

# GIVING A GRADE TO COSTA RICA'S GREEN TOURISM

In the late 1980s, Costa Rica was turned from a staging ground for the U.S.-funded contra war into a laboratory for 'green' tourism.



Bird watchers in the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve of Costa Rica.

BY MARTHA HONEY

Costa Rica is the poster child for ecotourism. This brand of nature-based tourism, which seeks to be low impact and provide tangible benefits for both the environment and host communities, is widely said to be the fastest growing sector of the tourism industry. And tourism, in turn, rivals oil as the world's largest industry. Today, nearly every country in Latin America that is promoting tourism is also promoting some form of ecotourism. In no other

country, however, has the experiment with ecotourism been as extensive as in Costa Rica. It seems that every traveler in the United States who is interested in nature has been to, or is heading for, Costa Rica. Costa Rica's ecotourism boom, while largely positive, has not been without a series of problems, conflicts and conundrums over its direction and its effects.

Beginning in the late-1980s, Costa Rica was transformed from a staging ground for the covert U.S. war against Nicaragua and a testing ground for U.S. free trade and privatization policies into a laboratory for "green" tourism. More than any other event, President Oscar Arias's 1987 receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize for his role as the architect of the Central American Peace Plan propelled Costa Rica onto the world stage, securing its image as a peaceful country and marking the start of the ecotourism boom.

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In the 1990s, Costa Rica jumped to the head of the ecotourism queue, surpassing older nature travel destinations such as the Galapagos Islands, Kenya and Nepal. In 1992, the U.S. Adventure Travel Society dubbed Costa Rica the "number one ecotourism destination in the world." By 1993, tourism had become Costa Rica's number one foreign exchange earner, surpassing coffee and bananas.

As a journalist based in Costa Rica in the 1980s and early 1990s, I witnessed firsthand Costa Rica's transformation from the southern front for the contras into an ecotourism Mecca. Costa Rica illustrates that, most fundamentally, tourism can only thrive in an atmosphere of peace. But while regional peace accords and the dismantling of the contras and local CIA operations improved conditions on the ground in Costa Rica, it can be argued that, as a result, the country changed less than did its international image. Arias' Central American Peace Plan helped the world to view Costa Rica through a different lens—in part because, once the region's wars ended, journalists began turning their attention to stories about what made Costa Rica unique. The reality was that Costa Rica had the right stuff—the right political, socio-economic, infrastructural, geographic and natural ingredients—to permit it to successfully ride the crest of the ecotourism wave.

Costa Rica's main building block for ecotourism has been, as in many other countries, its national park system. Officially created in 1969, the national park system grew rapidly so that by 1990 it included 230 different protected areas, with varying restrictions and permitted uses, including tourism. Today, more than 25 percent of Costa Rica's territory is under some form of protection. Worldwide, the average is just 3 percent. Some 13 percent of Costa Rica falls under the rubric of national parks and other strictly protected areas. In recent years, national parks and their surrounding buffer areas have been reorganized into nine regional conservation areas or megaparks. These are complemented by hundreds of private nature reserves; more than 110 of these contain "ecolodges" and/or provide tourism activities such as hiking, bird watching, rainforest canopy walks and butterfly farms. As Amos Bien, a biologist and founder of Costa Rica's first genuine ecolodge, Rara Avis, writes, "This mosaic of large, pristine national parks with smaller private reserves with visitor facilities provided the fertile ground necessary for ecotourism to be born in Costa Rica."

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While the country's name—Rich Coast—comes from Christopher Columbus' mistaken belief when he landed in 1502 that the land was full of precious minerals, in recent decades this misnomer has seemed appropriate as scientists, conservationists and tourists discovered its vast ecological richness. As part of the narrow isthmus joining North and South America, Costa Rica has flora and fauna from both continents as well as its own endemic species. This West Virginia-size country boasts more bird species (850) than are found in the United States and Canada combined, more varieties of butterflies than in all of Africa, more than 6,000 kinds of flowering plants (including 1,500 varieties of orchids), and over 35,000 species of insects. Costa Rica's extraordinary natural wonders are encapsulated in the statistic that the country contains 5 percent of the world's biodiversity within just 0.035 percent of the earth's surface. Costa Rica is, as former minister of natural resources Alvaro Umana put it, a biological "superpower."

However, Costa Rica's national parks and biodiversity have been supplemented by other ingredients lacking in many developing countries: its long-standing and well-functioning democracy, its political stability, the abolition of its army in 1948, strong social welfare programs, its respect for human rights, and its (generally) welcoming attitude towards foreigners, particularly the gringo variety. Costa Rica has one of the highest standards of living, the largest middle classes, the best public health care systems, the best public education through the university level and the highest literacy rates in Latin America. The country has produced an outstanding coterie of scientists and conservationists and has for decades attracted scientists and researchers from around the world. More than a hundred local and international environmental NGOs have branches in the country. Costa Rica is physically compact and easy to get around in, with adequate amounts of paved roads, telephones and electricity. It has a pleasant climate. And it's just a few hours' flight from the United States. The combination of these qualities made Costa Rica uniquely prepared to rapidly move into ecotourism.

On these stable foundations, Costa Rica's ecotourism industry grew. Until the mid-1980s, Costa Rica's tourism sector was modest, largely locally owned, and geared to domestic and regional visitors. Between the mid-1970s and mid-1990s, the number of foreign visitors nearly doubled and gross receipts



The Rara Avis Lodge uses tourism to balance commercial interests with rainforest conservation.

grew more than 11-fold. By 2000, Costa Rica, with a population of only four million, was receiving over one million visitors a year. Government exit surveys conducted at the airport showed that about 60 percent of tourists were motivated primarily by ecotourism; another 20 percent reported visiting a national park or ecotourism facility during their stay. The country was earning over \$600 million from ecotourism and nature-based attractions.

And, propelled by ecotourism, environmentalism has taken root in the national consciousness—just as a tradition of nonmilitarism (not having an army) had done earlier. When my family and I first moved to Costa Rica in 1982, environmentalism was confined to a small cadre of scientists and national park officials. I recall, for instance, that buses in San José carried signs saying something like: “Don’t litter. Throw your trash out the window.” Today, however, ecotourism has become part of “self-identity,” as Chris Wille, an official with the Rainforest Alliance puts it. “Ecotourism has helped create the self-image of Costa Ricans. That’s tremendously important. There’s a lexicon of environmentalism here, right up to the president.”

Three decades ago, “ecotourism” was not part of the lexicon, in Costa Rica or anywhere else. The origins of ecotourism can be traced to the late 1970s, when conventional, mass, packaged tourism, epitomized by cruise ships and high rise beach hotels, came under criticism on a number of fronts. Developing countries that had moved into

tourism as a way to earn foreign exchange and reduce poverty, found they were gaining little. Most of the profits, particularly from prepaid packaged tours, never entered the country or “leaked out” as foreign investors repatriated their profits, paid high salaries to expatriate managers, and imported luxury goods, vehicles and building materials to replicate first world lifestyles in some of the world’s poorest locations. An increasing consolidation within the tourism industry made it easier and more convenient for travelers to pay for nearly everything—airline tickets, hotels, car rental and sometimes meals—before they left home. The smaller and less industrialized a country, the more foreign exchange had to be expended to meet the demands of the international tourism market. In some cases almost everything used in a tourist facility

was purchased overseas. The World Bank estimated that the “leakage” of tourism dollars from developing countries averages 55 percent; other studies found the leakage from some areas could run as high as 80 percent to 90 percent.

Parallel with this was the growing realization of the darker side of mass tourism. While tourism has been popularly portrayed as the benign, “smokeless industry,” many countries found that poorly regulated mass tourism brought not only environmental destruction and pollution, but also social ills such as prostitution, crime, black marketeering, gambling, drugs and, increasingly, sexually transmitted diseases. In the 1970s, social ills associated with mass tourism helped spur the “responsible tourism” movement, supported by Protestant churches and centered in Thailand, with a focus on countering child prostitution.

Ecotourism also grew up in the womb of the worldwide environmental movement that took off in the 1970s. In Latin America, particularly in the Amazon region, scientists and environmentalists were becoming increasingly alarmed about the rapid destruction of the rainforest through logging, ranching, oil drilling, mining, and human encroachment and settlement. The rise of the environmental movement helped increase public awareness that rainforests are vital as both reservoirs of biological diversity and suppliers of oxygen necessary to maintain a balance in the earth’s atmosphere. Gradually ecotourism, along with various forms of sustainable harvesting of trees and plants, were proposed as alternative economic activities to protect the rainforest.



A tourist in a Costa Rican rainforest.

Parallel with this, there was a growing realization among parks officials, scientists and community development activists that the concept of park management through cordoning off parks—either literally with fences or figuratively with police forces—and barring access to local people, was not working. Seeing no tangible benefits from either parks or nature tourism, angry and hungry rural communities, who had often been forcibly expelled to create the parks, turned to poaching of wildlife, particularly elephant and rhino in Africa. Beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, some parks officials, scientists, and community activists began to call for a new approach to give local people tangible benefits from parks. They argued that protected areas and wildlife would only survive if there was harmony, not hostility, between people and parks.

In a ground-breaking 1976 article, Costa Rica-based biologist Gerardo Budowski wrote that the relationship between tourism and conservation can be variously one of conflict, coexistence or symbiosis, and he went on to outline ways in which tourism can be used to support conservation. The emphasis, described in the prolific writings of Mexican architect and ecotourism expert Hector Ceballos-Lascurain, was that the rainforest could be saved in part through low impact, locally-run tourism, by turning tourists into environmentalists, and by building an activist constituency among the traveling public, committed to environmental protection. In the mid-1980s, University of Pennsylvania biologist Daniel Janzen, who has worked for decades in Costa Rica, argued that parks would only survive if there were "happy people" living around them. Janzen put this philoso-

phy in practice in Costa Rica's Guanacaste National Park where, as new cattle lands were incorporated into the park, he invited the cattlemen and their herds to remain inside the park. He proposed turning ranchers into rangers and incorporating them as part of the park staff.

Only with time did these various experiments and intellectual strands come together under the ecotourism label. While definitions vary, the most widely accepted is that first promulgated in 1991 by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES): "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people." The core tenet is that, done right, ecotourism can, on balance, be positive in its impacts, i.e., it can provide tangible benefits for both conservation and host communities, and it can be educational as well as enjoyable for the traveler. Properly understood, eco-

tourism is not simply a niche market within the tourism industry, but rather a set of principles and practices, closely linked to the concept of sustainable development.

Over the years, ecotourism proponents have further expanded the definition arguing, for instance, that the architecture of ecotourism sites should be both low impact ("tread lightly on the earth") and should convey a "sense of place," incorporating local customs, culture, styles and materials. Others stress that ecotourism must also adhere to international norms and conventions regarding human rights and fair labor standards, as well as respect local democratic social movements. This includes honoring calls for tourism boycotts, such as the African National Congress's call for a boycott of apartheid South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s and, today, the call by Burma's pro-democracy movement for a tourism boycott against the ruling military junta.

During the 1990s, propelled in part by the United Nations' 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and a rapidly growing tourism industry, ecotourism exploded. In 2002, the United Nations declared the "International Year of Ecotourism" and staged the World Ecotourism Summit—a signal that this concept had taken on global significance. The significance of ecotourism can be measured in other ways as well: the expansion of university departments and degrees in eco- and sustainable tourism, the dozens of national ecotourism societies and scores of international meetings dealing with this alternative form of tourism, and the hundreds of millions of dollars flowing from the Inter-American Development Bank and other international aid and lending institutions as

well as from environmental NGOs into projects with ecotourism components.

More volume and international recognition, both around the globe and within Costa Rica, has not, however, necessarily meant better quality. While ecotourism is described as "win-win" for the environment and conservation, host communities and developing countries, the traveling public and the travel industry, the reality is more complex. Because definitions and standards have been weak, far too much gets put under the big green tent labeled "ecotourism." Instead, what is currently being served up as ecotourism includes a mixture of three rather distinct phenomena: "greenwashing" scams, ecotourism "lite" and real ecotourism. In Costa Rica all three varieties have taken root, jousting to capture pieces of the tourist market.

Costa Rica's ecotourism panorama is marked by both contradictions and potential. Visitors to Costa Rica find an ecotourism industry full of creativity and experimentation as well as crass opportunism, marketing ploys and downright scams. Although the image is of a country of small ecolodges and beach *cabins*, government investment policies have favored larger and foreign-owned hotels.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, Costa Rica passed legislation providing investment incentives for hotels, air and sea transportation companies, car rental agencies and tour operators. The Costa Rican Institute for Tourism's (ICT) incentives and tax exemptions favored foreign investors and applied only to facilities with more than twenty rooms. "These restrictions often preclude local people from qualifying for incentives," wrote geographer Carole Hill in 1990. Experts estimated that by the early 1990s, 80 percent of the country's beachfront property had been purchased by foreigners. Between 1990 and 1994, 13 new four- and five-star hotels were built, involving investments of nearly \$1 billion. While in the early 1980s, there were virtually no foreign owned hotel chains, by early 2000, many international hotel chains, including Sheraton, Holiday Inn, Hampton, Melia and Barcelo, had either built or bought hotels in Costa Rica.

Some of these big hotel projects have brazenly sought to put on the "eco" mantle. One of the most controversial projects has been Papagayo, a megaresort along a dry and barren peninsula in Guanacaste province. The original developer was Mexico's

Group Situr, which laid out plans for a giant resort complex à la Cancún: vacation homes, condos, shopping centers, golf courses, marinas and hotels for up to 30,000 rooms—more than twice the total number of rooms in the entire country. Despite much public outcry and charges that public officials were being bribed, the Costa Rican government in 1995 gave a "green" light to this \$3 billion project, the largest to date in all of Central America. Situr's first hotel was a stucco complex named Caribbean Village, an incongruous choice since it overlooked the Pacific Ocean. Equally inappropriate was the large sign out front reading *Ecodesarrollo Papagayo* ("Ecodevelopment Papagayo"). In an interview at the site, Arnoldo Estaril, Situr's infrastructure coordinator, told me that the name was fitting because "we're going to plant trees and do an aviary for birds and a butterfly farm." Environmental activist León González retorted, "Everybody calls themselves 'eco developments,' but Papagayo is a city!"

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The 'ecotourism' label is also slapped on 'greenwashed' scams, but two certification programs help tourists find the real thing.

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Around this same time, another near-city masquerading as ecotourism was slated for development along Playa Grande, an important leatherback turtle nesting beach on the Nicoya Peninsula, also in Guanacaste. I became aware of the project through an article in a 1995 architectural magazine entitled "Green Luxury" which bragged that "ecotourism will meet the

high life in a luxury beach resort." The project's architect and main developer, Yves Ghiai, an Iranian based in San Francisco, boasted that "environmental considerations are an integral part of the design" including a system of yellow lights designed not to disturb the leatherbacks as they lay their eggs. "[I]t's just found the yellow lights to meet reptilian and human needs alike." Nonsense, scientists later told me in Costa Rica: Any lights on a beach will scare away turtles looking for a nesting area. Nonsense, also, said the project's administrator in Costa Rica who admitted he knew nothing about any of the environmental innovations described in the article—solar panels, electric golf carts, etc. And, he added, the yellow lights were intended to keep away mosquitoes, not protect the turtles. He showed me the plans for the project: an enormous beach front complex with condos, restaurant, shops, a casino and nightclub, hotel, marina and yacht club. As ecotourism expert Anne Becher, who helped devise Costa Rica's first eco-rating program, put it, "The only thing green about some of these places is the color of the dollars they are earning." Fortunately, the "Green

Luxury" project provoked a public outcry and it was shelved. But struggles to block such developments continue at Playa Grande and elsewhere.

Today, everything in Costa Rica seems to carry "eco" in its name. There is, for instance, "Eco-Playa" (a typical beach indistinguishable from other gray-black sand beaches), "Ecological Rent-a-Car" (which rents the same vehicles as Hertz, Budget or Avis), "eco-gas" (super unleaded), "eco-musica" (songs with environmental themes), and innumerable ecolodges, ecosafaris and ecological cruises. Many of these tourism enterprises can be categorized as ecotourism "lite," meaning that the company's green rhetoric far outstrips the reality of its adherence to sound ecotourism principles. The classic example of this in Costa Rica as elsewhere is the growing number of major hotel chains that offer guests the "eco-option" of not having their sheets and towels laundered every day. Such sensible but relatively minor environmental innovations are advertised with claims such as "Keep your towels and help save the world!" The reality is that it is the hotels that are saving sizeable sums on their laundry bills.

Or consider the new Four Seasons Hotel, which is scheduled to open as part of the Papagayo complex in early 2004. Billed on the Four Seasons website as offering "casual luxury and unsurpassed service to this pristine jungle setting," it is actually situated on dry and denuded former cattle grazing land. Although still under construction, it is also being billed to the travel press as ecologically responsible because plans for the golf course include using a special type of grass that can be watered with a combination of sea and recycled waste waters. However, this all-inclusive resort will bring only modest revenue to Costa Rica, with vacationers paying for their packages overseas and not needing to venture into Costa Rica since everything (except a rain forest!) is available at the resort.

Some smaller lodges, too, have little more than the patina of ecotourism. One of the most notorious examples is Villas del Caribe (this one correctly named for its Caribbean coast location), built by Canadian multimillionaire businessman and U.N. official Maurice Strong, the architect of the U.N.'s 1992 Earth Summit. The Rio Summit was opening just as Strong's company, Desarrollos Ecologicos (Ecological Development) was putting the finishing touches on the \$35 million, 12-suite beach resort.

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Though problems remain,  
when compared to other  
Costa Rican industries,  
ecotourism does seem to be  
more economically and  
environmentally viable.

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While billed as environmentally sensitive for its recycling, composting, and nature walks, one researcher who took a close look concluded that it had "very modest offerings of ecotourism." Even more troubling to local residents and Costa Rican environmentalists, Strong did not have clear title to the land; the luxury hotel was built within the Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge, where development is restricted, and the Kekoldi Indian Reserve, where construction must be approved by the Indian association. It was not, and Costa Rican Indian leaders were livid about Strong: "He's supporting Indians and conservation around the world, and here he's doing the complete opposite," declared Demetrio Mayorga, president of the Kekoldi Indian Association.

Despite the green brush that is dragged over many hypes and shams, Costa Rica also contains scores of genuine ecotourism businesses that are working to be low impact, good environmental stewards, socially responsible, culturally respectful and beneficial to the surrounding communities. Costa Rica's original ecolodge, Rara Avis, was built by Amos Bien, a New York biologist and ecotourism expert who, since his arrival in 1977, has put down deep roots in the country. Beginning in 1983, Bien took out a bank loan and built Rara Avis, a modest lodge on a private reserve, with the intent of demonstrating to area farmers that rainforest left intact could be more profitable than clear-cut land. He also has sought to provide tangible benefits to area residents through employment and profit-sharing, purchasing supplies locally, awarding student scholarships, offering free tours for local school children and making in-kind donations to the local clinic and schools.

As ecotourism has grown, whole rural communities of Costa Rica—Monteverde, Tortuguero, the Osa Peninsula, to name a few—have been converted into ecotourism centers. They include small-scale lodges situated in or near private or public reserves and offer a variety of nature hikes, white water rafting and other outdoor activities. Costa Rica has also developed some of the world's best naturalist guides who deftly interpret the ecological, cultural and political panorama. Many middle and lower-middle class Costa Ricans have managed to move into auxiliary businesses associated with ecotourism, including opening tour agencies or restaurants featuring local dishes, renting riding horses, or building butterfly

"farms" or a few guest cabins. While there are shortcomings and conflicts in all these communities, on balance, ecotourism has brought more income to many Costa Ricans, raised environmental awareness and provided more funds for conservation projects, national parks and private reserves.

*The New Key to Costa Rica*, the country's oldest and most respected guidebook, has long specialized in highlighting genuine ecotourism businesses. Most are locally owned or owned by long-time foreign residents, thereby ensuring that most of the profits stay within the country. Beginning in 1992, the guide's authors, Beatrice Blake and Anne Becher, began a pioneering "green-rating" system with the aim of helping to protect high standards within nature-based, small-scale and often locally-owned lodges. With input from other environmentalists, academics, lodge owners and tour operators, they created an eight-page survey to measure environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts of accommodations. Based on on-site inspections and interviews with hotel managers, workers, and community representatives, the *New Key* authors began awarding eco-logos—one to three "suns"—to those hotels that passed a certain number of the criteria.

In 1997, Costa Rica's tourism ministry, the ICT, unveiled its own certification program. Like the *New Key* survey, the ICT's Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) program grew out of a mounting concern that the "golden goose" of ecotourism was being killed by mass tourism, greenwashing and ecotourism "lite." Tourism officials as well as sectors of the tourism industry were worried that, unless the government began setting rigorous standards, Costa Rica would lose its ecotourism edge. According to a 1998 evaluation, many of the 104 hotels that had signed up to be assessed were resentful of other facilities that "also use such terminology but do not really put into practice basic environmental principles or contribute to the quality of life in their communities." From the outset, the CST was designed to take in a broader swath of the market than simply ecotourism. Its principle creator, ICT official Eduardo Lizano, felt strongly that tourism in Costa Rica was moving beyond small ecolodges and that if the country were to remain competitive internationally, the new, larger, more conventional and often more luxurious hotels also needed to abide by responsible environmental and social principles.

Unlike the home-grown, low-budget *New Key* survey, the CST program has been backed with political muscle and financial resources. A CST audit includes 153 yes/no questions covering the physical-biological environment, hotel facilities, customer satisfaction and socio-economic issues including respect for the surrounding community and nature. Accommodations voluntarily apply for certi-



Lodge on the edge of Manuel Antonio National Park.

ALEXANDRO BILAGUER

fication, which includes an on-site audit by a team of experts. The first round of audits are free. Certified facilities are awarded logos—one to five leaves—by a seven member National Accreditation Commission. Although several hundred hotels have applied for certification, political infighting within ICT slowed the process so only 59 hotels have so far been certified. Of these only five have been awarded four leaves; none have yet achieved a top score of five leaves.

In 2002, tourism ministers from the other Central American countries officially accepted CST as the model to be used throughout the isthmus, and currently a number of South American governments, including Brazil, Ecuador, Peru and Chile are creating certification programs modeled along the lines of the CST. It has also been welcomed by many within Costa Rica: Former Costa Rican President Rodrigo Carazo, whose ecolodge in a private reserve features traditional Costa Rican architecture and art, said, "I never thought they could do what they are doing. Tourism ministers always think in terms of number of hotel rooms. When they began to talk about paying attention to the environment, I

thought they were going to be rejected by the hotels. But this did not happen and CST is growing bigger and stronger." Even the Four Seasons Papagayo project is being forced to build with an eye on the CST program and incorporate some showcase eco-reforms so that it might be able to get certified.

Despite these obvious successes, there have been problems. In addition to bureaucratic haggling, the CST is poorly marketed, leading some hotels to wonder if it's worth the effort. The CST is, however, working to develop and expand the program to include tours and guides. Finally, there is a longer term and very sensible plan to move CST outside the tourism ministry and set it up as either an NGO or a for-profit entity.

Despite Costa Rica's international reputation, some recent studies are indicating that ecotourism has so far only partially fulfilled its objectives of providing significant resources for national conservation efforts and benefits to local communities. A recent study around the Corcovado National Park by Caroline Stern and a team of Cornell University professors, reported "mixed" findings "regarding ecotourism's effectiveness as a conservation and community development tool." The study, to be published in the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, concluded "that ecotourism would be most effective as a component of a broader conservation strategy," i.e., if there was stronger and clearer national planning and policies.

When stacked against other land-based, foreign exchange-generating activities such as cattle ranching, banana growing and logging, Costa Rica's ecotourism industry does appear more economically and environmentally viable than the others. During the first half of the 1990s, tourism grew at 17 percent per year. While this has slowed considerably, due to a combination of internal and external factors, the future still looks relatively bright. Projects such as Papagayo, however, raise the wider question of whether tiny Costa Rica can afford, in the long run, to have it both ways: to promote itself as a leading ecotourism/nature tourism destination sprinkled with small-scale rainforest lodges and beach front cabins,



Waterfall near the Tarcoles River in the Carar Costa Rica National Reserve.

along with dozens of hotel chains and a growing number of megaresorts catering to mass tourism. In the long run, many Costa Ricans fear, the country's unique ecotourism image will be lost, with other countries, particularly Belize, taking on the ecotourism mantle. The move towards creating a strong certification model is important, but certification is only one tool. The government also needs to work to bring its regulations and legislation into line with its country's international reputation and its innate strengths. Ecotourism, not mass or conventional tourism, is most in keeping with Costa Rica's geographical size, its extraordinary biodiversity, and its political and social history. ■

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TITLE: Giving a Grade to Costa Rica's Green Tourism  
SOURCE: NACLA Rep Am 36 no6 My/Je 2003  
WN: 0312101575014

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