



CREST Newsletter: Issue 1, January/February 2014

Bear Viewing Far More Valuable than Bear Hunting: CREST's Newly Released Study Generates Debate

CREST's study, *Economic Impact of Bear Viewing and Bear Hunting in The Great Bear Rainforest of British Columbia*, concluded overwhelmingly "that bear viewing ... generates far more value to the economy, both in terms of total visitor expenditures and GDP, and provides greater employment opportunities and returns to government than does bear hunting." The study, released in January after a six month investigation, is the first to compare the economic value of these two outdoor recreational activities in the magnificent Great Bear Rainforest (GBR) in coastal British Columbia.

The study was widely reported in the Canadian press because it comes amidst heated public controversy, with the Coastal First Nations living in the Great Bear Rainforest declaring a ban on trophy bear hunting and the BC government continuing to issue hunting licenses. Its Key Findings include:

- Bear viewing in the Great Bear Rainforest generated 12 times more in visitor spending than bear hunting and over 11 times in direct revenue for BC's provincial government in 2012.
- The 53 bear-viewing companies identified as operating in the GBR directly employed an estimated 510 persons, while the four guide hunting outfitters generated only 11 jobs that same year.
- Bear viewing is growing rapidly, while most of the hunting outfitters have experienced a decline in business and several are seeking to sell their businesses.
- Bear viewing is a key factor bringing international tourists to the GBR from Europe, Asia, and the United States.



See the [full report](#), [press release](#) and [media coverage](#).

A Portrait of Economic Realities in Nosara and Sámara: Providing Tools for Sustainable Development



In January, CREST released an economic analysis of Nosara and Sámara, two coastal towns in Guanacaste, Costa Rica, characterized by vacation homes and small scale resort tourism. The three month study, commissioned by the Nosara Civic Association (NCA), was led by CREST consultant Janelle Wilkins. Wilkins examined government records in San Jose, Nicoya, and Nosara, interviewed key officials, conducted Internet research, and wrote much of the final report. The study provides vital baseline data to NCA as it develops programs to help reduce poverty and provide high quality local livelihood. The report's Key Findings include:

- **Poverty persists despite the growth in tourism.** In the Canton of Nicoya, including Nosara, the levels of poverty remain higher than the national average. In the coastal zone, areas of extreme poverty exist alongside abundant riches, characterized by luxury ocean view homes and resort hotels. In Nosara, 23% of workers are without National Health Insurance, compared with 12% in the town of Nicoya.
- **Low education levels fuel the stubbornly high levels of poverty in both Nosara and Sámara.** As these coastal communities have moved from agriculture into international tourism (including residential tourism), much of the local population has remained ill equipped for these new jobs. In both districts 75% of the overall work force does not have a high school education. There is an urgent need for vocational skills, English language training, and training that targets women.
- **Nosara lacks sufficient government services.** Nosara is presently paying far more in property taxes to the Canton than it is receiving back from the government in Nicoya in terms of public services.
- **Growth and 'development', while inevitable, must be carefully managed.** Despite the economic disparities, Nosara and Sámara enjoy well deserved reputations for both small-scale sustainable tourism and as attractive livable communities. But, as experienced elsewhere in Guanacaste, fast paced and often ill-planned tourism development can happen very quickly. For Nosara and Sámara, a trigger could be the completion of a paved road from the Liberia airport. The challenge is how to put in place necessary instruments and regulations to ensure that growth is well managed and continues to focus on attracting high value rather than high volume visitors and property owners.

The study is available in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

Destination-Level Sustainability in Mexico

In partnership with knowledgeable and committed local partners, CREST is exploring ways to develop competitive and sustainable tourism in Mazatlan and southern Sinaloa, Mexico.

Marismas Nacionales is known as the “crown jewel” of critical wetlands on Mexico’s Pacific coast. It is also the nursery for the country’s most important shrimp and fish production, and is slated to become a new tourism hub. The federal government has plans to attract development for up to 10,000 new rooms in a first phase, and tourism-related real estate speculation in the area has been high.

CREST and our partners, however, have been working to ensure that any new development meets minimum sustainability standards, complements existing local livelihoods, and provides broad economic benefits. We began by creating a series of eight [Fact Sheets](#) that outline sustainability challenges and identify solutions that have worked elsewhere and could be applied to southern Sinaloa. At a workshop led by CREST in October, a broad coalition of stakeholders created a unified vision for the kind of tourism they’d like to see, and developed a critical path of steps to make their vision a reality. In coming months, CREST will continue to help find and implement solutions to sustainable tourism development in this precious region.



CREST’s New Honorary Advisory Board

CREST is pleased to announce that it is creating an Honorary Advisory Board comprised of distinguished leaders and influencers in the field of responsible tourism. CREST plans to tap the valued knowledge, insights, and opinions of Honorary Board members to aid in advancing its mission and activities. We are pleased to announce the seven individuals have agreed to become the inaugural members of CREST’s Honorary Advisory Board:

- Elizabeth Becker, *author and former New York Times reporter*
- Ewald Biemans, *Owner & CEO, Bucuti & Tara Beach Resorts, Aruba*
- Chris Blackwell, *Founder, Island Outpost and Island Records, Jamaica*
- Dorinda (Dinda) Elliott, *Freelance journalist; former-Global Affairs Editor CondeNast Traveler*
- Dennis Pinto, *Managing Director, Micato Safaris*
- Sonu Shivdasani, *Chairman and CEO, Soneva Group and Founder Six Senses*
- Jonathan Tourtellot, *Geotourism Editor, National Geographic Traveler; Portal Editor, www.DestinationCenter.org*

You can view the biographies of these inaugural members [here](#). Other members will be announced and posted on the CREST website as we receive their acceptance. This Honorary Advisory Board complements CREST's Board of Directors which has legal and fiduciary responsibility for the organization.

New Partnerships

CREST has two new exciting partnerships with organizations that have great potential to change the way the world travels: BookGreener.com and FreeNomads.com. Check them out:

Bookgreener: A Sustainable Hotel Booking Agent



There is a growing demand for responsible tourism worldwide, and travelers know that sustainability is the way forward. The aim of www.bookgreener.com is to list the sustainable hotels in the world - any properties that are actively working to reduce their environmental impact and make positive contributions to local communities. The listing will be free - all hotels need to do is fill in a [questionnaire](#) and indicate green practices. Currently in the process of listing all properties with a certification approved by GSTC, BookGreener is looking for additional properties to include.

Still in the development phase, [BookGreener](#) will be a platform that monitors properties, posts reviews, and allows users to share their experiences, inspiring the travel industry overall to transform holidays into a force for positive change. BookGreener also gives back: they'll plant a fruit tree for every booking made on the site and are later planning to give a share of the profit to community-based projects. Check out the website, and email info@bookgreener.com for more information.

FreeNomads: Promotion, Education, and Collaboration for Tourism Professionals

It's also not always easy for small & medium sized travel businesses to reach their target audiences, find suppliers, or access the information/education they need. CREST is excited to announce a new partnership with FreeNomads, which provides opportunities to solve those problems. FreeNomads is a free and fast growing online business-to-business platform developed specifically for tourism professionals, letting them promote their travel businesses worldwide while connecting with clients and providers, based on the information in their business profiles. FreeNomads also provides free marketing, management and communication tools designed to improve competitiveness. And, most importantly, its unique structure means that users never feel lost in the crowd as is common on other social networks. As of the beginning of 2014, FreeNomads has members in 138 countries worldwide.



Check out the [FreeNomads website](#), create a free profile, and be sure to see CREST Co-Director Martha Honey's blog posting [The Responsible Travel Revolution](#). You can also contact info@freenomads.com for more information.

Stanford Panel on Coastal Development

On Friday, May 2nd, CREST's annual board meeting will be held at Stanford University. Coinciding with the 2014 board meeting, from 12-1pm at the Center for Latin American Studies, CREST's Stanford office has organized a panel on coastal development and ecotourism in the Neotropics, featuring Stanford faculty and experts in the field. The panel will be an opportunity for the same Stanford faculty who participated in CREST's Innovators Symposium in Los Cabos, Mexico in 2013, to speak to the larger Stanford community about the current challenges and achievements made in the region.

Additionally, CREST's co-director Martha Honey will be speaking at the Center for Latin American Studies at 1:15pm about coastal resort and cruise tourism, the subject of her forthcoming book, *Selling Sunshine* (Island Press, 2015).

Travelers' Philanthropy Partner Spotlight: CARE for the Cape & Islands

CREST's oldest program is Travelers' Philanthropy, for which we have a dedicated website: www.travelersphilanthropy.org. In each newsletter, CREST will profile one of our Travelers' Philanthropy partners.



CREST has been assisting an exciting destination-wide Travelers' Philanthropy project in Cape Cod since its inception in 2012. CARE (Creating A Responsible Environment) for the Cape and Islands was the brainstorm of Jill Talladay who is the organization's Director.

Working through local businesses, visitors to the area are invited to make a donation to support any of these designated CARE projects. To date, CARE has funded five different projects for four separate organizations. This coming April, for instance, an educational exhibit on whales (which is partially funded by CARE) will be installed at the Cape Cod National Seashore's Herring Cove Bathhouse and Visitor Center in Provincetown. Other projects include supporting signage and safety measures for Falmouth's Shining Sea Bike Trail, development of a Farm Tour at Cape Abilities Farm that provides training and jobs for adults with disabilities in Dennis, and assisting beach debris clean up and research for the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies.

New programs for 2014 will also include some volunteer and learning opportunities for Cape visitors. For example, volunteers may work with an innovative project to use oysters to purify local pond water in Falmouth. They can also learn about local aquaculture, wildlife, native plants, Cape Cod's history and culture. CREST's role has been to serve as ongoing advisors to CARE for the Cape, as well as its fiscal sponsor. We solicit tax-deductible donations for CARE for the Cape through our [Travelers' Philanthropy website](#). For more information see [CARE's website](#) or contact [Jill Talladay](#).

"I Love Responsible Travel Because..." Facebook Contest

CREST held its first social media contest in January and February, surrounding the statement "I Love Responsible Travel because...". With the goal of igniting dialogue, we asked participants to post an entry explaining why they love responsible travel, via picture with narrative, video, digital poster, or poem. Many thoughtful and exemplary entries were submitted, and were judged by the following tourism experts, many of whom are now serving on our Honorary Board:

- Elizabeth Becker, author of *Overbooked*
- Dorinda Elliott, consultant and previous Global Affairs Editor of *Conde Nast Traveler*
- Gail Henry, Sustainable Tourism Product Specialist, Caribbean Tourism Organization
- Jonathan Tourtellot, Geotourism Editor of *National Geographic Traveler*
- Antonis Petropoulos, Editor, *ECOCLUB.com* - International Ecotourism Club

The winner was Theresa Conn, from Dover, NH. She submitted a video from her eco study abroad in Australia and New Zealand. Check it out [here!](#) She won a two night stay donated by [The Orchard Hotel](#), a luxurious and eco-friendly boutique accommodation, in San Francisco.

Spring 2014 Interns

Four new interns have joined CREST through mid-May, and not a moment too soon! We have two students from Mexico, who have come via a prestigious internship program at the [Washington Center](#):

- Edmundo Acosta is an accomplished graphic designer, who works for the Mexican state of Hidalgo. He often works to help entrepreneurs market and package their products and is very interested in corporate image and CSR.
- Raymundo Morales is in his last semester at the Autonomous University of Querétaro, studying Industrial Design. Passionate about the environment, he has invented an organic waste processor, which has helped his university to reduce organic waste by 80%.

Two students have also joined us from the George Washington University's [Master of Tourism Administration](#) Program.

- Rui You (Helen) is in her second semester, studying Hospitality Management. She is very interested in the role hotels play in the sustainability of tourism, and hopes to bring knowledge from CREST back to China.
- Luyang Zhang (Vicky) is in her final semester, studying Events & Meetings Management. She hopes to be an event planner for a non-profit, and is focused on the continued evolution of sustainable events.

We're thrilled to have these diverse and enthusiastic students on board.

CREST's Eco-Auctions

Thanks to eight fantastic responsible trip donors, CREST's February eco-auction via [Charitybuzz](#) was a huge success! Donors included: [Cavallo Point Lodge](#), [Coco Collection's Coco Bodu Hithi](#), [Costabaja Resort & Spa](#), [Hotel El Ganzo](#), [Knight Inlet Lodge](#), [Mukul Beach, Golf & Spa](#), [Totonal viajes que iluminan](#), and [Tweedsmuir Park Lodge](#).

CREST holds four of these auctions a year, which provide valuable funding for CREST's day-to-day operations, research, and travelers' philanthropy program. We use the occasion to feature not only the fantastic vacations offered, but also highlight our donors' CSR policies, awards, any certification, carbon offset, and/or travelers' philanthropy programs. This is a great opportunity for travel businesses to get the word out about what their company has to offer and create or maintain a connection with CREST.

The next eco-auction will take place prior to Mother's Day 2014. If your company would like to donate a trip, or if you know of a responsible travel company that would be a good fit, please contact CREST Program Associate, [Samantha Hogenson](#).

Upcoming CREST Events

- **March 27 & 28:** Miami Dade College & Earth Ethics Institute Ecotourism Symposium, featuring Martha Honey as the keynote speaker. The symposium will explore ecotourism as a lens to understand the triple bottom line of sustainable development and review ecotourism's presence in South Florida.
- **March 30:** CREST's documentary examining impacts of different models of tourism in Costa Rica, *The Goose with the Golden Eggs*, will be shown at the Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital! See the [EFF Website](#) for a film schedule to be released in late February.
- **May 2, 12 pm - 1 pm:** Coastal Development and Ecotourism in the Neotropics Forum at Stanford University, featuring Stanford faculty & additional experts in the field.
- **July 9 - 12:** Executive Symposium for Innovators in Coastal Tourism, Grenada. Hosted by CREST, the Caribbean Tourism organization, and the Grenada Tourism Board. More information about this exciting event will be released shortly.