

Leading Sustainable Environmental Change: A New Adult Learning Journey in Costa Rica

Cerro Vueltas, an ecolodge/organic farm in the high mountain area of Costa Rica, is proud to offer *Leading Sustainable Environmental Change*, a New Adult Learning Journey in Costa Rica.

Run by the multi-generation Seelye family, Cerro Vueltas specializes in unique and life-changing experiences for nature lovers of all ages. Our philosophy is that deep, experiential learning in nature is essential to revealing purpose and critical to reimagining and regenerating a world that we can all live in, both now and seven generations from now.



Course at a Glance

- Topics covered: leadership, communication, team-building, networking, meaningful reflection
- Duration: 11 days (we recommend flying in on day 0, 1 day before the course officially begins)
- Dates: There are two separate sessions offered in Winter 2024
 - o Session 1 – Wednesday, January 24 – Saturday, February 3
 - o Session 2 – Friday, March 1 – Monday, March 11
- Travel: Fly in and out of SJO airport in San Jose, Costa Rica. In-country travel will be covered.
- Course Fee: \$3,000 per person (covers food, ground transportation, and lodging)
- Link to Register: _____

Why should you embark on this journey?

If you are reading this, chances are very high that, like so many of us, you are deeply concerned about the state of the world today and the messes we are leaving for future generations. In addition to our human family, you care about *all* species that share the planet with us. You want to do more to help and do it in a joyful, collaborative way, but you just aren't sure what that might look like... We created this course just for you!

Course Origins

This course is modeled after a highly successful, graduate-level course in Sustainability Leadership developed by Paul Kazyak and Amber Lively at Johns Hopkins University that has been inspiring folks to step up and lead more on things they care about since 2016. By eliminating mandatory assignments from that for-credit course, we took an outstanding learning experience and made it even more powerful. More interaction with your classmates, and more interaction with the natural world in Costa Rica. Win, win!

Why Costa Rica

Costa Rica is a perfect location for a deeply meaningful leadership learning experience. First, it is one of the few countries in the world that is actively pursuing a carbon-free economy in the near-term. Second, Costa Rica has positively stunning natural beauty and its wildlife biodiversity is actually increasing because of its sustained efforts to replace agricultural land with tropical forests. Thus, it is a perfect place to see some of the solutions we need displayed right in front of our eyes.



Course Highlights and Activities

Leadership can be learned, but not taught. So, during our 11 days together, we will explore the principles and 'how-tos' of leadership in highly interactive, personal ways, with frequent breaks dedicated to self-reflection and informal discussion to help you truly process and 'own' all the great stuff you will be learning.

To maximize our learning, we will create a space where mutual respect and trust are high and empathetic listening is the norm. We will also practice and hone our observational and communication skills and learn to more objectively question assumptions about what we see and hear. Two highlights of our learning will be providing regular, honest feedback to peers and being faced with frequent, real-time leadership challenges to work through as a group. Because sustainability is inarguably the most important challenge and opportunity of our time, we will also use examples and hear first-hand testimony from sustainability practitioners about how they overcame obstacles to achieve or make progress on their goals.



Our ultimate goal for you in this course is to help you greatly expand your leadership toolbox, increase your confidence to lead, and inspire you to do so more frequently on things you care about- all while developing relationships, a support network and approaches that will help you stay 'in the game' over the long haul.



Whether it be group activities, team challenges, or time for introspection, the learning environment on our journey will quite often be outdoors, as we believe that it is where the stickiest learning occurs.



Just because we have scheduled team-building and learning activities, it doesn't mean we won't take breaks during class when unusual wildlife sightings present themselves. At Cerro Vueltas, we have taken time to view particularly amenable resplendent quetzals and Bairds tapir. At Hacienda Baru the cause for stoppage might be a passing troop of capuchin monkeys, a flock of yellow-throated toucans or a turf war between black iguanas.



***Physical activity note:** Our activities during this course are all 'Challenge by Choice' (optional) and most activities are doable by folks who are decently fit. However, for those who crave a challenge, we sometimes up the ante, hiking up to 5 miles or more in challenging terrain at 9000 ft+ elevation. There is also an all-day trip to Corcovado National Park on the Osa Peninsula that includes unique river/ocean passage via motor boat.

Your Instructor



Paul Kazyak has been a popular lecturer at Johns Hopkins University since 1994. An aquatic ecologist by training, two of his courses, sustainability leadership and applied sustainability, have allowed him to share his deep passion for these subjects with his graduate students.

Separately, Paul has been conducting leadership retreats for over two decades to a wide variety of audiences, including high school and college students, graduate students, foreign students, government employees, non-profits and schools. He is a Fellow of the prestigious National Conservation Leadership Institute (NCLI) and he has been a leadership instructor for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies since 2013.

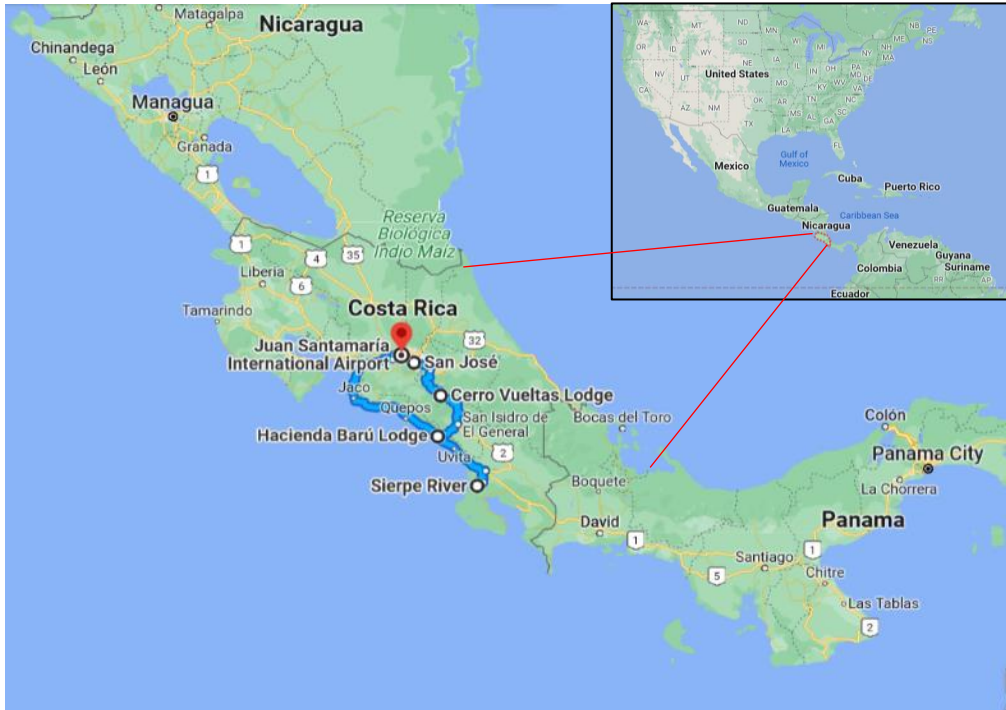
In addition to the Excellence in Teaching Award he received in 2020 from Johns Hopkins University Advanced Academic Programs, Kazyak's many other awards span a range of topics, including youth environmental education, aquatic science, sustainability, and work in government.

Beyond his teaching interests, Paul is totally committed to helping put the world on a path to sustainability. The Kazyak family walks the talk (solar PV, electric cars, LED lighting, carbon offsets, compost, garden, etc.) and he shares these approaches with others. Paul is a community organizer and Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream (ATD) facilitator for the Pachamamma Alliance and a Climate Reality Mentor.

In addition to Paul as a primary instructor, our team will also include a teaching assistant chosen from former graduate students who are active practitioners of leadership in their community.



Course Schedule and Details:

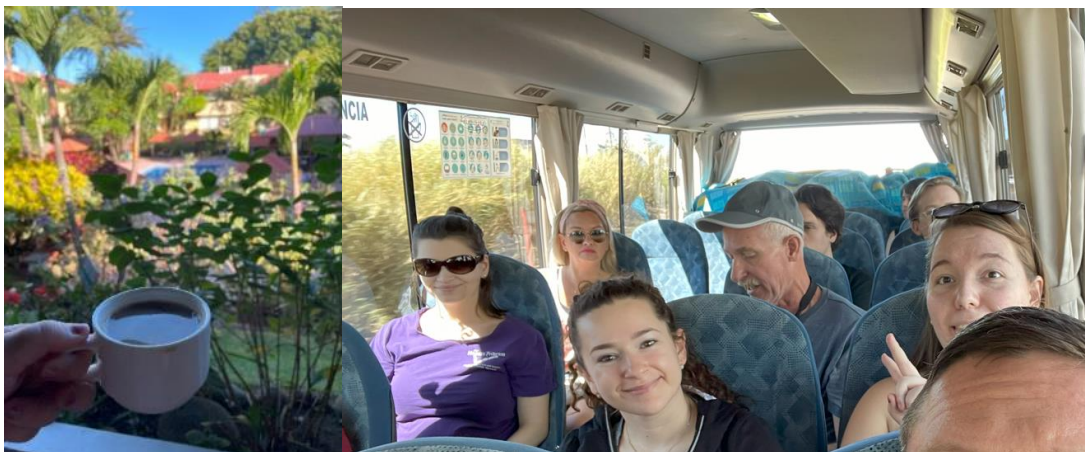


Course Schedule

Course activities will include a pre-trip zoom meeting approximately 2 weeks prior to the start of the course to go over specific details, logistics, and answer questions you may have.

Your journey will officially convene at a hotel TBD in San Jose, Costa Rica near the SJO airport on the morning of Day 1. To ensure that you arrive at the convening site on time, you will in all likelihood fly into SJO airport on the day before, and we invite you to share dinner with the instruction team at the hotel that evening.

On the first morning, we will convene at the hotel and after some initial activities, we will head up into the high mountain area of Costa Rica.



Our first destination will be Cerro Vueltas Ecolodge/Organic Farm in the cloud forest near the highest part of the country- a unique area with many endemic species, including truly magnificent, 3,000 year old podocarpus trees.



After 6 days at Cerro Vueltas, on Day 7 we will move locations via bus to the 800-acre Hacienda Baru National Wildlife Refuge on the Pacific Coast near Dominical. A cattle ranch in the 1970s that now hosts over 365 bird species and five species of cat, Hacienda Baru has become a shining international example of what environmental restoration can do for biodiversity in just a few decades.



During our 5-day stay on the coast, we'll take a memorable journey down the Sierpe River, past the most intact and largest mangrove forest in Central America to the the Pacific Ocean to visit Corcovado National Park on the Osa Peninsula.



On the morning of Day 11, we'll return to SJO airport in San Jose to say our goodbyes, with a projected noon-time arrival.



What else you will be doing

During non-class times, you will have many opportunities to be out in nature during our journey together, including opportunities for guided and unguided wildlife viewing along miles of trails, reflection time in an old growth area that is magical, and time to beachcomb or swim along four miles of undeveloped beach.



What you'll see:

Each class has its own unique list of flora and fauna, but we included some representative species as photos throughout this document to give you an idea of the magic you may discover.



Food and Lodging:



At Cerro Vueltas Lodge, you will be staying in multi-occupancy rooms with shared bathrooms. A common after-the-fact remark from students is that they were nervous ahead of time about having roommates, but totally glad they did afterward because of the wonderful side-conversations and friendships that may not otherwise have happened. Our work truly needs to be as a close-knit community, so what better way to start to break down your tendency toward 'separate-selves' than by embracing the idea of having roomies during our time together!

Food at Cerro Vueltas will be prepared fresh by perhaps the best cooks in Costa Rica, and the added benefit is that much of the food (and coffee!) will be uber local.



At Hacienda Baru, you will share very comfortable, multi-bedroom cabins with several other participants, and we will eat our meals at the on-site restaurant that is very good and does have local fare on the menu. Try the tropical fruit smoothies! 😊



During our day at Corcovado National Park, your guides will provide you with a pre-ordered hot breakfast and a picnic lunch that is to die for.



Course Dates and Registration:

In 2024, we are running two sections of this course. The first session will run from Wednesday January 24th through Saturday February 3rd, and the second session will run from Friday, March 1st thru Monday March 11th. To register, go to : _____ and be sure to indicate which session you are registering for (and if you might be flexible enough to attend either session).



Course Fee:

The fee for this course is \$3000 per person, and the maximum class size will be 20 people. To hold your reservation, a 50% deposit is required, with payment in full due no less than two weeks prior to the start of the course. Your fee covers all food, ground transportation and lodging from the convening time on the first day to noon on the last day when you are dropped off at the airport. It does not cover adult beverages or other incidentals.

Final Thoughts

Based on years of student feedback from the for-credit version of this course, our expectation is that you will find the information you take away **highly** useful on a daily basis in your life, and you will be more likely to take action on issues you care about. In addition, you will likely find the experience truly fun and memorable, but also challenging because of our emphasis on vulnerability and authenticity. If you have any questions, feel free to email Paul Kazyak kazyakpaul@gmail.com.

Student Testimonials

This is now the best educational experience I have ever had but “education experience” doesn’t begin to describe how meaningful this was.

D.W.

*I will try to express this in words, but may fail. I’ve thought about this throughout the trip – this has been life-changing for me, but instead of feeling like a new person, I feel reminded of who I really am...I will be going home more whole, but appreciative of my cracks. I am leaving with a new family, new connections, and a new faith in humanity and the future. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. **J.H.***



*Thank you for such an intentional, impactful and meaningful course... What you created will forever mean the world to all of us. You are creating an incredible force to reckon with. All of us, your other classes, and all the ripple effects will lead to a better world. **H.K.***

*Before going on this trip, I seriously doubting humanity- seeing us (and “them”) throw away the beautiful gifts we’ve been given... You brought together this group and have shown us what true teamwork can be like... Thank you for that healing experience. I’ve begun to regain my sense of purpose and my relationship with people. **A.K.***

*Thank you so much for making this trip happen! Our class has grown ridiculously close in such a short timeframe, and we’ve been able to make and maintain that close-knit connection in close quarters for ten days because of your guidance. This has truly been transformative –I’ve attended numerous leadership trainings in my life, but the culture of this course has been unlike any other. I truly appreciate your encouragement, empathy and leadership throughout this course. I hope to keep in touch and look forward to working with you in the future. **A.L.***

*I feel like a piece of me has been restored and I am better armed to go forth and make a change in my life and step up on leadership positions... I don’t know what I expected, but I never thought that this would be such an emotional and life-changing experience... I am so grateful for this experience! I hope to keep this love, support and kindness with me always. Thank you for this gift . **C.B.***

*I will never forget this course... and I think it will change my perspective about the next part of my life. I will not settle, I will make a difference and I will change my part of the world. Thank you! **A.G.***

I can't begin to express the emotions and thoughts I have about this experience. I don't know how exactly, but I am changed, and I am more confident in my abilities to bring about change outside of me as well. Thank you. From the bottom of my heart, thank you. **N.B.**

Thank you for sharing your infinite enthusiasm and fierce compassion with us. You embody leadership in and outside of the classroom, and it was a real privilege to learn from you. Your example and the lessons of this experience will stay with me for many years, and I look forward to sharing with others too. **K.R.**

Thank you for helping us find our inner strength to effectively step up in this fight for survival of life on this beautiful planet... Thank you for being humble and vulnerable and showing us what true leadership means. **S.S.**

It was an amazing experience and I will cherish the bonds that were created. There were so many takeaways from this trip and I feel empowered to grow and change things in my organization and in the world. I look forward to growing and supporting this community that we created. **A.J.**

Thank you for creating such a loving and creative space for our class to grow into where we need to be. Even with all of your experiences and wealth of knowledge, your moments of listening were just as powerful. **E.R.**

I feel immense gratitude for having been part of this class... It's remarkable how 17 of us came together and bonded with such trust and acceptance. There are so many lessons to take away and incorporate. I am grateful for your vision and passion, and for enabling me to be part of this life-changing experience. **J.C.**

When I signed up for this course, I had no idea what it would end up meaning to me. The way you go forth with love and respect is so inspiring! I am also so grateful for your passion for sticky learning and making real impact. You have shown me that there is so much we can do to make a positive change in the world. You have helped restore my self-confidence, my passion for sustainability, and my hope for a better and brighter future! **T.D.**

I cannot express how much this trip means to me. I have so many good feelings of joy, gratefulness, happiness, love, and connectedness. It truly feels like a life-changing experience... You have given me the strength to pursue this journey of preserving and celebrating LIFE with intention and purpose... Thank you for teaching us what true leadership means. **S.K.**

