where sustainability is a way of life. From backwoods bush whacking to sustainable castles, we've seen a broad range of approaches to green living. But whether we're touring a pantry full of bulk jars in an otherwise unsustainable home, or visiting a huge site intimidating in its quantity of sustainable devices, Ripples field trips are always an adventure in changing the world.

Some of my favorite visits have actually been to homes which are not very sustainable at all, or with families and individuals who haven't yet put the basics into practice, such as recycling or carpooling. I think these visits are among the best because of the spirit of shared information and personal growth that's so vividly expressed by people who are enthusiastic about doing good things in the world. They're just as eager to learn from us as we are to learn from them, which sets an egalitarian stage. It also alleviates any feelings of guilt or shame they may have regarding their lifestyle, when they hear that, No, we haven't installed solar panels yet. We're all at different places on the journey.

While it's enjoyable to visit people who are just getting their feet wet in the pool of options for green living, it's unavoidable to say that the most enriching and educational field trips are at sites which are advanced. We can learn more, and consequently share more, from homes that are using almost every sustainable strategy known to humankind. Sometimes these are simple, practical solutions from the past, and sometimes they're complex, expensive solutions that use modern technology. It's very humbling to emerge from a world in which you're the only environmentalist on the block, to a world where your current version of a sustainable lifestyle is someone else's toxic hell. These field trips stretch us farther than even our dreams could have done, inspiring us to never settle with convenience and to always strive for efficiency.

The challenging moments are knowing how to be supportive and truthful (at the same time) when someone asks if using electricity from coal-fired power plants is really all that harmful, or what to do to keep my brain functioning once it's gone into hibernation after the third explanation of a multi-filter cistern setup.

We often walk away from Ripples field trips with much more than knowledge. The dog hair, sunburn, and tick bites, along with the scent of basil, rosemary, and wood smoke on our clothes will stay with us for awhile. But the positive connections formed between organizations and individuals could stay with the world longer than the destruction of climate change will last.

*Ripples* is a blog connecting people to resources on sustainable living while chronicling their off-grid journey and supporting the work of non-profit organizations. Read more on this topic and others at [www.RipplesBlog.org](http://www.RipplesBlog.org)