



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Sonia Díaz  
Burson-Marsteller  
(305)347-4396  
[sonia.diaz@bm.com](mailto:sonia.diaz@bm.com)

**COSTA RICA ANSWERS THE AGE-OLD QUESTION – WHAT IS THE KEY TO HAPPINESS?**

***By setting forth a philosophy of peace with nature and the world, Costa Rica proves to be the happiest place on Earth***

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica, July 9, 2009 – Costa Rica, the world's foremost leader in sustainable tourism practices, has begun to reap the rewards for its commitment to social and environmental preservation alike. The country's philosophy to being at peace with humanity and nature have now set the stage for a country that is recognized internationally as one of the most stable, most ethical, one of the cleanest and consequently, the happiest place on Earth.

A recent study done by a British organization, the new economics foundation, has named Costa Rica as the Happiest Place on Earth citing its long life expectancy, life satisfaction of its people, its low environmental impact, strong networks of friends and family and a healthy balance between work and play. More importantly, the report highlights the attitude of its people and their view of what's important in life. So, what has this small nation done right to create this type of society and, more importantly, what kind of changes can other countries make to achieve a little more happiness in everyday lives?

When Costa Rica made the decision to eliminate its army in 1948, it seemed like an unlikely and naïve choice, at best. Then, in 1978, Costa Rica took it a step further and declared 25% of its territory as protected land in an effort to preserve the rich biodiversity that today has made the country one of the most sought after ecological destinations in the world.

(-more-)

While these decisions were highly criticized in their time, Costa Rica, today, has come full circle and proven that a life focused on the well-being of the people and the planet is the best recipe to living a long and happy life. Their zest for life shows because while many initially come here for the country's natural beauty and an endless choice of activities, ultimately, the longest lasting impression they leave with is the kindness and joy that the Costa Rican people offer.

All of these choices have enabled Costa Rica to be a society that can count on accessible education for all and a nationwide healthcare system that even provides for tourists in the country. Ticos, as Costa Ricans call themselves, enjoy a literacy rate that is comparable to any other well-developed nation, equal rights for all, a political system which allows for strong participation from its citizens, and an almost complete elimination of fossil fuels for electric production.

As a destination that offers visitors a chance to experience the beauty of the Earth and its people, Costa Rica began to see a growth in its tourism industry. In order to mitigate the negative effects of tourism development in the country, Costa Rica quickly took action and in 1996 it established the Certification for Sustainable Tourism Program (CST) which outlines four main pillars for developing a property or operation that would reduce the impact that it would on the environment, its population and its culture as well.

Over the past year, Costa Rica, as a country, and its tourism sector alike, have received an unprecedented amount of recognition for its staggering achievements at the environmental and social level. Organizations like the World Economic Index Forum and the Environmental Performance Indicator developed by Yale University and Columbia University have ranked Costa Rica as the best place to do business and the cleanest destination in the Americas, respectively. Additionally, for the first time ever, the Natural Resources Defense Council honored an entire country with its Natural Biogem Award for its commitment to protecting the more than the 500,000 species of flora and fauna that call Costa Rica their home.

The CST program has not only been well received by the industry, with over 100 hotels and tour operators certified, but it has also been regarded by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as the model for sustainable tourism in Latin America. Additionally, the CST program was recognized by the III Virtual Congress on Latin American Tourism Industry and Destination Competitiveness with the "Tourism for All" award in the category of "Innovation in Tourism and Hotels."

All of these efforts have positioned its tourism industry as one of the most sustainable in the world and it has no shortage of awards either. In the past year alone, establishments such as Green Hotels of Costa Rica, Lapa Rios Ecolodge, Rios Tropicales, Hotel Punta Islita, El Silencio Lodge, Nature Air, among many others, have been recipients of sustainable tourism awards and recognitions from prestigious organizations such as *National Geographic*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, Rainforest Alliance and the World Travel and Tourism Council. Furthermore, Ethical Traveler named the country as one of its choices for Top 10 Ethical Destinations for the industry's strong environmental efforts.

(-more-)

Costa Rica has always understood the importance of being able to be innovative and evolve its strategy in order to provide sustainable solutions for an ever-changing world. With a successful certification program under its belt, Costa Rica declared a goal to be carbon neutral by 2021, a goal that has been embraced by all and in two short years has begun to generate an astounding amount of critical acclaim throughout its tourism industry.

Nature Air, Costa Rica's premier airline, with the help of Costa Rica's National Financial Fund for Reforestation (FONAFIFO) and its Certification for Environmental Service program, has become the leader in the effort to moving the country towards its carbon neutral goal. Nature Air declared itself the first certified carbon neutral airline in 2004 and in a short amount of time began to receive recognition for its environmental and its social program, Nature Kids, which is dedicated to educating children in Costa Rica. This year Nature Air received the Tourism for Tomorrow Award from the World Travel and Tourism Council and in 2008 it was awarded the Top Sustainable Award from the Rainforest Alliance, both for its unparalleled commitment to changing the face of the transportation industry.

The key to happiness, as Costa Rica has proven, isn't necessarily limited to the act of consuming less. Rather, it is the philosophy that when people take the time to take care of and appreciate the things around them that aren't replaceable, such as the environment, their people and their culture, then they begin to create a society that finds happiness in the simple things that the world has to offer.

###

#### About Costa Rica

Costa Rica is located in Central America, nestled between Nicaragua and Panama, and bordered on the east by the Caribbean Sea and the west by the Pacific Ocean. This small country represents only .01 % of the planet's surface and it shelters almost 4% of the existing world's biodiversity. It has given priority to the conservation of its natural resources, protecting 26% of its national territory through the creation of National Parks and other natural areas. The country also offers world-class eco-tourism and adventure travel. The options are unlimited for any discriminating traveler: horseback riding on a secluded beach; hiking through the lush whispering greenery of a rainforest; having an exhilarating experience on a white-water rafting trip, observing the tropical forests from a canopy tour; surfing the blue waves of either coast; experiencing a quite, close encounter with different species of birds and wildlife; and enjoying the diverse culture and hospitality of the Ticos.

#### About the Costa Rica Tourist Board

The Costa Rica Tourist Board, created in 1955, is an autonomous institution of the State, responsible for regulating the tourism activity in Costa Rica and promoting Costa Rica's tourism attractions and destinations both at a national and international level. The Costa Rica Tourist Board creates tourism norms, regulations, incentives and grants the tourist declaratory for Costa Rica's hotels, travel agencies, rental cars and other tourism organization and service provider.

For general travel or tourism information about Costa Rica, contact the Costa Rica Tourist Board directly at 1-866-267-8274 or visit their web site at [www.visitcostarica.com](http://www.visitcostarica.com).

FOR PRESS ONLY: For press inquiries, please contact 1-888-600-6806 or e-mail [VisitCostaRicaPress@bm.com](mailto:VisitCostaRicaPress@bm.com)

