



**ECO-DESTINATION EXCELLENCE: HOLISTICALLY  
DELIVERING SUSTAINABILITY, NATURALLY**

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As the United Nations' *International Year of Sustainable Tourism For Development (IY2017)* unfolds across the globe, the 'S' word is echoing across the tourism world. The concept of sustainability has long been a core principle of tourism development.

The opportunity for IY2017, its legacy, is in the embedding of not just the message of sustainability in the context of tourism for development, but the messengers – the examples that will provide the learnings for others to apply in their destinations, in both policies and practices.

As a proud partner of the UNWTO in its leadership of the IY2017 across the UN system and global tourism community, CNN International will continue to focus a number of 2017 CNN TASK 'Compass' articles on showcasing not just the critical messages of the *International Year of Sustainable Tourism For Development*, but also the examples of global practice – the messengers.

This month, focus is on the heart of the hospitality sector – the hotel segment – and how in one country, from deep within the rainforests to all along its shores, excellence in execution of 'sustainability' in policies, practices and philosophies, is lived.

Importantly, as embedded in this nation's philosophy (so not just that of the tourism sector), the meaning of 'sustainability' goes far beyond going green.

The country: Costa Rica.

The Philosophy of Its People: *"Sustainability, as a model of development, seeks to meet the current demands of society without compromising the rights of future generations to meet theirs. That is to say, the development of the country cannot be based on the unbalanced exploitation of resources (natural, cultural, social, etc.) to meet the demands of society (food, housing, health, employment) because these are the only resources we have, and that future generations have, to meet our and their own needs."* Source: Government of Costa Rica

The Philosophy of its Tourism Sector: *"The development of sustainable tourism must be seen as the balanced interaction between the use of our natural and cultural resources, the improvement of the quality of life among the local communities, and the economic success of the industry, which also contributes to national development. Sustainable tourism is not only a response to demand, but also an imperative condition to successfully compete now and in the future."* Source: [www.visitcostarica.com](http://www.visitcostarica.com)

The property in the spotlight: the Arenas del Mar, a luxurious 5-star property within the Cayuga Collection of Sustainable Luxury Hotels and Lodges.

The Cayuga Philosophy: *"Our hotels and lodges are proof that sustainability and luxury can co-exist. We create a sense of place as well as physical and social well-being for our guests and staff. We positively impact the communities where we operate through educational initiatives, the creation of growth opportunities for people and supporting local supply chains. Our hospitality operations run efficiently and create no harm to biodiversity and people. We create consciousness*

*of a sustainable lifestyle. (Our) Concept of “Experience – Learn – Connect – Relax” and Sustainability go hand in hand in many aspects, especially related to the guest and staff experiences overlap. They complement each other and are strongly interwoven.* “ Hans Pfister, President, Cayuga Collection of Sustainable Luxury Hotels and Lodges

The Pledge at Arenas del Mar: *“Our hotel is set in eleven acres of nature with private nature trails filled with wildlife and access to two beautiful beaches. Inspired by the natural beauty that surrounds us, we at Arenas del Mar are committed to demonstrating that a world class resort can successfully combine the highest levels of sustainability, rigorous standards in environmental stewardship and social responsibility, all while operating completely carbon neutral.”* (Source: <http://www.arenasdelmar.com>)

Why it matters? *“Sustainability is an equilibrium, it’s trying to live in equilibrium with other people, with our nature, with our resources. We have to make a change in our minds, the way that we live, our lifestyle. But we need to communicate – we need to educate that sustainability is more than the trees, the nature. We must protect our people, their way of life. Our culture is what makes us different, what makes Costa Ricans proud. It is why people visit our hotels and feel welcome, feel part of our family. Costa Ricans are proud of family, they want people to see their homes, know how they live. Sustainability must take care of our people, not just our nature. We learn in school about history, chemistry, biology – but we don’t have the opportunity to learn about this problem, about our future, about what we are doing to our child’s future.”* Fernando Jimenez, Director of Sustainability, Arenas del Mar

How it is Managed and Measured: A national Certification For Sustainable Tourism process (CST) championed by the Ministry of Tourism of Costa Rica and Costa Rica Tourism Board, that embeds the following essential principles within tourism businesses and bodies across the country:

*“What is 100% responsible tourism?”*

- *It is the type of tourism that the country needs.*
- *It is efficient operations that promote conservation and efficient use of resources.*
- *It is tourism that is committed to the community and its needs, seeking dedication and solutions for the environment.*
- *It is the certification of all tourism businesses that must be dedicated to carrying out conservation measures and handling risks to nature appropriately.”*

Source: Government of Costa Rica

The Lesson of Costa Rica for all Nations in IY2017: A holistic approach, with people and place in a protected balance. *“The CST’s fundamental purpose is to make sustainability a practical and necessary reality within the context of the country’s competitiveness in tourism, while looking to improve the way that natural and social resources are used, encourage the active participation of local communities and provide a new source of competitiveness within the business sector.*

Sustainability, with all of its dimensions, working for the future of the nation, naturally.

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