

Our Story

The Village of Salvatierra and an Idea

There are few businesses that require getting up a dawn, loading up a bicycle with 40 pounds of hand-woven hammocks, crossing two piranha-filled rivers in dugout canoes and riding 15 miles through the jungle to carry the products to the closest bus. But maybe that is why we started Salvatierra Imports.

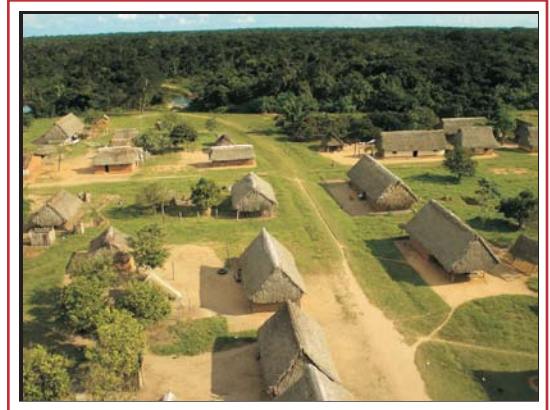
We named our company after Salvatierra, a village halfway between somewhere and nowhere in eastern Bolivia. Three years ago, Kristen arrived at this small indigenous community as a Peace Corps volunteer. She fell in love with the 50 families, 20 cows, several monkeys, and dozens and dozens of children, and they accepted her into their lives as one of their own. When Kathryn came for a visit, she too became enamored with the local traditions, rich in music and art.

In that tiny village there is tremendous talent for weaving, a skill passed down from mother to daughter for generations. Women craft the famous Guarayos hammock, known as the best in Bolivia if not all of Latin America, with such care and intricacy that weaving a single hammock requires a month of work.

Then we discovered that there are other villages like Salvatierra, each with its own proud tradition of art and culture: Urubichá with its famous Painters Workshop, the wool weavers of Vallegrande, the tapestry creators from Buena Vista,



The vibrant woven hammock in fresh color combinations: Sol, Agua, and Natura.



The village of Salvatierra.



Making tamales with Josefina, the president of the cooperative (left) and Angela (right), the treasurer.

the wood carvers of San Miguel de Velasco, and many others. We set out to find the very best of the Bolivian tropics: the unusual, the beautiful, the whimsical. We discovered art and handicrafts that are virtually unknown outside of Bolivia.

We are excited to tell you about Salvatierra not only because the name means "save the earth" in Spanish (particularly meaningful because the village is participating in a community forestry program; they are now custodians of more than 100,000 acres of tropical

SALVATIERRA

imports



forest). By supporting the art of Bolivia you are also strengthening and preserving some of the most fascinating indigenous cultures of the Americas, and you are directly benefiting the producers by buying from artisan cooperatives. Additionally, Salvatierra Imports donates a percentage of profits to youth music education projects in Bolivia.

We think that you will be enchanted with the unusual beauty of what we offer. Each piece carries cultural and historical traditions found nowhere else and brings with it the story of its unusual journey to reach you.

We hope you enjoy the whimsical, magical, lyrical, idyllic art of tropical Bolivia.

Kathryn Krubsack and Kristen Evans
Co-founders and Partners

Facts:

- Founded in 2005
- Ten artist groups from throughout the eastern tropics of Bolivia represented
- Office located in Arlington, Virginia—all shipments FOB Virginia
- Sales through Web site, art markets, gift fairs and retail stores
- Many products use Forest Stewardship Council certified wood
- Portion of profits donated to music education in Bolivia
- Web site: <http://www.salvatierraimports.com>
- Address: 3548 Military Road, Arlington, VA 22207 USA
- Phone: 703527-0277
- Email: info@salvatierraimports.com



San Miguel Mermaid by Taller Bolivia



Guarayos musicians play bamboo violins at a village festival, by the Urubichá Painters Workshop

The jungle comes alive on the painted treasure boxes from Urubichá



Musical Mermaid with Guitar from San Ignacio de Velasco



Whimsical tapestries of everyday life in Bolivia

Salvatierra - "Save the Earth" in Spanish

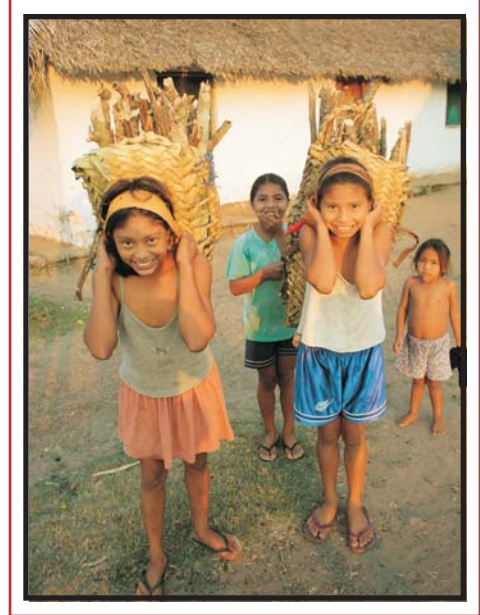
The name of a village and a vision

In 1827, only two years after the Republic of Bolivia was born, a Franciscan priest named Jorge Salvatierra set out from Santa Cruz city to find and befriend the elusive Guarayos tribe. They were a famously stubborn people who had resisted the attempts by missionaries to "civilize" them for several centuries. Salvatierra trudged 300 kilometers through the jungle paths, and finally, with determination, diplomacy and coercion, he brought the land of the Guarayos under the control of the Catholic church.

Jorge Salvatierra may not have made it as far as the remote Guarayos village that now carries his name, but today Salvatierra, "Save the Earth" in Spanish, is meaningful for a new reason. Recent reforms in Bolivia law have returned their traditional lands to the Guarayos people, including their forest. The village of Salvatierra now protects and controls over 100,000 acres of natural wilderness, filled with tapirs, jaguars, and macaws. This is part of an ambitious project in community forestry to put custodianship of forests into the hands of the people who depend on them. In return for managing them responsibly, the villagers can selectively harvest some trees for profit and basic needs such as firewood and home construction.

Will it work? The future of Bolivia's forests depends on it. The isolation of Guarayos has preserved its forests for years. However, change is coming quickly from outside: illegal loggers, migrants from the highlands, and large-scale farmers are putting pressure on Salvatierra for their land. It will not be easy for the villagers to defend their forest. Many adults are illiterate and do not speak Spanish. The village does not even have a store, so exposure to the basics of business is limited. That is one reason we are working with Salvatierra and other villages like it. Now with their artisan cooperative, women are learning how to manage money and to run a business. They can buy basics for their families, such as school fees, clothes and medicines. More importantly, the women are developing independence, self-respect and pride in their skills. "The women now have work too. And we spend more of our money on our families than the men do," says Josefina Oreyai, president of the weavers' cooperative.

We hope that by providing new income sources and opportunities to learn, we will be strengthening the communities. Then they will be better prepared to defend their land, their culture and their forests.



Salvatierra girls collect firewood using the traditional panakú. The village of Salvatierra depends on its forest and is trying to save it.

Saving the Forest Through the Trees

Certified Forests and Wood Products

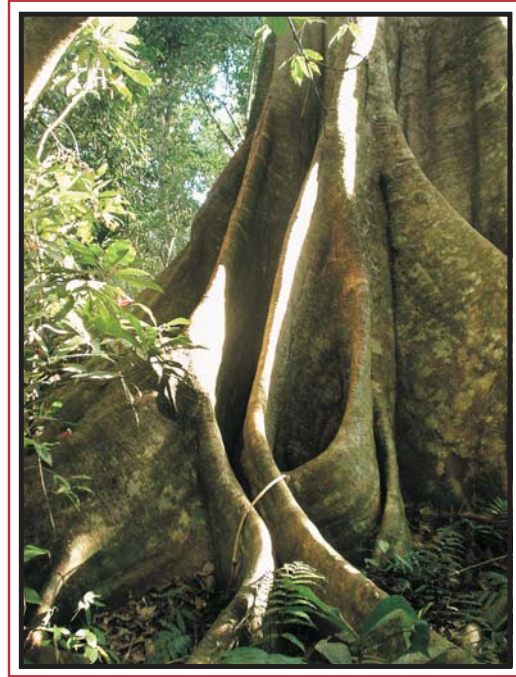
In February 2005, Dorothy Stand, an American nun who had worked for decades to stop illegal logging, was gunned down in the Brazilian state of Para. Her murder turned international attention to the growing problems of illegal logging: Not only are tropical forests falling faster, but violence is escalating.

Should we then not buy tropical wood? Demand for precious South American hardwoods such as mahogany and cedar has pushed illegal loggers to these extreme measures. But not all of the trees are illegally cut. In fact, many communities are now managing their forests sustainably, selectively harvesting only some of the trees in order to save the forest. Buying from these sources is in fact actually helping to stop deforestation.

So how can we know if the wood we are buying is from treacherous illegal loggers or responsible forest managers? In the 1990s a new concept emerged: Forest Certification. If a community or private company demonstrates that they are embracing fair and sustainable forest management practices, they can gain international certification of their timber. Consumers now know that the wood or wood products that they purchase come from a well-managed forest, not an illegal logging outfit.

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certifies the cedar and mahogany used by Taller Bolivia and Taller Guasase. This means that the trees were harvested legally and sustainably, that employees work under good and safe conditions, and that local communities benefit. So you can rest assured that buying their beautiful carvings is helping, not hurting the forests of Bolivia.

For more information on forest certification, visit the Forest Stewardship Council (www.fsc.org) or the Amazonic Center for Sustainable Forest Enterprise (www.cadefor.org).

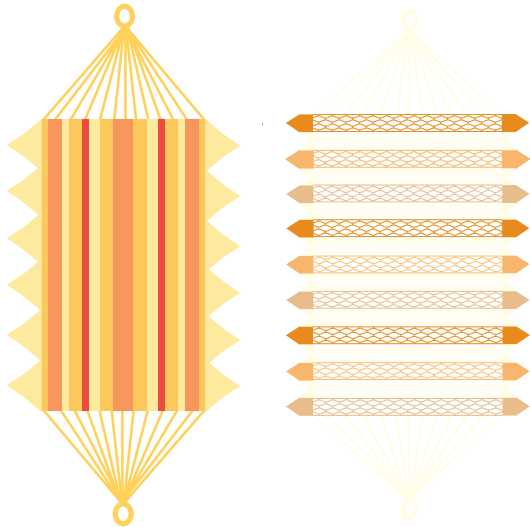


The buttress roots of a giant bibosi tree in the Guarayos forest. By harvesting some trees, communities will save the entire forest.

Unique art and handicrafts from Bolivia

Below is a small selection of what we offer.

Guarayos Hammocks



Chiquitanía Mission Carvings



Mission Angel



San Miguel Mermaid

Urubichá Painters Workshop



Jungle Step

Treasure Box



Story Window

Wall Mirror



Handmade Wool Rugs



Bonfire

Limited Edition Prints



The Gaze, by Romanet Zarate

Whimsical Tapestries



Tropical Windchimes



Mermaid Tales

The World Below

The rivers of tropical Bolivia are full of creatures: anaconda, stingrays, piranha and caiman lurk below. What else?

People in the village of Salvatierra talk about a race of water people who thrive in hidden caves in the river. They are mermaids, white-skinned and rubbery, and they can only survive for short periods of time out of the water .

Some of these mermaid women will beckon to land men, drawing them into their watery world forever. This is a not uncommon explanation for the disappearance of a husband or son.

To the east of Salvatierra, in the Jesuit missions of the Chiquitanía, the mermaids represent sinfulness and the peril of violating the interdicts of the Church. The story goes that during Lent, women were prohibited from washing in the river by the missionaries. However, they heard the call of the mermaids at the riverside, and they were drawn to the water in spite of the warnings. The priests punished the women who violated the rule, and they would not let them forget their sin. They had the artisans carve mermaids into the base on the pulpit in San Miguel, a constant reminder of the sin of succumbing to earthly temptation.

Perhaps mermaids are only myths, inspired by the freshwater dolphins who travel up the rivers every year during rainy season. From December to April, the rivers swell with the seasonal thunderstorms that shed water on the forests for days on end, and the dolphins explore the smaller rivers and streams.

Whatever the explanation may be, the legend of the mermaids beckons us to gaze into the watery depths of the wilderness rivers and wonder what lies beneath.



The Black River near Salvatierra during rainy season.



Replica of the mermaid at the base of the pulpit in the mission church of San Miguel de Velasco

How to Make a Guarayos Hammock

Four Weeks, Tree Bark, Nimble Fingers and Centuries of Tradition

Anyone who has ever sunk into a Guarayos hammock can easily explain why the hammocks are famous. The strong elasticity of the cotton weave wraps around a tired body to support it for perfect comfort while letting breezes travel through to carry away the heat. You will lose your afternoon in one. And be prepared to lose many; the Guarayos hammock is so well made that it stands up to daily use for decades. The hammocks are the best in the world because of centuries of product testing under the most rigorous of environments: the Bolivian jungle. The Guarayos people traditionally slept in hammocks slung between the wooden support posts under a palm thatch roof. Only recently have beds started to appear in the villages. "We could sleep ten people in a room hanging in hammocks!" claims Asencia, who has woven hammocks her entire life.

The first hammocks were woven from the fibrous bark of the Bibosi tree, a ficus. Today's hammocks are made from high quality cotton thread and colorfast dyes that last in the sun for years. Since they do not need poles, they take up little room when not in use: Simply hang both ends from the same hook to save space. The hammocks require only gentle soaking in warm, soapy water to freshen them up.

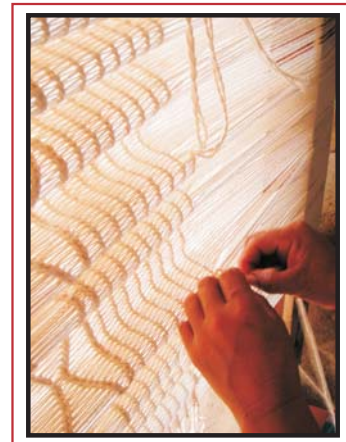
Women learn from their mothers and grandmothers, preserving the same technique over generations. A weaver starts with a single strand of thread and create thicker strands by hand-spinning four threads together. She then wraps the thread around two posts sunk ten feet apart in the earthen floor of her home. These form the length of the hammock. Then she carefully introduces the strands of the vertical thread, knotting the design as she goes. When the body of the hammock is complete, she crochets the fringe on both sides, and then finally creates the loop handles on either end. Weaving requires one month, five hours per day.

Children play nearby, pots of soup boil, and the kitchen fire burns while she works. For women who have myriad responsibilities to their families and farms, hammock-making is ideal. The work provides needed income, their time is flexible, and they can work in the home.

www.SalvatierraImports.com



Berta Pibo of Salvatierra crochets the fringe on a Guarayos hammock in her home.



The meticulous workmanship requires one month to make a single hammock. But it is worth it: Guarayos hammocks last for decades in humidity and heat.

The Music of the Chiquitanía

Jungle Baroque

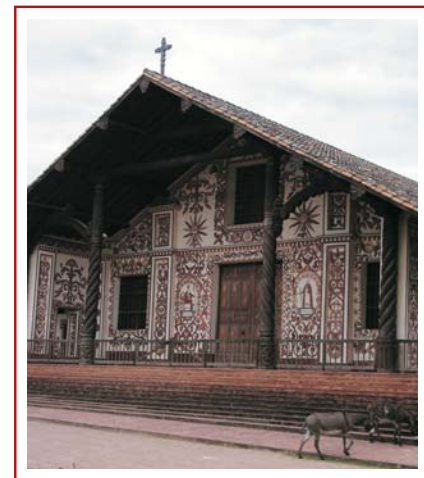
Four hundred years ago, on foot and mule, carried by the strength of their conviction as religious soldiers, Jesuit priests struck deep into the Bolivian jungles to “civilize the natives” and develop a network of missions. But along with their heavy Bibles they had carefully packed violins and sheet music, hoping to overcome language barriers and enchant the indigenous tribes with the tones and harmonies of Baroque music.

Not only did the local people listen, but they learned to play and write music, developing their own distinct Baroque style, with complex chords and eerie melodies. They adapted the Jesuits’ instruments, crafting their own from local materials to create bamboo violins. Today there are fifteen orchestras throughout the region — some even tour internationally — which celebrate this unique musical heritage.

Youth music education is the living legacy of the music heritage. Twenty years ago, in the remote mission town of Urubichá in Guarayos, the parish priest, Father Walter, started a youth orchestra to carry on the musical tradition. The program has flourished, and today Urubichá is synonymous with music in Bolivia. The sounds of flutes and violins from practicing musicians carry into the hot dusty streets; visitors leave enchanted with memories of the town that sings. The program developed into SICOR, the Network of Choruses and Orchestras. Salvatierra Imports supports the efforts of SICOR with donations of violin strings and funds.



Guarayos musicians play bamboo violins at a village festival. Hand painted by the Urubichá Painters Workshop



The restored mission church of San Miguel de Velasco in the Chiquitanía. Visitors can listen to Baroque music written in the mission churches during the biannual Festival of the Missions, the largest Baroque music festival in the world.