



CEPA

Champions Regenerative Education Abroad



GENERAL INFORMATION

Established in 1997, CEPA (Customized Educational Programs Abroad) and the non-profit CEPA Foundation are organizations based in Ingersheim, Germany that focus on university-level summer and semester study abroad programs for groups or individual students. As catalysts of education, these organizations also organize advanced seminars and professional workshops.

In 2018, as part of a shared initiative between CEPA and its non-profit CEPA Foundation, the extent to which the organizations contribute to the climate crisis was evaluated, and specific goals were set to mitigate their climate impact. In unison, these organizations began to integrate climate and nature-positive action within their operations. Today, CEPA and its sister foundation partner with universities across North and South America, who benefit from CEPA's strategic partnership with the Forest Friends ecosystem restoration program hosted by Green Initiative.



Established in 1997



Location: Ingersheim, Germany



+150 universities around the world actively involved



INTRODUCTION

CEPA believes education is instrumental in fostering global understanding and leadership. Their climate and nature-positive program is integrated into its value proposition for universities involved in their study abroad program, aligning with the UNWTO's Glasgow Declaration for Climate Action in Tourism and emerging recommendations for regenerative tourism. By investing in climate projects that avoid carbon emissions and through their support to non-profit nature conservation organizations in biodiversity hotspots, CEPA is effectively setting the standard for educational organizations by building educational programs abroad that support the long-term renewal and flourishing of our social-ecological systems. Thus, CEPA is building a future where we can meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.



REGENERATIVE TOURISM WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Organizations involved in tourism have progressively adopted best practices such as eco-friendly accommodations and the offsetting of flight emissions. Now, "green" tourism is entering a new shift – from eco-conscious, to sustainability and regenerative practices. Regenerative tourism practices take a step beyond sustainability practices by integrating ecosystem restoration and community well-being into business models, and climate mitigation actions.

"I have seen other organizations planting trees and sending certificates, and so on. However, none of them have the transparency Green Initiative and Saimiri Foundation offer..."

Uli Leibrecht the founder and executive director of CEPA went to one of the most important events for worldwide international education (NAFSA), and the participant universities were impressed with the quality of the work that has been done"



Tatiana Visnevski
Institutional Global Relations at CEPA



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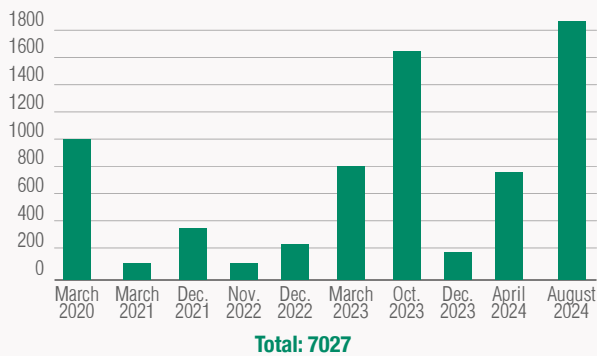
NATURE POSITIVE ACTION FOREST FRIENDS ACCELERATOR

CEPA partners with universities in North and South America to catalyze climate and nature-positive actions in their educational programs abroad. Effectively, earning CEPA the Forest Friends Accelerator certificate for their commitment to accelerating the restoration of degraded lands into natural wildlife corridors in biodiversity hotspots.

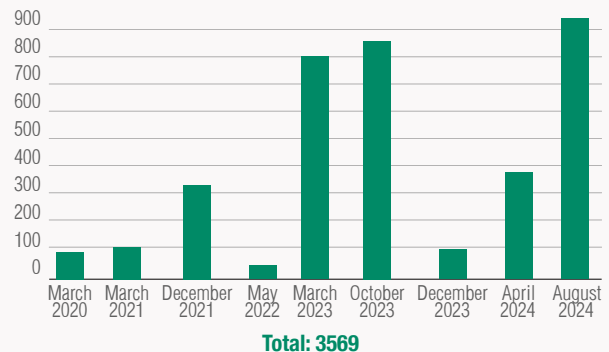
Specifically, CEPA is committed to planting a tree and supporting climate initiatives that avoid GHG emissions equivalent to half a tonne of CO² for each student who is enrolled in an academic program of a participating university. Hence, CEPA not only contributes to providing students with a new cultural experience and diverse education but also to building an educational experience that is aligned with today's global climate concerns.

From 2019 until June 2024, CEPA has proudly planted 7,027 native trees and avoided the emission of 3,569 tons of CO² through the purchase of Certified Emissions Reductions (CERs), showcasing CEPA's understanding of the relevance and importance of connecting their business model and value proposition to climate and nature positive impacts.

Historical record of trees planted (unit)



CERs (tCO₂e)



CEPA'S POSITIVE IMPACTS

Reduce habitat fragmentation through tree-planting initiatives that are conducive to the livelihood of wildlife. For example, several of the native tree species planted in the Osa Peninsula produce fruits that are consumed by the Black-crowned Central American Squirrel Monkey (*Saimiri oerstedii*), and other species of primates, such as the wild cashew (*Anacardium excelsum*).



Communicate environmentally friendly initiatives to partner universities, service providers, and networks, to inform on how they can make low-carbon choices, measure their climate footprint, and reduce and/or offset their carbon emissions.



Provide seasonal employment for the local inhabitants, particularly for local workers at tree nurseries. Thereby, helping reduce illegal logging.



Engaging local communities in the notion of ecosystem restoration and maintenance, fostering environmental awareness, and supporting the local economy which heavily depends on nature-based tourism.



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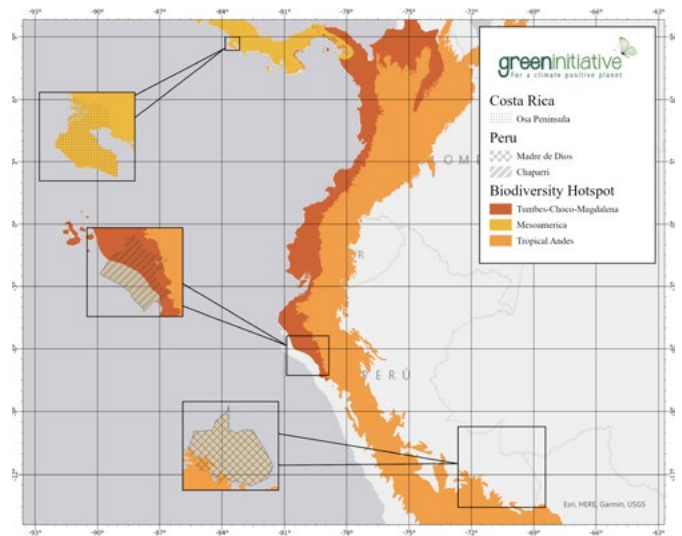
OSA PENINSULA, COSTA RICA RESTORATION IN BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOTS

CEPA's ecosystem restoration initiative operates exclusively in Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica; a biodiversity hotspot recognized by Conservation International. As such, the remote southwestern Osa Peninsula is one of the most biodiverse areas relative to its size (1,200 km²) harboring 2.5% of the global terrestrial biodiversity (Zurita et al., 2014).

The Osa Peninsula is an excellent candidate for conservation and restoration as it is composed of the world's most carbon-dense forests, the majority of which lie within protected areas. Additionally, ecotourism in the area represents 60-80% of the economic benefits for the locals (Zambrano et al., 2010). Hence, restoration initiatives in the peninsula work effectively with the local communities and are of utmost importance to them. In fact, overall forest cover in the peninsula is increasing at a rate of 5-6% yearly (Algeet-Abarquero et al., 2014).

To ensure restoration generates a positive impact on biodiversity CEPA works with Green Initiative and Saimiri Foundation to identify key areas exhibiting habitat fragmentation that lie within the national parks/forest reserves or key biological corridors. Helping reinforce the habitats of over 4000 species of vascular plants, 10,000 species of insects, 700 species of trees, 463 species of birds, and 4 kinds of monkeys.

In addition, CEPA's long-term and continuous commitment to restoration has greatly benefited local non-profit organizations such as the Saimiri Foundation.



4000

species of vascular plants



10,000

species of insects



700

species of trees



463

species of birds



4

kinds of monkeys

"Our grassroots organization has greatly benefited from our partnership with the CEPA and Green Initiative. These projects have had a significant economic impact on local communities in the countryside of the Osa Peninsula. The involvement of the locals in planting and maintaining trees has generated jobs and brought a stable income, empowering local associations and fostering economic growth; showing that environmental conservation and economic development go hand in hand."



Daniela Solano
Founder of Saimiri



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CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS



In local communities, constrained financial resources impede the adoption of sustainable practices and technologies, underscoring the vital support by organizations such as CEPA to provide the necessary funding for effective climate action initiatives.



Expanding the program's reach by involving new universities and increasing outreach with current universities poses a challenge due to CEPA's small number of team members.



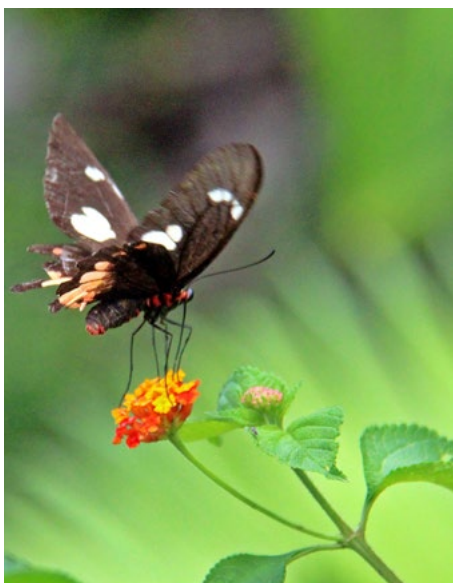
Increasing the incentives for people to do voluntary work in the Osa Peninsula restoration sites is beneficiary for both the locals and the volunteers.



Shifting CEPA's organizational culture to prioritize sustainability can be challenging. Resistance to change, especially from long-standing practices, may need to be addressed through effective communication and leadership.



Making the added value of nature- and climate-positive initiatives apparent to stakeholders and showing the return on investment (ROI) can be difficult in the short-term, especially while working towards long-term environmental goals.



To learn more about how to engage in nature-positive actions please visit:

<https://greeninitiative.eco/forest-friends/>

For more information on regenerative practices visit our blog:

[click here](#)

To explore CEPA's work please visit:

www.cepa-abroad.org

www.cepa-foundation.org