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International Travelers' Philanthropy Conference Hailed as Great Success Papers and Presentations Available Soon

The 3rd International Travelers' Philanthropy Conference, held in Costa Rica July 20-23, 2011, has been enthusiastically proclaimed an "excellent", "memorable" and "marvelous" event by attendees from some two dozen countries. "It was truly a wonderful gathering of eclectic people, ideas and working models that inspired and informed," commented one participant, while another called the four-day gathering "impressive. This is a movement that will grow in the future."

Organized and hosted by the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) and the Monteverde Institute, the conference was designed to showcase travelers' philanthropy, which generates resources of "time, talent, and treasure", above and beyond what is generated through normal tourism business transactions. Over the last decade, travelers' philanthropy has expanded around the globe and, increasingly, become part of the definition of responsible travel.

As Costa Rica's former First Lady Margarita Penon, wrote in an August 4th op ed piece in the leading Costa Rican newspaper, *La Nacion*, the conference "established in an explicit manner that travelers' philanthropy should be part of the concept of responsible travel and contribute to sustainable social, environmental, and economic development of local communities and tourism destinations."

The 150 conference participants included a rich mix of practitioners from tourism businesses, experts in the fields of sustainable tourism and philanthropy, government officials, community-based organizations, global and regional NGOs, academics, and the media. To download the conference program with a list of speakers and workshops, please [click here](#).

The first day of the bilingual conference was held at the Ramada Herradura in San Jose, the only large urban hotel to have earned five green leaves under Costa Rica's sustainable tourism certification program. On day two, the conference moved to the small mountain town of Monteverde, renowned for its cloud forest reserve, small scale nature-based ecotourism, and vibrant and engaged local community. "We chose these two diverse settings to demonstrate that responsible tourism, including travelers' philanthropy, is about principles and good practices more than a business' size," explained Jannelle Wilkins, Executive Director of the Monteverde Institute.

CREST has organized two previous travelers' philanthropy conferences, at Stanford University, California in 2004 and in Arusha, Tanzania in 2008. "The diversity and professionalism of the participants at this third conference and the high quality of their presentations demonstrates that travelers' philanthropy is maturing as we develop best practices and protocols to ensure its effectiveness," noted CREST Co-Director Dr. Martha Honey.

In order to continue the momentum created at the conference, CREST will produce a set of post conference proceedings (which will be available online), an online database of tourism businesses with travelers' philanthropy initiatives, and a proposed "Code of Conduct" for travelers' philanthropy. Important and

controversial topics surrounding travelers' philanthropy are now up for debate on the discussion threads at CREST's Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/CRESTravel>

In addition, the Monteverde Institute launched the pilot phase of an innovative project to develop the first-ever destination-wide travelers' philanthropy program through which tourism businesses are working collectively to raise funds for select community projects. For more information on the Monteverde Initiative, [Click Here](#). The Institute is also planning to offer courses and field studies in travelers' philanthropy and other aspects of responsible travel.

Ultimately, the conference reinforced the momentum of a growing movement – one that will continue to evolve and mature as the concept of travelers' philanthropy becomes more integrated into the mainstream travel market.

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For post-conference updates and other details, [Click Here](#).

The conversation continues online, go to our Facebook page to be a part of it. Also follow us on [Twitter!](#)

Conference website: www.travelersphilanthropy.org/conference

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