

ECOTOURISM IN COSTA RICA GENERATES USD 1.4 BILLION A YEAR



Ecotourism in Costa Rica generates more than 809 billion CRC (1.4 billion USD approx.) a year, according to research conducted by the National University of Costa Rica.

Ecotourism comprises activities related to national parks and biological reserves and represents more than 3% of the country's GDP. **Revenues of the industry have grown 48% between 2009 and 2016, as the findings suggest.**

Almost 52% of tourists entering the country visit a national park or a biological reserve, these being one of the main attractions of Costa Rica. Between 2015 and 2016, visits made to parks by both nationals and foreigners grew 13%, according to the data from the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC).

The activities generated 9.1 billion CRC (over 15 million USD) in ticket sales to the parks. Three years ago, more than 2.1 million tourists visited national parks. Parks most visited by foreigners are the Manuel Antonio, Poás Volcano and Tortuguero national parks, while the Irazú Volcano is among the favorites of the domestic tourists.

"It is extremely satisfying to see these figures, and all the more reason to push the proposal to turn the production model of this country towards a circular economy and a blue economy, which are the current trends around the world," said Grettel Vega, Director of the National System of Conservation Areas.

In total, national parks add 1 trillion CRC (1.7 billion USD) to the national economy, without subtracting the annual maintenance to these areas or the employees' salary.

Ecotourism in Costa Rica is followed by the second industry that generates more income from national parks - the water resource management, with 144 billion CRC (about 246 million USD), as well as creation of direct and indirect jobs, which represents almost 7 billion CRC (about 12 million USD)

To date, the country has 29 national parks, but the current administration is studying new proposals, so this number could increase soon. **At least five protected areas and wildlife refuges will soon receive the status of national parks**, said Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, Minister of Environment and Energy.

Adventure tourism and the Essential brand (Costa Rica's official country brand), which integrates protection and enjoyment of nature, would help the Government achieve the goal of up to 4 million visitors a year by 2022, according to projections of the Costa Rican Tourism Institute.

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