



# COSTA RICA SUN TOURS

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY





# ALL TOGETHER

CONSERVING COSTA RICA

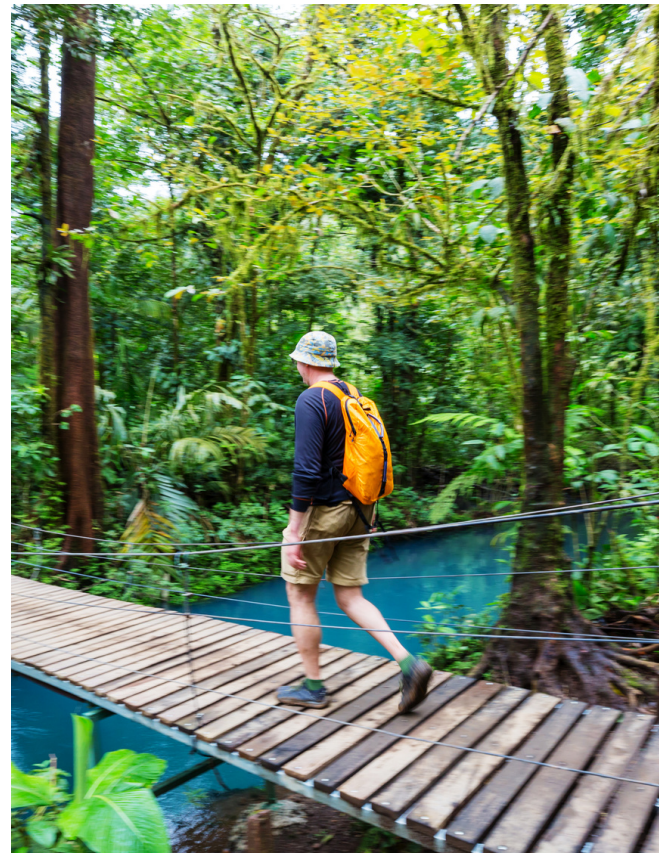


## CONSERVING COSTA RICA

Given the naturally beautiful landscapes and rich biodiversity, Costa Rica is one of the most visited destinations in Central America. The term ecotourism was created in Costa Rica—to date, we have protected 26% of our country. Mountains, valleys, volcanoes, beaches, lakes, forests, national parks, thermal waters, and myriad species of fauna and flora are some of the natural gems visitors can enjoy while in Costa Rica and we ensure that your experiences have a positive and lasting impact.

Today, ecotourism is a cornerstone of sustainable tourism—an economic activity where respect for the environment is of utmost importance, causing the minimum impact possible while maintaining a positive social and cultural environment. In addition, the country's power comes from hydro, nearly 75%—with the rest from wind, geothermal, and solar sources.

Each day, more and more local businesses show their commitment to sustainable management while respecting local culture, and contributing to the communities they belong to.





COSTA RICA SUN TOURS

# ETHOS & IMPACT

CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION



## OUR COMMITMENT

*"We believe tourism should be educational, entertaining, and above all sustainable. We focus on a low-to-no environmental impact and strive to support the local communities that host us."*

John Aspinall, CEO



### NATURAL ETHOS

Since inception over 30 years ago, Costa Rica Sun Tours (CRST) have been guardians of the land and the people of this Central American country. Our efforts to protect the beauty of our land and empower local communities have spread far and wide. We make every effort to carbon neutral trips and continuously make positive improvements to all levels of our business.



### POSITIVE IMPACT

In addition to our daily efforts both in the field and in the office, the CRST team has been involved in several dynamic projects over the past three decades, many of which are outlined on the following pages.



# COSTA RICA SUN TOURS

IN BUSINESS FOR GREATER GOOD



## ABOUT US

Owner-operated Costa Rica Sun Tours has been offering engaging and unparalleled tours since 1988. We are fully committed to working with and supporting our travel partners and today more than ever, it is imperative to have a reputable ally and one with a commitment to sustainability. We're proud of our team in the office and in the field, and the outstanding reputation we have among our peers and suppliers. Our goal is to offer transformative, meaningful, and unique life-changing travel experiences.



## JOHN ASPINALL, FOUNDER & CEO

John Aspinall, CEO of Costa Rica Sun Tours and sole proprietor, is a pioneer in tourism in Costa Rica. He along with his family, were ahead of their time with the creation of two eco-lodges—Tiskita Jungle Lodge and the Arenal Observatory Lodge, built for scientists from the Smithsonian. John's newest property is Senda Monteverde, a cutting-edge example of environmental consciousness in the hospitality world offering a new standard in sustainable luxury to its guests.

John's love for nature and wildlife defines everything he does—an explorer that is always procuring the road less traveled in search of new and exciting places to be interwoven in our itineraries.





# ON GOING EFFORTS

Project-by-project, partnership-by-partnership,  
we're building a sustainable future



## GUIDE TRAINING

CRST has provided guide training and seminars for more than 25 years. This improves the skills of guides and helps boost their incomes. Several CRST guides have obtained international awards as top guides competing with guides from around the globe.

## TREE PLANTING

Over several decades, thousands of trees have been planted with guests in a variety of locations including the central highlands of Los Lotes-Tres Rios, Monteverde, Cerro de la Muerte, Cajón de Grecia, Río Tárcoles, Punta Banco de Pavones, and La Fortuna de Arenal.



## CARBON REDUCTION

CRST works with the Programa de Aliados de Cambio Climático in order to mitigate the carbon footprint of our programs.

## COOPELESCA

We support the work of COOPELESCA by bringing our guests to experience their organized local tours of Juan Castro Blanco's cloud forest and promoting visits to energy plants with eco friendly operations to protect water resources.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Costa Rica Sun Tours supports a number of important organizations nationally and worldwide fiscally and through project work and education.





# ON GOING EFFORTS

Working hand-in-hand supporting the communities that support us is a natural win-win and bonus for our guests who have the opportunity to experience real *pura vida*

## HOME LUNCHES & HOMESTAYS

Costa Rica Sun Tours have curated authentic cultural experiences and educational opportunities where our guests can experience the natural warmth of the Ticos. For decades, we've worked with several local families who warmly welcome travelers into their rural homes for homemade traditional dishes and even a homestay if they wish!



## SMALL BUSINESS

We place great emphasis on working with local subcontractors for activities that include local tours, dance lessons, and cooking classes— a fun and beneficial way of helping our neighbors gain extra income and sharing our culture with guests.

## SCHOOL VISITS

CRST organizes school visit programs for volunteering, sharing donations, and cultural exchanges in areas including El Cerro, Tortuguero, Arenal, Sarapiquí, and Quebrada Arroyo in Quepos. These visits are always a highlight for guests and the schoolchildren alike.

## DONATIONS

Oftentimes, guests may have to purchase items for their trip that they don't want to take home. In this case, we facilitate guest donations on request. These have included useful items such as child booster seats and even a wheelchair.

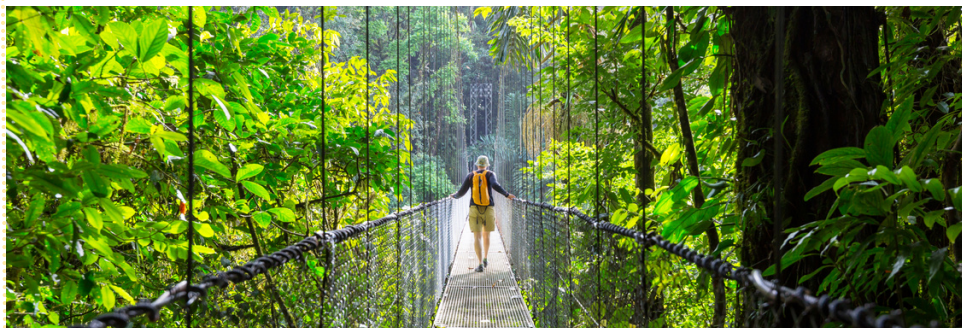
## GIFTS FOR GOOD



Upon request, we purchase gifts for guests to help celebrate special occasions or for no reason at all! In all cases, we always opt to support local artists and cooperatives. An example being bandanas created by Tamara Rojas, and her project Bekuo Arte—in support of the Cabanisi Project protecting the Cabanisi's Ground-Sparrow, a bird species in danger of extinction.

## COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM

CRST promotes El Camino de Costa Rica and Sendero Pacífico – trail hikes that have clients hiking past rural communities who reap benefits of tourists.





# EFFORTS IN ACTION

TOGETHER WE CAN



## PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

Costa Rica Sun Tours' partnerships over the decades have included companies who are champions in conversation in their own right! In collaboration with several international tour operators—including Natural Habitat, Conservation VIP, REI, and Xperitas, to name a few—as well as Rotary International, schools, and individual families wanting to get involved with projects, we have facilitated countless efforts with great result!

## COMMUNITY FOCUS

We recognize that for all the natural beauty Costa Rica is famous for, our people are just as stunning and we celebrate and honor them. For over 20 years we have organized visits and donations to local schools in Monteverde and Arenal. For those looking to immerse themselves deeply in local culture, we organize home stays in rural areas (Sarapiquí, El Cerro). These examples directly help local families.



## SUSTAINABLE COMMITMENTS

- We facilitate Sea Turtle Conservancy turtle adoption certificates for guests visiting the east coast—these travelers become ambassadors for the conservation of sea turtles in Tortuguero.
- We provide ongoing support for the Bellbird Conservation Program in Monteverde through hiring local experts to provide talks—in turn promoting donations to improve the biological corridor of the endangered Bellbird.
- On request, we can include a pre-dinner performance by a local children's music school band from Tortuguero—the school, Escuela de Música Infantil Caribeña, receives payment in exchange to purchase new instruments.





# EFFORTS IN ACTION

## VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES

### TRAVEL WITH PURPOSE

Get ready to get dirty! Over the course of the past several years, we have developed an array of volunteer experiences with positive impact and fun to boot! Following are just a few examples focused on conservation though we offer several volunteer opportunities that are focused on community. We encourage you to inquire with us to plan experiences that are the perfect match for interests and abilities.



### PUNTA BANCO TURTLE HATCHERIES

The primary goal in Punta Banco is to protect the sea turtles that nest on the beaches in the area. Work here at Tiskita and Playa Burica includes exhuming nests of hatched sea turtles, tallying egg casings, creating signage, beach clean up, and even bicycle repairs (these bikes are used to patrol by night and rented out during the day to generate funds for the project!). We have also organized similar volunteer work near Dominical Beach at Hacienda Barú Wildlife Refuge.



### TARCOLES SCARLET MACAWS

The coastal communities along this area have established a biological corridor of beach almond tree nurseries, extending from Carara National Park to Guacalillo Mangroves. The almond tree is the main food source for the endangered Scarlet Macaws. Here, volunteer groups help build the nurseries, dig post holes, place wood skirting and mesh roofs, and fill seedling bags with the rich soil and seeds found under mature almost trees.

## RESPLENDANT QUETZAL

### CERO DE LA MUERTE

This is an opportunity to work in the highlands near Cerro de la Muerte on a project that centers on restoring the habitat of the Resplendent Quetzal. Volunteers join a community member of Sal Si Puedes and our Resplendent Quetzal nest project manager, who leads the group in the process of how to build and assemble a pre-made Quetzal nest and clearing a viewing trail near a tree where Quetzals have been feeding.





# SUPPORT & ACHIEVEMENTS



An overview of awards, achievements and important dates to us

## 2023 CASA LUZ

Costa Rica Sun Tours supports Casa Luz through donations. This is a home for young mothers and their children who come from situations of abuse, extreme poverty, and exploitation.

## 2022 & 2023 SMILES FOREVER

Smiles Forever is an organization CRST have supported on several occasions. Initially it was through a trip that was auctioned and the money raised was used to purchase a dental chair for the clinic in Punta Banco. CRST continues to donate trips to auction. The money is used to support this Smiles Forever group.

## 2019 GREENHOUSE GAS OFFSETS

CRST acquired 129 compensation units for greenhouse gas emission in order to mitigate all operations and logistics of their business for 2017 and 2018. This is managed by FONAFIFO, a national payment program for carbon storage, hydrological services, and the protection of biodiversity and landscapes. The funds paid by CRST were applied as PSAs, or payment for environmental services. Local farmers receive the money through FONAFIFO to protect standing forests and recovering lost forest.

## 2012-2019 MAJOR EFFORTS INCLUDED:

- Support from CRST as sponsor of the Union of Ornithologists of CR, in a meeting of the Neotropical Ornithology Congress.
- Awarded Climate Change Allies Program certification.
- Conservation International awarded John Aspinall for been a pioneer in Ecotourism, for the efforts in conservation in Punta Banco, and for his green ethics and guidelines operating CRST, helping local operators and promoting rural tourism.

## 2010 ORGANIZATION FOR TROPICAL STUDIES

John Aspinall, owner and founder of Costa Rica Sun Tours, served on the board of The Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS). The OTS is a non-profit founded in 1963 that has grown to include 63 universities and research institutions from the United States, Latin America, and Australia. OTS conducts graduate and undergraduate education, research, tropical forest conservation, maintains three biological stations in Costa Rica and environmental education programs. Research at the OTS stations has added significantly to what is known about tropical biology and forest ecosystems.



# SUPPORT & ACHIEVEMENTS

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An overview of awards, achievements and important dates to us

## 2009 EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

CRST helped Don José Miranda with an important donation to rebuild his main restaurant after the Cinchona earthquake. Don Jose is the owner of Albergue del Socorro, Albergue del Socorro is part of the Costa Rican Bird Route.

## 2005 COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS, MONTEVERDE

CRST invested in converting an old building into facilities for free use by the community of Monteverde. It is named Galeron Cultural Aspinall Murray.

## 2002 HONORARY MEMBER TO ACOPROT

Acoprot (Costa Rican Association of Tourism Professionals) awarded John as an Honorary Member for his long and outstanding career in tourism in Costa Rica and for his contribution as President to Tour Operators Association.

## 2002 ECOTOURISM EXCELLENCE AWARD

Conservation International awarded John Aspinall for been a pioneer in Ecotourism, for the efforts in conservation in Punta Banco, and for his green ethics and guidelines operating CRST, helping local operators and promoting rural tourism.

## 1999 FUNDACION TISKITA

The Aspinall Family donated 125 hectares of land as a nature reserve to establish a foundation to support the neighboring Guaymi Indians. The foundation raises funding for a variety of community projects including a health clinic, a new primary school, scholarships, and a housing program for teachers.

## 1997 CERTIFICATION FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Costa Rica Sun Tours achieved a 5 Leaf rating in 1997—the highest possible—through the Costa Rican government's CST Sustainability program. This program was designed to differentiate businesses of the tourism industry, based on the level at which they comply with a sustainable model of natural, cultural, and social resource management and awards one to five leaves. Today, this system is being updated to account for remote offices.





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