

## Costa Rica: Happiest Place On The Planet?

&nbsp; &nbsp; If you were asked to pick the place with the highest satisfaction of life and happiness, where would you choose? Hint: Disneyworld which claims to be the "happiest place on earth" did not make the finals (or the list for that matter). It is officially tropical Costa Rica, winner of the Happy Planet Index as the most satisfying place to live in the world.

The Index measures three factors in 143 countries, encompassing 99 percent of the population on the planet: high life expectancy, high life satisfaction, and a low ecological footprint. Costa Rica came out on top by a large margin.

The Happy Planet Index asked: 1. What is a person's life expectancy (premise: it is better to live longer than die young)? 2. While alive, how satisfied are people with the quality of their life (premise: living longer but miserably is not very satisfying)? 3. How much does a country cost the planet (premise: sustainable development is better than exhausting resources and has less effect on global warming) ?

Most of us assume that the richest, most developed countries should be at the top but it just is not so. In fact, the developed nations fall somewhere in the middle. Great Britain comes in at 74th place and the U.S. is way back in 114th place.

The difference between Costa Rica and the USA is striking. Costa Ricans live longer than Americans (health care is nationalized, nearly free, and universal in Costa Rica), report much higher levels of life satisfaction (they are very happy with their life), and yet have a carbon footprint which is less than a quarter the size of the States.

It is no accident that Costa Rica is at the top of the rankings. The country is committed to sustainable development. While the Western world, China and India are committed to relying upon nonrenewable, nonsustainable resources (think oil) that are exhausting the planet's resources and contributing to serious global pollution and warming, 99% of Costa Rica's energy is completely renewable and sustainable. As developed countries dither about how to address power needs and meet the challenges of pollution and global warming, tiny Costa Rica has taken action. More than two decades ago, at a time when so many other countries were cutting and burning their forests, Costa Rica decided to go the opposite direction and now there are 20% more forested areas. Presciently, it has long denied oil drilling off its shores, choosing sustainability over exhaustion. And, in 2007 it became the first country to commit to being completely carbon neutral by 2021.

Costa Rica's per capita income is only about \$11,000, but it is the #1 place in the world for life satisfaction. Other countries can endlessly debate all the ways things cannot be done or rethink their model.

### About the Author

About the author: Vic Krumm lives in sunny Costa Rica. Visit his popular website about [Costa Rica Vacations](#) and if you like big adventure on the high seas look at [Costa Rica Humpback Whales](#)

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