



CREST Newsletter: Issue 8, August & September 2015

CREST Charter Club Trip to Cuba - Additional Spring 2016 Trip Possible!

The CREST [Charter Club trip to Cuba](#), January 24 – 31, 2016, is now full. Participants will go with CREST staff and tour operator Cuba Educational Travel to experience a number of the country's ecological and cultural wonders. They will also have the opportunity to learn about the unique opportunities and challenges stemming from increased tourism demand on Cuba's environment, cultural,



and economy, given the recent warming of relations with the US. CREST is planning to organize and host an additional trip due to high interest. If you would be interested in joining a future trip (Spring 2016) to Cuba, please fill out this short [expression of interest](#). We will be in touch when dates are selected.

In addition, we are also organizing specialized trips to Cuba for specific (theater, scientific, etc.) organizations or associations. These will combine high quality ecotourism with your specific field of interest. Please [contact us](#) to discuss a customized trip for your organization.

Climate Change and Coastal & Marine Tourism Publication

Stemming from the successful July 2016 Innovators Think Tank: Climate Change and Coastal & Marine Tourism, organized by CREST and the Puntacana Ecological Foundation, CREST is working with partners to prepare a publication on the topic. The result will be a compilation of informative essays and case studies, designed to help coastal and marine tourism businesses better address climate change. Divided into two main sections, coastal tourism and marine tourism, it will contain practical information for what is currently working and not working and what needs to

be done going forward.

The focus is on the Caribbean and North America, but much of its content will be applicable worldwide. While targeted at the industry (both businesses and associations), CREST anticipates that the publication will also be useful to governments and international development agencies, academics, NGOs, and others involved in or interested in coastal and marine tourism and climate change.

Contributing authors include attendees from the Innovators Think Tank and a number of other climate change and/or tourism experts and best-practice practitioners. The coastal tourism section will be edited by CREST's Martha Honey and the marine tourism section will be edited by Dr. Kreg Ettenger, who heads the Program in Tourism & Hospitality and is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at University of Southern Maine. He is a Visiting Associate Professor doing research at University of Maine this semester. CREST is in the final stages of selecting a publisher, and digital and print versions are expected to be available in Spring 2016.

'New CREST Film: "Caribbean 'Green' Travel"

Editing is continuing on CREST's latest documentary film, "Caribbean 'Green' Travel" with an estimated release date in late November. The editing of the 40 minute documentary, which is being done by Pilot Productions, is half completed. The final film will feature examples of socially and environmentally responsible travel in Grenada, Jamaica, Aruba, and the Dominican Republic. It will be used, together with the new CREST publication on climate change and coastal and marine tourism, as part of a public education campaign targeting the Caribbean.

CREST Holds Successful Workshops with Indigenous Communities in Chihuahua, Mexico

In September, CREST and its partners spent 8 days conducting site visits and workshops with three Raramuri indigenous communities in and near the Copper Canyon in Chihuahua, Mexico. The CREST team also met with local tourism business leaders and government officials, as well as indigenous vendors selling crafts and food near the Canyon's rim. To date, indigenous communities have been marginalized and largely bypassed by tourism businesses and government agencies involved in developing tourism in and around this famous natural attraction. CREST, with support from The Christensen Foundation, is involved in a two year project to create tourism circuits involving three communities to showcase certain cultural and natural attractions. Because international tourism has dropped off sharply in the wake of drug-related violence



and the economic downturn, these tours will initially be marketed primarily to Mexican visitors, but will be suitable for foreign visitors as well.



The CREST team included Ximena Alvis Gonzales, the project manager; Mauricio Martinez Miramontes, a tourism consultant from Chiapas who specializes in working with indigenous communities; and Arturo (“Chito”) Gutierrez, a tour operator based in Creel, Chihuahua who runs adventure, eco, and cultural tours. CREST is also partnered with two local NGOs, Tierra Nativa and CONTEC, that work with the three indigenous communities selected for this project, Huitosachi, Bacajipare, and Mogotavo. Leaders from these

two NGOs accompanied the CREST team on day long site visits and workshops in each community. Between 25 and 45 community members attended each workshop. The community workshops focused on having community members work together to identify their natural and cultural resources and a calendar of activities and festivals, and then determining which attractions and activities they want to share with tourists.

CREST and its partners then held a final day-long workshop in the Bacajipare Community Center with some 50 participants from the three communities. The workshop included a didactic game designed to demonstrate that tourism takes collaboration among and between communities, followed by a presentation of successful community-based tourism in other parts of the world and a discussion of what types of tourism products the CREST project could developed in these Raramuri communities.



In addition the CREST organizers held individual meetings with government tourism officials, local hoteliers, and tour operators. In the coming weeks, CREST will send a survey soliciting additional information about tourism to other Chihuahua-based tours operators and hoteliers.

CREST’s Destination-wide Assessment in Southern Sinaloa

In September, CREST officially launched the next phase of its Sinaloa project, which is carrying out an assessment of five southern municipalities in the state. The tourism assessment is based on the UNWTO-backed GSTC (Global Sustainable Tourism Council) indicators and methodology.

The project, which is expected to last eight months, will conduct a detailed analysis to determine how well southern Sinaloa conforms to the GSTC criteria for destinations, and where are the areas in which improvements are required. CREST is working with two GSTC consultants, Amos Bien who serves as a GSTC technical certification expert and Kathleen Pessolano who has served as GSTC's Destinations Program Director. In Sinaloa, CREST is partnered with the state business council CODESIN and the environmental NGO Conselva. In addition, Kennedy Magio, who has just completed his Ph.D. in tourism management at the **Universidad de Occidente** in Sinaloa, is assisting with gathering documents and other information needed for the GSTC assessment. CREST staff is assisted by Oscar Axel Tellez, a Mexican student who is working with CREST during the fall semester. Conselva is in the process of hiring a tourism consultant who will serve as the project's on the ground counterpart, based in Mazatlán.

In early November, CREST and GSTC will hold a workshop and extended site visit in Sinaloa. The final product will be a strategic tourism plan for sustainable tourism in southern Sinaloa, along with the creation of a local Destination Management Organization (DMO). This new DMO, to be made up of key tourism professionals in the state, will oversee the continuing development of sustainable tourism. The CREST project is supported by the Overbrook Foundation, International Community Fund, CODESIN, and the Sinaloa State Tourism Secretary.

CREST Project in Guerrero, Mexico Concludes

In late September, CREST and its Mexican partner Sustenta concluded their project in Guerrero with the publication and final delivery of two products: a Strategic Ecotourism Plan for the state and an inspiring photo book depicting Guerrero's many cultural and natural attractions. CREST and its three consultants -- Juan Luna, a Mexican tourism expert who was the lead on the project; Thomas Meller, a Mexican-based certification specialist; and Rodrigo Gallegas, who works with IMCO, Mexico's institute for competitiveness -- researched and wrote the Strategic Plan, and Sustenta produced the photo book.

While the CREST and Sustenta teams worked collaboratively and professionally and the final products are high quality, this government-financed project has proven to be the most difficult consultancy CREST has ever undertaken. Guerrero is the poorest and most violent state in Mexico and sections of the state could not be visited for security reasons. The Guerrero officials overseeing the project changed several times, delayed decision-making and payments, and repeatedly demanded additions beyond the original deliverables in the contract. The project took twice as long as scheduled to complete and in the end, the government cut the amount it had agreed to pay, while government taxes and the dropping value of the peso cut significantly into the payments for CREST.

Meet the CREST Fall Interns

We are thrilled to have four inspiring students from all across the world working with us at CREST this fall semester. These students are sharing their talents with us, while supporting the work we are doing and building their knowledge of responsible tourism to bring back to their home countries.



- **Loan Dao** (pictured far right) grew up in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She is currently pursuing a Masters of Tourism Administration with a concentration in sustainable destination management from the George Washington University. She earned her bachelor degree in Hospitality and Tourism Administration at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, RI, with honors. Loan has traveled, worked, and volunteered all over the world.
- **Noora Laukkanen** (pictured right center) grew up in a small town in Eastern Finland called Mikkeli, and is currently enrolled in a Masters of Tourism program, specializing in Global Tourism Development, at Aalborg University in Copenhagen, Denmark. She earned her Bachelor in Hospitality Management in Finland, but she spent half of her studies abroad, having gained a wide range of experiences to add to her tourism and development understanding.
- **Lisa Sciacaluga** (pictured left center) spent her childhood partly in Barcelona and grew up on the island of Gibraltar. In July 2015, she graduated from Manchester Metropolitan University (UK) with an Upper Second Class Bachelor of Science degree in Geography. During her time in Manchester she researched and studied an array of topics including development, social and cultural, and political geographies.
- **Oscar Axel Tellez** (pictured far left) was born in downtown México City's and has lived the majority of his life in a little town in México called Tecámac. He is currently finishing his studies as a biotechnologist engineer at the Universidad Tecnológica de Tecámac. He also has a degree as an industrialization dairy technician. He is very interested in the well-being of the environment and the impact humankind has on the planet.

Sharing Expertise ~ Providing Leadership

State Department Delegation from Mexico

On September 30th, CREST had the privilege of hosting seven Mexican leaders in indigenous education through the U.S. State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program. The objective of the visit was to facilitate the development of joint research initiatives between Mexican Intercultural Universities and U.S. universities and institutions with advanced programs in alternative



tourism, community forestry engineering, sustainable development, and language and culture. CREST's Martha Honey and consultant Ximena Alvis Gonzales shared dialogue with these guests regarding sustainable tourism development within indigenous communities, and specifically, CREST's current indigenous tourism project in Chihuahua.

CREST Intern Spotlight Articles

Our interns bring different passions and interests with them to CREST, and we encourage them to develop and share their thoughts while they are with us. This article by Noora Laukkanen, "[Challenges of Sustainable Tourism Planning in Rural Areas](#)," explores some difficulties in developing successful community-based tourism, based on experience she had in Morocco during her Master's program. This article by Loan Dao, "[Buong River Ecolodge Project: A Way to Preserve Vietnamese Culture and Showcase the Nation's Ancient Architecture](#)," discusses her family's ecolodge project and their work to make sure it highlights and preserves Vietnam's natural and cultural assets, while supporting and involving local communities. The final article, by Oscar Axel Tellez - "[Fall in Love with Mexico's Cultural-Heritage & Natural Attractions](#)" - presents some of Mexico's tourism offerings that can make travelers want to return time and time again to the diverse country.

CREST Fall Eco-Auction & Upcoming Holiday Auction

CREST's Fall Eco-Auction was held September 8 -22, via [Charitybuzz](#). This and CREST's other auctions would not be possible without generous donations from leading tourism businesses. We invite only businesses well recognized for providing both high quality of service and socially and environmentally responsible tourism. These auctions are critical to supporting CREST's various programs, including CREST's research and field studies, internship program, travelers' philanthropy, and operational expenses as a non-profit. Donors included:

[Alto Atacama Desert Lodge & Spa](#), [Bougainvillea Beach Resort](#), [Finca Luna Nueva Lodge](#), [Himalayan Smile Treks](#), [Hotel Antumalal](#), [Hotel Vermont](#), [Inn by the Sea](#), [Lisu Lodge](#), [Madidi Jungle Ecolodge](#), [Mallin Colorado Resort](#), [Maui Eco Retreat](#), [Nuarro Lodge](#), [Rainforest Expeditions](#), [Sea Crest Beach Hotel](#), [Soneva Kiri](#), [Tiamo Resort](#), [Xixim Mayan Hotel](#), and [Yacutinga Lodge](#).

If your business is interested in being a part of our holiday auction (November 24 – December 8), please contact CREST program associate, [Samantha Hogenson](#). This is a great opportunity for responsible travel businesses to showcase sustainability initiatives and create or maintain a connection with CREST.

CREST in the News

- **August 04, 2015: Travel Weekly** article by Gay Nagle Myers - [Young Voices are Heard in Sustainability Conversation](#). JetBlue partnered with the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) to offer two students scholarships for attendance to the 2015 Innovators Think Tank Conference. In addition, the outcome of the conference will be showcased in a video documentary title “Caribbean ‘Green’ Travel” that scheduled for release late this year.
- **August 13, 2015: Inter-American Foundation** article by Martha Honey and Janelle Wilkins - [Top 10 Points to Consider When Creating a Destination-Wide Travelers' Philanthropy Program](#). Reflecting on the challenges and successes of Monteverde, Costa Rica's Travelers' Philanthropy program, developed in 2010, and Grenada's program, developed in 2015, Honey and Wilkins share points for advice for others looking to establish destination-wide programs.
- **August 16, 2015: Odyssey** article by Maxime Devillaz - [The Lion King Still Lingers, For Now](#). While animal lovers around the world were celebrating “World Elephant Day” on Aug 12, the issue of sport hunting on the African savannah was raised again. CREST’s Martha Honey shares thoughts on sport hunting in her book “Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who Owns Paradise?”
- **August 26, 2015: Inter-American Foundation** article by Justin Welch - [Tourism, Development, and Community Philanthropy in Costa Rica](#). The Monteverde Community Fund was established by a group of local residents based on the idea of “Travelers’ Philanthropy” by the Center of Responsible Travel (CREST).
- **September 23, 2015: Travel Weekly** article by Gay Nagle Myers - [Cuba Tours Reflect Increased Demand](#). The Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) has partnered with Cuba Educational Travel for its first Cuba program, an eight-day people-to-people tour highlighting Cuba’s marine, cultural, and natural tourism offerings.
- **September 29, 2015: Los Angeles Times** article by Mary Forgione - [Millennials Give More than Most, a Survey of Charity Travel Finds](#). A recent survey by [Tourism Cares](#) shows high giving

tendencies among US travelers. CREST's [Dos and Don'ts of Travel Giving](#) is referenced for how to take part in mindful travel giving.

Upcoming Events, Projects, & Announcements

Rock Hewn Churches Route in Ethiopia

In October, CREST will undertake a short term consultancy to develop a route and visitors' map for the spectacular Wukro-Ghera Rock Hewn Churches located in Tigray province, Ethiopia. These archeological gems date from the 4th century when Christianity was first introduced into Ethiopia. In late October, CREST Program Associate Samantha Hogenson will spend about 10 days in Tigray, working with local experts to identify up to



15 of the 70-odd rock-hewn churches as well as other local attractions that will be featured in a new tourism route.

This consultancy is part of the European Development Fund's project, "Preserving and Promoting Tigray's Cultural Heritage for Development" which is administered by the Tigray Culture and Tourism Agency (TCTA). Based on the site visit, CREST will produce a high quality, English language, digital print-ready route guide and map for the rock-hewn churches and other cultural attractions in the area. This guide will be suitable for use by international tourists and is intended to help promote Tigray rich cultural heritage to the international market in order to help increase jobs and local livelihoods, especially for youth and women in Tigray region.

American Prairie Reserve (APR), Montana

From October 7-12, CREST Executive Director Martha Honey will visit the American Prairie Reserve in Montana and speak at the Reserve's 2015 Annual Gathering in Bozeman. ARP is spearheading a historic effort to assemble the largest wildlife reserve – over 3.5 million acres of public and private land – in the continental United States. Dubbed "America's Serengeti", the Reserve seeks to manage this vast park for wildlife regeneration and protection and for public enjoyment. Honey



has been invited to speak as part of the Global Conservation Panel on the theme of integrating ecotourism principles and practices into the American Prairie Reserve.

Tourism Development in Northern Cyprus

In October, CREST Executive Director Martha Honey is scheduled to take part in a World Bank mission to foster sustainable tourism among the Turkish communities in the northern part of Cyprus. The site visit and two day workshop is intended to help further the development of international tourism in the northern part of the island and to ensure that it meets European Union standards. Cyprus is a major tourist destination in the Mediterranean, but most of it is concentrated in the Greek dominated south.

While the Republic of Cyprus has legal sovereignty over the island, holds a seat in the UN, and is a member of the European Union, in reality, the island is partitioned into Greek and Turkish sectors divided by the 'green line'. The self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which is recognized only by Turkey, covers about 36% of the northern part of the island. In early 2016, Cyprus is scheduled to hold a popular referendum on reunification. In preparation for this important vote, the World Bank is providing support to both the tourism and agriculture industries in the northern sector to bring them into compliance with EU standards.

Studies of Note: Tourism Cares Conducts Survey on Philanthropic Habits of American Travelers

CREST applauds the work of our industry colleagues at Tourism Cares and their partners at Phocuswright on the release of the study, [Good Travels](#). The study was conducted for the industry to better understand the philanthropic habits of American travelers. Among the important results, "55% of travelers surveyed donated dollars, time, or supplies while traveling in the last 2 years." CREST was pleased to play a minor role by providing resources such as our "[Dos and Don't of Travel Giving](#)," given our past work in Travelers' Philanthropy. We look forward to further collaborating with Tourism Cares and other partners in the future to advance the impacts of mindful travel giving.