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PRESS RELEASE

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Comprehensive New Study Released: *"The Impact of Tourism Related Development along Costa Rica's Pacific Coast"*

Washington, DC and San Jose, Costa Rica: The Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) is releasing today a new study analyzing the “boom and bust” of coastal sun-and-sand resort and real estate development on Costa Rica’s Pacific coast. This multi-dimensional study, carried out over two years by some two dozen researchers in Costa Rica and the U.S., is the first comprehensive examination of the growth, trends, and impacts of tourism and tourism-related development along Costa Rica’s Pacific coast, with particular focus on the years between 2002 and 2009. Click [here](#) to download the full study.

At a press conference today in San Jose, CREST co-directors William Durham and Martha Honey, together with several of the researchers, presented the study’s key findings and policy recommendations. The CREST Co-Directors are also meeting with several top government officials to discuss the key policy recommendations emerging from the study.

Speaking at the press conference, Costa Rica’s former first lady, Margarita Penon, a member of the study’s eleven person Advisory Committee, said that the study’s findings are “critically important to our understanding of the risks that rapid and poorly planned coastal tourism development are posing to our successful model of nature-based ecotourism.” The study compares the increasingly dominant models of coastal and marine tourism – characterized by large resorts, vacation homes (“residential tourism”), and cruise tourism – with Costa Rica’s internationally acclaimed model for high value, nature-based ecotourism.



Billboards advertise new condos resorts and land sales along Costa Rica’s Pacific coast

Over the last decade, Costa Rica’s Pacific coast has become one of the epicenters of rapid beach resort and vacation home development closely tied to the U.S. market. The research traces the origins of this coastal transformation from the 1970s to the present, with particular focus on the real estate and construction boom and bust caused by the international economic crisis.

The research project includes 18 individual studies, written in either English or Spanish, which are posted on the center's website: www.responsibletravel.org. In addition, CREST is releasing today the Summary Report in English and Spanish, also available online, that pulls together the most salient points from all 18 studies.

Based on a number of key findings, the study concludes with a list of Top Ten Recommendations, including:

- The controversial government-managed Gulf of Papagayo Tourism Project be turned into a showcase demonstrating that resort tourism can conform to sustainable tourism principles and practices.
- The government abandon plans to build a second Pacific coast international airport at Palmar Sur because it would attract large scale tourism and vacation home development that would degrade habitat on the biodiversity rich Osa Peninsula.
- Costa Rica expand its 'green' hotel certification program to cover design and construction as well as coastal vacation home complexes.
- Costa Rica not expand high value cruise ship tourism on the Pacific coast and instead concentrate on smaller 'pocket' cruises.

The research findings, analysis, and recommendations are intended to play a constructive role in helping to foment public discussion, civic engagement, and policy reforms to ensure sustainable development of coastal and marine tourism.

About Center for Responsible Travel

Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) is a policy-oriented research institute affiliated with Stanford University. It is committed to using tourism as a tool for poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation. CREST's network of experts provides interdisciplinary analysis and innovative solutions through consultancies, research and field projects, publications, conferences and courses. Core programs include Coastal and Marine Tourism, Market Research, Travelers' Philanthropy, Ecotourism and Certification.

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