

~ 2024 Annual General Meeting ~
Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network
(WIDECAST)

Hotel Bougainvillea

Heredia, Costa Rica

11-12 March 2024

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

Dates:

The Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST) will convene its annual general meeting (AGM) on 11-12 March 2024 at [Hotel Bougainvillea](#) in Heredia, Costa Rica. Participants will fly into Juan Santamaria International Airport (SJO). A sponsored Reception, including drinks and hors d'oeuvres, will take place on March 10 at the hotel in the Dalias Room (first floor) from 6:00 to 8:00 pm!



Location:

Hotel Bougainvillea is located in Santo Tomás, Santo Domingo, Heredia, 20 minutes from the airport and 10 minutes from downtown San José. It features a 10-acre tropical botanical garden, home to more than 600 species of beautiful plants!

Objective:

The aim of the meeting is to share information on national and regional-level sea turtle research, management, and outreach programs; to learn from peer experiences; to facilitate networking and partnerships; and to strengthen science-based conservation programming. The agenda will include national reports, regional issue reviews, working groups, and technical presentations with related discussion. WIDECAST country coordinators, biologists, policy-makers, and educators from throughout the Wider Caribbean region are welcome to attend.

Meeting Itinerary:

We are offering pre- and post-AGM field trips with *advance registration*. See Appendix I for details. If you would like to participate in a pre-AGM field trip, please arrive on March 9 and

be prepared to pay for an additional hotel night. Similarly, plan to stay after the meeting to enjoy a post-AGM adventure! In either case, our discounted hotel rate will apply.

International Travel:

Juan Santamaria International Airport (San Jose International Airport: SJO) is accessible by dozens of international airlines. Non-resident travelers must have a valid passport and possess a return ticket as proof of intent to exit the country before their visa or entry stamp expires, usually within 90 days.

Airport Transport:

Juan Santamaria International Airport to the Hotel Bougainvillea:

1. Uber: select the hotel address and walk north behind the airport parking lot (70 m) to reach the main road.
2. Orange taxis or airport taxis: COOPETRANSTURA R.L. is a cooperative comprised of a group of Costa Rican State concessionaires that offer taxi service to and from the Juan Santamaria International Airport. They are committed to providing a serious, prestigious service with the comfort and safety of passengers being the foremost issue for our drivers. The services may be hired 24 hours per day, 365 days of the year. The drivers are bilingual (Spanish/English) and are trained in tourist information and human relations. Reservations are available by telephone (506) 2440 4444 and (506) 2440 3113, online www.officialairportsjotaxi.com, or you can find their office after the luggage X-ray machine. You will recognize their personnel in a white shirt and brown pants. For more than 4 people together, we recommend that you request a microbus service (average cost US\$31/one way).
3. Private taxi: ask for Oscar by Whatsapp: +50687352955 (Didiher's friend).

Visas:

References: <http://www.costarica-embassy.org/index.php?q=node/51>
<https://migracion.go.cr/Paginas/Visas.aspx>

Entry Requirements

Tourist entry to Costa Rica is allowed from all countries, but each visitor must comply with the migratory processes established in the General Law of Migration and Immigration. Temporary immigration measures established under the national health emergency due to COVID-19 have been repealed (see "Health", below); however, tourists must follow the health protocols established by private companies in order to participate in any tourist activity.

Remember that:

A return flight ticket is needed when entering Costa Rica. The immigration officer will ask for it upon your arrival. It is advisable to make a photocopy or take a picture of your passport with the entry stamp to carry at all times during your stay.

- Your country of origin determines the number of days available to stay in Costa Rica as a tourist.
- Even with a 90-day tourist visa, the immigration official determines the duration of your stay as allowed by your passport.
- In some cases, the Immigration official may request that you show economic solvency for your stay in the country.

Visitors to Costa Rica must have a valid passport as well as proof of their intent to exit the country before their visa or entry stamp expires, usually within 90 days.

All non-resident travelers must possess a return ticket or a ticket as proof of when they intend to exit the country, commonly referred to as an outbound exit or onward ticket. An onward ticket is required of non-residents who are:

- Traveling on a one-way ticket
- Entering the country with a return ticket dated more than 90 days after arrival
- Flying into Costa Rica and flying out of another country

By law, an onward ticket includes any of the following on approved, commercial transport:

- A pre-purchased bus ticket out of the country
- A pre-purchased flight out of the country
- Proof of passage on a cruise ship

Obligation to Declare when entering or leaving Costa Rica:

When entering or leaving a port in Costa Rica, if you carry an amount equal to or greater than US\$ 10,000 or its equivalent in other currencies, cash or securities, you must request and complete the form provided for this purpose at the migration post and present it to the Customs Authority for verification. The declaration must be made before finalizing the corresponding immigration procedures. The omission of what is established by Costa Rican law (No. 8204, article 35) will result in the immediate loss of money.

Source: <https://www.visitcostarica.com/en/costa-rica/planning-your-trip/entry-requirements>

Health:

Starting April 1, 2022, the temporary immigration measures for entering Costa Rica - put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic - were repealed. This eliminates the requirement to complete the epidemiological form known as the Health Pass and the requirement of medical insurance for unvaccinated foreigners.

All commercial establishments, activities, and events can operate at 100% capacity. However, Costa Rica maintains a requirement for mandatory use of masks, protocols for washing hands and taking temperatures, as well as compliance with health protocols for each tourist activity.

Starting on July 30, 2007, all travelers coming from the following countries must possess a **yellow fever vaccination** certificate before entry into Costa Rica will be allowed: Angola,

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Bolivia, Venezuela, **Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador** and the **Republic of Guyana**.

Meeting Expenses:

Registration Fee: **None** 😊

Hotel: **PLEASE READ CAREFULLY.**

We have 25 rooms reserved at the Bougainvillea Hotel. They must be reserved by January 15, 2024. Please DO NOT make your reservation on the website, EMAIL your reservation to info@hb.co.cr (copy Keisy Gutiérrez M., our hotel liaison at ventashb@hb.co.cr and keckert@widecast.org). Use the discount code **AGM 2024**.

You can request a single, but I urge everyone who is comfortable doing so to reserve a double or we may run out of rooms. Plus, by sharing a room we meet our long-standing criteria that the meeting cost no more than US\$ 100 per person per day 😊 If you need help finding a roommate (or need financial assistance), let Karen know.

The lowest price room category is the Mountain View room with two full size beds, at US\$ 142.50 minus our 20% discount (using the AGM 2024 code), for a total per night of US\$ 128.82 with tax and breakfast *included*. You can also choose another room category and, if it's available, the hotel will apply the same 20% discount to the chosen category of room.

When sending your room request to info@hb.co.cr, you must: indicate the preferred room category, your arrival and departure dates, the name of each guest in each room, a credit card number with its expiration date to guarantee the arrival, and indicate the WIDECAS group code. Each guest will receive his/her confirmation directly.

Need a roommate? Spanish speaking, let Didiher know. English speaking, let Karen know. We'll do our best to keep track! We know that having your travel confirmed by January 15 will not be easy for some. Request leave now, make sure your passport is up-to-date, and examine your end of year budgets to confirm affordability! WIDECAS always has a small amount of funding available to help those who most need it. Don't hesitate to ask.

Conference Room: The Conference Room is fully equipped with amenities, including a screen, beamer, laptop, microphone, and a service staff member.

Meals: **Breakfast** is included in your room rate. **Lunch** on March 11 and March 12 is covered by WIDECAS in the Vitrales Restaurant inside the hotel. We must pre-pay for these lunches so please plan to take advantage of the lunch service! During the meeting time we will have two **coffee breaks** per day and a permanent drink/snack station in the conference room.

Dinner will be your choice. You may elect to dine at the hotel restaurant, visit restaurants nearby, or shop at supermarkets around the hotel. Some ideas:

- Tecos Gastronomía Mexicana
- Big Chicken CR
- Artisan Brew Pub
- El Diez
- Belin Pub
- Manpuku Sushi
- Papa Johns Pizza
- Super markets: Mas por Menos, Automercado

The sales tax is 13% plus 10% of services (tips) - these are included in all bills by law.

Currency:

The Costa Rican *colón* (CRC) is the official unit of currency, but US dollars are used and accepted most everywhere. Credit cards are accepted in all major shops, hotels, and restaurants in Costa Rica. Exchange rate is around 530 colons per 1 US dollar.

Foreign visitors should be prepared to provide ID to verify a credit card transaction. For additional detail, visit <https://costarica.org/facts/currency/>

You can find three banks in Sto. Domingo town: Banco Nacional, Banco de Costa Rica and BAC.

Electrical and Internet:

Electrical: Electrical outlets in Costa Rica are like the electrical outlets found in Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. (110 v), meaning that they are most likely to have two prongs and an extra prong for grounding (Type B). Notwithstanding, it's always wise to have an adapter with you should the socket you encounter be Type A.



Internet: It's my understanding that free Wi-Fi Internet is available in all rooms, but WIDECAS will pay a fee for Wi-Fi to be available in the conference room.

Shopping Centers:

We recommend Lincoln Mall and Paseo de las Flores Mall (20 minutes by car from the hotel).

Contacts:

Didiher Chacón - Local logistics, field trip details, expressions of gratitude!

AGM Host 😊

WIDECAS Latin American Office

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APPENDIX I

Sendero Agency (info@senderoadventures.com) Reservation Code: WIDECAS AGM 2024

Please select a day before or after the AGM. The extra hotel days will be at your own expense. Our discounted hotel rate will apply to your entire visit.

Poas Volcano, Doka Coffee Plantation, La Paz Waterfall Gardens - \$180 USD per person

We will visit the Doka Coffee Estate for a delicious breakfast. Then we will be treated to a coffee tour in a working coffee plantation where we will learn the ancient techniques used by the experts to produce some of the best coffee in Costa Rica and around the world. After the coffee tour, we will continue to Poás Volcano National Park, where there is a noticeable change in temperature and vegetation of the cloud forest. Poás Volcano is an active 2,708-metre (8,885 ft) stratovolcano. The crater of the volcano is over a mile across and 1,050 ft deep. It has erupted 40 times since 1828, including April 2017.

At the Volcano we will have time to enjoy the impressive main crater with its sulfur fumaroles, and hike on a trail to the beautiful Botos Lagoon as we learn about the different ecosystems in the park. After Poás, we will continue to La Paz Waterfall Garden, where we will enjoy a buffet lunch that includes multiple selections of Traditional Costa Rican dishes and much more. At La Paz Waterfall Gardens we will walk through trails surrounded by lush tropical rain forest. Here we will appreciate flowing white rivers, spectacular waterfalls, birds, butterflies, monkeys, and hummingbirds. There are also educational animal exhibits to enjoy such as the Aviary, the Butterfly Observatory, Hummingbird Garden, Serpentarium, Jungle Cats Exhibit, and the Frog Exhibit!

Arenal Volcano and hot springs - \$175 USD per person

Enroute to the Arenal Volcano, we will stop at the famous town of Sarchi, known as the birthplace of Costa Rica's artisans. Here you can appreciate many of the country's finest crafts and souvenirs. The journey continues through diverse plantations with agricultural

products, including pineapple and plantain farms, mango groves, ornamental plants and even cattle ranches until arriving to the small town of La Fortuna, and stopping to enjoy lunch at a cozy restaurant with a magnificent view of the volcano. The impressive Arenal Volcano is a natural wonder situated in La Fortuna of San Carlos. It was assumed to be dormant until it experienced a major eruption in 1968. Now it is visited by tourists from around the world hoping for the opportunity to witness volcanic activity, such as the white plumes of smoke that emanate from the conical shaped behemoth.

Then you will go on to relax at one of the best hot springs in the area where you will revel in the cleansing and rejuvenating effects of the thermal waters. The facilities at Baldi provided 25 separate mineral water reservoirs that flow naturally from the volcano. The medicinal waters are certified by L.N.A. (Laboratorio Nacional de Aguas). And for a perfect ending, before going back to San José, a wonderful dinner will be served with a great view of the volcano so that you do not miss any opportunity to look at the classically shaped volcano.

Irazu Volcano, Cartago and Orosi Valley - \$135 USD per person

The tour begins with us trekking south along the Panamerican Highway until we reach the base of the "Iztaru" (a name of an indigenous village that was situated on the flanks of the volcano, and a likely candidate as a possible origin for the current name of the Irazu Volcano). The winding road traverses fertile lands in which all types of vegetation are cultivated, all the while affording us a spectacular panoramic view of the surrounding hills and valleys. And, at the very top of the summit, on a clear day you can be privy to an unforgettable bird's eye view of both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

As we descend to the city of Cartago we will stop at the Virgin of the Angels Basilica - a famous site for many believers, some of which travel for days or even weeks on foot, in a pilgrimage of faith, to the site. The Basilica has large, vaulted ceilings and exquisite examples of stained-glass windows, and is a must see. Next, after we visit the Basilica, we will continue to the Valley of Orosi, an area that overflows with unparalleled beauty. We will visit one of the few remaining colonial churches and we will stop to enjoy a tasty typical lunch at one of the local restaurants.

Manuel Antonio (closed on Tuesdays) - \$165 USD per person

Manuel Antonio National Park is considered one of the most beautiful parks in Costa Rica. On this tour, you will visit pristine beaches bordered by exuberant vegetation and the natural wonders of the tropical rainforest. On the way to Manuel Antonio National Park, you will travel along the coastline enjoying scenic views, including African palm plantations. You will also travel past small villages along the Pacific Coast until you reach the port of Quepos and ultimately the National Park. Since access to the park itself is closed to vehicles, you will hike to the preserve, crossing a creek. Once in the park, you can relax and enjoy the beach, sunbathe, or hike through the park's trails, which will allow you to observe Manuel Antonio's abundant flora and fauna. Several species of monkeys, iguanas, birds and possibly even the three-toed sloth can be seen. If you choose to hike the trail to Cathedral Point, do not forget your camera; the views of the park and the sea are simply spectacular!

Catamaran to Isla Tortuga (Turtle Island) - \$175 USD per person

You will experience a day full of beautiful skies, great ocean views and live music. On board the yacht, tropical fruits and natural drinks will be served and at the island there will be time to explore the surroundings, sunbathe, swim, take an optional tour like kayaking and ziplining; and enjoy a delicious lunch prepared by the crew. This excursion departs from San José very early in the morning to Puntarenas, where you will board a yacht to Isla Tortuga (Turtle Island), a beautiful island located in the Gulf of Nicoya. Tortuga Island is composed of 120 hectares of gorgeous terrain and a Blue Flag certified beach. On the way to Tortuga Island you will see the San Lucas Island which in the past was a security prison where no human rights existed and thus a dark age in Costa Rica's history. The journey to Tortuga Island will be onboard a yacht equipped with 2 motors, radar, satellite navigation systems, VHF marine radio, clean bathrooms, and drinking water. An experienced international maritime licensed yacht captain and well-trained crew will ensure a safe, enjoyable and unforgettable journey.

Rainforest Cable Car - \$155 per person

The Cable Car of the Caribbean Rainforest is a Private Reserve of 475 hectares, located just 50 minutes from San José and 5 kilometers after the Rio Sucio bridge, on the Braulio Carrillo highway to the province of Limón. The property shares a limit of 10 km with the Braulio Carrillo National Park and constitutes a buffer zone between the park and agricultural production lands. Upon arrival, visitors are greeted by the staff, who will invite them to board the exclusive transportation from the reception to the video room in the visitor area. Before, there will be a short stop to enjoy the panoramic views on the suspension bridge and the Brook Tree Viewpoint. After the presentation of a short introductory video of the park, visitors are guided to the Cableway boarding area where the main idea is to showcase the different levels of the forest, including the canopy, the hardest level to reach and until now, the part of the forest less known in the scientific field. On the trails you can see the heart of the rainforest where there is a great diversity of plant and animal species. That is why the walk along the trails and the ride on the Cable Car are an excellent combination to know and appreciate the rain forest from the ground to the treetops!

Dinner and Dance show - \$85 per person

Located in San Antonio de Escazú, Mirador Tiquicia is a magical and unforgettable place. This is where the Tica Night show is performed. The impressive view of the Central Valley can be enjoyed from here. This evening tour takes you to discover Escazu - the Capital's upscale suburb. En route a winding paved mountain country road with awesome views brings you to Tiquicia. Here a traditional farmhouse with 150-year-old tiles awaits to offer you a genuine Costa Rican ambiance where you will be able to sample local food together with national drinks served in the kitchen area. A typical dance presentation takes place during your stay while you enjoy amazing views of the entire Central Valley.