



# Costa rica europe renewable energy

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In Costa Rica, sustainability is a way of life. The country has long been a pioneer in protecting its plentiful natural resources, including its biodiverse cloud forests and rainforests, golden and black sand beaches, and active volcanoes' vibrant ecosystems. Today, it's on a mission to become the first carbon neutral country on the planet. With renewable energy sources already making up nearly 93 percent of Costa Rica's electricity, the country is well on the way to reaching that goal.

At just 19,730 square-miles, Costa Rica is roughly the size of West Virginia. Despite its relatively small footprint, the country's high concentration of rivers, dams, and volcanoes provide a plethora of renewable energy resources.

After the end of Costa Rica's civil war in the late 1940s, the country abolished its army, opting to invest its budget instead on environmental conservation, education, and health. Around the same time, its government created the Costa Rican Electricity Institute to tap into its renewable natural resources, diversifying between green energy technologies like geothermal energy--deriving power from heat beneath the earth's surface--as well as wind power, solar power and the use of biomass, a renewable organic material that comes from plants and animals.

However, Costa Rica's ample waterways and high volume of annual rainfall has made hydropower the country's obvious choice when it comes to renewable energy. In fact, electricity harnessed from moving water makes up more than half of the country's overall energy output.

The National Decarbonization Plan also includes initiatives to develop integrated, low greenhouse gas emission systems to collect, separate, reuse and dispose of waste by 2025. The country has already banned the sale and free distribution of single-use plastic straws and bags, with exceptions for reusable and biodegradable bags. Although these latter bags can be plastic, they must be certified for low environmental impact and cannot be single-use.

By the 1980s, Costa Rica had lost somewhere between a half and a third of its trees to loggers and agriculture. However, thanks to a successful reforestation program--which includes a Payment for Environmental Services Program, providing financial incentives to farmers or landowners who engage in activities like agroforestry and planting tree farms--and forests now cover nearly 60 percent of the country. The country's Decarbonization plan calls for maintaining this percentage and even increasing it by 2050.

Costa Rica is home to about six percent of the planet's land-based and marine life biodiversity. It also boasts nearly a half-a-million acres of protected land, including 29 national parks, 19 wildlife refuges, 8 biological reserves. These include places like Tortuguero National Park, a remote stretch of tropical rainforest, swamps and beaches, and Santa Rosa National Park, which protects some of the last remaining tropical dry forest in



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the world--one that's brimming with wildlife such as tapirs, jaguars, and white-nosed coatimundis.

The country's dedication to sustainability extends to community-led initiatives, such as locally run ecolodges and fair-trade coffee farms, as well as industry. In 2018, Costa Rica joined the Wellbeing Economy Alliance, a collaboration of organizations, alliances, movements, and individuals worldwide, all working toward an economy that puts human and ecological well-being first. This includes attracting multinational companies that prioritize sustainability, like US-based medical device company Boston Scientific, and global tech innovator IBM.

When it comes to sustainability, Costa Rica is a global model for everything from investment to ecotourism. Still, it's the country's commitment to renewable energy that's leading the charge.

The 1948 elimination of the military of Costa Rica freed up millions of dollars from the government defense budget which are now invested in social programs and renewable energy generation. As president of Costa Rica in 1948, Jos? Figueres announced that the nation's former military budget would be refocused specifically in healthcare, education, and environmental protection.

The commercial consumption of energy in Costa Rica has tripled from 1980 to 2009. The electricity consumption has increased by 4.2 times due to a high level of electrification. According to the World Bank, 99.5% of the country's population has access to electricity. Meanwhile, fossil fuel's consumption has increased by 2.4 times, caused by a significant growth of the number of motor vehicles.

Geothermal power is a natural energy source that provides subterranean heat and power as a byproduct of volcanic energy. Costa Rica has six currently active volcanoes and dozens of inactive volcanoes. Unlike many other forms of renewable energy, geothermal can be continuously generated and is not dependent on weather. Geothermal energy contributes to about 15% of the energy in the country.

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