



Rick Steves'
EUROPE

CLIMATE SMART COMMITMENT

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

\$500,000 Invested in 10 Organizations



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In late 2019, Rick Steves’ Europe launched our Climate Smart Commitment—a program designed to pay back the environmental debt created by our travelers flying to Europe to join our bus tours. Our goal: to creatively mitigate our carbon footprint by smartly investing a self-imposed carbon tax of \$30 per tour member (for a total of \$1 million). We use these funds to support organizations that fight climate change in two ways: by helping farmers in the poor world employ climate-smart agriculture technology, and by advocating in the halls of government to take the threat of climate change more seriously.

We believe that lasting change requires both hands-on work and advocacy. Climate change hits the poorest people in the poorest countries the hardest. Roughly half of the world’s population is made up of smallholder farmers and their families, and in their desperation to grow enough food, their farming practices also contribute substantially to climate change. Without the US taking a global leadership role, the combined actions of all the world’s nonprofit organizations won’t be enough. That’s why we believe that the US must implement smart policies that acknowledge the link between climate change and hunger (both at home and abroad), and that support the transition to a climate-smart economy.

We’re presenting this report to show our travelers (and those who might travel with us in the future) what we accomplished in the past year. Despite canceling all our tours in 2020 because of the COVID pandemic—and earning no revenue—in 2021 we committed \$500,000 to our program so that organizations could continue to do great work even in difficult times. And for 2022, after a second year without tour customers, we’ve committed another \$500,000. (Even though you could make the case that we shrunk our carbon footprint to near-zero in 2020 and 2021, we couldn’t bear to stop supporting our partner organizations after learning how effectively they invested our \$1 million in 2019.)

While climate change and smart development often seem abstract, the organizations in this report are perfect examples of how positive and life-changing action is being realized in faraway places. We are proud to offer those who take our tours the peace-of-mind that our “self-imposed carbon tax” effectively mitigates the carbon they emit to join us in Europe. Together, we’re making a difference. It feels good. It’s ethical as a business practice. And it’s simply good global citizenship.

This annual report shares what eight of our partner organizations accomplished in 2021. Despite the global pandemic, these organizations persevered, delivered on their missions, and fulfilled their pledge to be transparent with us. They inspire all of us at Rick Steves’ Europe. We hope you enjoy reading about them.

Happy climate-smart travels,

Rick Steves

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Agros International

2021 DONATION: \$100,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$250,000

Our donations allowed Agros to continue to expand their agribusiness center in Nicaragua and help more than 500 farming families learn how to use hydroponics, vermicomposting, and reforestation techniques to improve soil conditions, increase their yields, produce healthier food, help with the reforestation effort, protect water recharge zones, and generate more income.

Current farming methods produce a third of all greenhouse emissions worldwide—but they don't meet the world's growing demand for food and don't generate enough income for those growing the food. Agros believes that there is a solution to break the cycle of poverty for farming families in rural Latin America: land ownership, market-led agriculture, financial empowerment, and sustainable climate-smart farming practices.

Since our partnership began, Agros has transformed their model, incorporating new performance indicators and key data to track the effectiveness of their climate-smart programs. They have developed a vermicompost production and training facility (reducing the use of chemical-based fertilizers by 40 percent), created a nursery, produced over 41,000 seedlings, built a water irrigation system, and installed community hydroponic modules and family-oriented greenhouses. As a result, they have created highly productive areas of land, reduced pests, and given women the opportunity to diversify their household income by selling surplus produce to other community members.

Going forward, Agros intends to finish their work by graduating three climate-smart villages where each family is fully independent and has an average net worth of \$20,000: San José, Nueva San José, and La Bendición. In this step, Agros will ensure each village has newly installed community hydroponic modules for water-efficient farming, confirm their harvest collection centers are certified, and install ecological latrines, showers, stoves, and water filters, saving over 1.6 million gallons of water and 90,000 kg of wood per year. In addition, Agros will reforest over 47 acres of land, certify all of the plantations with the Rainforest Alliance, and register 226 acres of forest under a sustainable forest management program.

Agros International works to break the cycle of poverty for farming families in rural Latin America.





Bread for the World is an advocacy organization working to end hunger at home and abroad.

Bread for the World

2021 DONATION: \$20,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$220,000

Our donations supported Bread for the World (Bread) in their advocacy work in the fight to end hunger. Rick Steves' Europe has been proud to partner with Bread for more than 20 years; in the last several years, in addition to our Climate Smart funding, Rick Steves' Europe raised \$1 million annually to support Bread's important work.

Our Climate Smart funding is earmarked to help Bread scale up their advocacy efforts and raise awareness in our government of how climate change makes more people hungry which, in turn, makes our world less stable.

In 2021, the federal government was positioned to address climate change for the first time in years, and Bread wanted to help lead the conversation. By creating a grassroots petition, they identified over 900 people who had a shared interest in climate change and ending hunger—forming the foundation of climate-smart, anti-hunger advocates. They also launched their young adult climate and hunger dialogues with two successful Instagram Live events, hosted and attended by Millennials and Gen Zs.

Going forward, Bread will lobby for US investments in climate-smart agriculture and food security programs to strengthen long-term food security in the US and around the world. As part of this, Bread plans a series of dialogues with diverse audiences to better understand the perspective of the people working directly with hunger and the impact of climate change, and to ensure that their voices are part of the solution going forward.



Citizens' Climate Education

2021 DONATION: \$40,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$90,000

Our donations helped Citizens' Climate Education (CCE) strengthen their nationwide coalition of climate advocates, create a powerful voice to counter paid lobbyists advocating for the fossil fuel industry, and educate policymakers and the public about smart solutions to climate change.

CCE believes that as long as climate change remains a partisan issue, solutions will inevitably be delayed or rolled back every time opposing parties assume power—and time is running too short for partisan gridlock. That's why they empower a bipartisan coalition of over 195,000 climate advocates to educate policymakers and the public about effective and equitable solutions to climate change.

CCE volunteers are organized into more than 450 active chapters across the country—spanning all 50 states and territories—and are trained to meaningfully engage their elected officials and local communities through meetings, writing letters to members of Congress, getting letters to the editor and op-eds published, hosting public outreach events, and building public support for action to fight climate change.

Over the past year, they added 23,552 members, held 1,735 outreach events, had 1,307 meetings with Congress, and published 3,865 media pieces. As a result of their efforts, the Storing CO2 and Lower Emissions (SCALE) Act was signed into law through the bipartisan Infrastructure and Jobs Act; the Senate passed the Growing Climate Solutions Act with overwhelming bipartisan support (and it's expected to pass the House); and significant progress was made on carbon pricing through stand-alone legislation and reconciliation negotiations.



Citizens' Climate Education is an advocacy organization that educates policymakers and the public about smart solutions to climate change.





Food 4 Farmers partners with coffee-farming families in Latin America to increase food security, teach climate-smart practices, reduce deforestation, and stabilize incomes.

Food 4 Farmers

2021 DONATION: \$50,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$100,000

Our donations allowed Food 4 Farmers (F4F) to partner with six cooperatives representing over 8,400 coffee-farming families in Latin America and increase their food security. F4F's goals: teach climate-smart practices, strengthen local food systems, improve incomes, reduce deforestation, restore local ecosystems, and create a healthier planet.

Industrial agriculture is responsible for about 80 percent of all tropical deforestation globally. F4F aims to disrupt this trend by helping small-scale farmers transform their monoculture farms into sustainable operations that provide food and income security without the need for increased acreage. Through their Home Garden Program, F4F teaches sustainable farming practices, including the making of organic compost and pesticides, growing a diverse range of organic food crops, improving soil health, using agroforestry to restore biodiversity, and building low-cost water management systems to sustain gardens through dry seasons. Then, to help diversify the farmers' incomes and reduce their dependence on a single commodity crop, their Beekeeper and Farmers Markets Programs help them establish supplemental on-farm businesses—which have the added benefit of reforesting land to provide pollinators with food and shelter. And to ensure long-term sustainability, their Community Promoter Programs train and empower young women and men to bring these climate-smart techniques to more families and support their progress.

In 2021, F4F was very productive. In Huehuetenango, Guatemala, five new community promoters were hired to help 100 beekeepers establish and maintain their home gardens after the number of farmers in the program doubled. In Quiche, Guatemala, F4F helped plant 25,500 fruit trees, seedlings, cover crops, and six types of vegetables at 198 member farms and home gardens. In Mexico, the Apicultores Real del Triunfo beekeeping group at the CESMACH Co-op secured two contracts for 17 tons of honey—at their best price ever—and were able to pay beekeepers in advance for the first time. In Cauca, Colombia, F4F added 150 families to their agroforestry program, provided them with 16,875 fruit trees and other plants, and set up three demonstration farms to help local co-ops teach families how to diversify their farms in remote areas. And in Jinotega, Nicaragua, they added nine new schools to their school garden program (bringing the total number of schools to 13 and reaching 2,600 students), provided 55,400 trees and other plants to 230 families, and began training 17 Community Promoters (in conjunction with a local NGO) with the goal of providing successful students with a certificate in rural entrepreneurship from the National Institute of Technology.

Over the next year, F4F plans to expand and strengthen their school garden programs, add 500 families to their home garden program, and continue to engage women and young people to lead their communities to healthier diets, stronger local economies, and climate-smart farming practices.

Global Communities (formerly Project Concern International)

2021 DONATION: \$75,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$225,000

Our donations allowed Global Communities (GC) to plant over 28,200 trees and provide 388 households and 2,328 individuals in the dry western highlands of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, with the tools to lift themselves out of poverty while contributing less to climate change.

In the developing world, families often prepare food over traditional open fires, consuming far more wood than would be necessary with a modern stove. Cooking this way not only results in greater deforestation, it also increases carbon emissions and causes smoke-related health problems. Through their Climate Smart Communities program, GC provides families with clean, fuel-efficient cook stoves, which lower carbon emissions by roughly 50 percent and dramatically reduce firewood-related deforestation and smoke-related health problems. (Did you know that one stove can reduce carbon dioxide emissions by the equivalent of what 30 travelers create by flying round-trip between the US and Europe?) GC also provides tree seedlings for reforestation and installs latrines and eco-friendly water filters—improving sanitation and eliminating the use of firewood to boil water.

Taken together, these initiatives create safer and healthier households that consume less firewood, emit less carbon, and directly stem deforestation. (So far, our funding has allowed GC to provide enough fuel-efficient stoves and water filters to conserve over 6,798 metric tons of cut firewood and reduce CO2 emissions by over 11,878 tons over their useful life.) And to ensure these communities thrive for the years to come, GC puts women at the center of the effort by training them to maintain the stoves, promote household health, and manage the reforestation effort.

Next year, GC will enroll 100 new households into their Climate Smart Communities, provide cook stoves and water filters, replant over 2,100 trees, and continue to give local women the tools to ensure the project's long-term success.

Global Communities provides families in the developing world with the tools to lift themselves out of poverty and contribute less to climate change.



Rainforest Action Network works to preserve forests, protect the climate, and uphold human rights by challenging corporate power and systemic injustice.

Rainforest Action Network

2021 DONATION: \$40,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$90,000

Our donations allow the Rainforest Action Network (RAN) to challenge the multinational corporations that use unethically sourced resources and protect the Leuser Ecosystem of Sumatra, Indonesia, from deforestation caused by the illegal expansion of pulpwood and palm oil plantations. To do this, RAN works with community partners and local authorities to document illegal deforestation, the clearing and burning of peatlands, labor abuses, and other human rights violations.

Last year, RAN published *Keep Borneo's Forests Standing*, and called out the 10 target corporations in their Keep Forests Standing campaign—Colgate-Palmolive, Ferrero, Kao, Mars, Mondelēz, Nestlé, Nissin Foods, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble, and Unilever—for failing to disclose their impact on Indonesia's last remaining forests and their related communities. And in their 12th annual report on finance and fossil fuels, *Banking on Climate Chaos*, they called out the continuing disconnect between government action on climate change and the world's largest financial institutions by noting that the world's 60 largest banks have poured \$3.8 trillion into fossil fuels since the Paris Agreement.

Going forward, RAN will leverage their reports to encourage companies to release complete global accounting of the forests and communities they impact and explain how their growth plans will impact the future. In addition, they will continue to publicly campaign for corporations to implement policies to protect forests and human rights, partner with local governments to document illegal activities, and attempt to stop plantations from encroaching on the 80,000-hectare Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve and the 1,750,000 hectares of lowland rainforests that surround it (which are home to the largest density of Sumatran Orangutans on the planet, as well as breeding populations of the Sumatran rhinoceros, tiger, and elephant).



Rainforest Alliance

2021 DONATION: \$30,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$80,000

Our donations allowed the Rainforest Alliance (RA) to expand their climate-smart agriculture work in Ghana and provide 2,600 local farmers in 76 communities the climate-smart tools and resources necessary to sustainably produce cocoa, manage their shade trees, and conserve Ghana's forest landscape.

RA works with farmers and forest communities in over 70 countries to protect forests and biodiversity, promote the rights and livelihoods of rural people, and help mitigate the effects of climate change. In Ghana, where cocoa is a vital cash crop that supports the livelihoods to over a million households, unsustainable cocoa production is a key driver of deforestation and causes close to half of the forest loss in Ghana's high forest zone—resulting in an unbalanced ecosystem with more erosion, heavier rains, longer droughts, and lower crop yields. By providing farmers with the skills and resources necessary to produce cocoa more sustainably and better manage their shade trees, RA hopes to conserve Ghana's forest landscape, create carbon sinks, improve soil conditions, restore tree cover, create a suitable habitat for wildlife, and improve the cocoa yield. The goal: to help farmers boost their climate resilience and improve their livelihoods while contributing less to climate change.

With our funding, RA restored just over two hectares of land bordering the Tano River within the Sui Forest Reserve that are under threat from farm expansion, climate change, and tourism (bringing their total restoration area up to 4.1 hectares); planted over 91,000 seedlings (170,000 since the project began); expanded their capacity at four nursery sites; introduced two additional tree species to increase biodiversity; and continued to register trees at over 1,000 farms. These restoration efforts were aligned with Ghana's national "Green Ghana Day" initiative to plant 5 million trees in 2021 and 100 million trees by 2024. (In this part of the world, people—understanding the importance of this work—like to say, "Trees make rain.")

Going forward, RA will continue to help farmers grow and register more trees, implement GPS technology to monitor tree survival rates, expand their restoration activities to Bibiani-Anhwiaso-Bekwai, establish a new nursery site, produce 100,000 more seedlings, and help local Landscape Management Boards ensure climate-smart agriculture practices are followed and illegal deforestation is tracked.

The Rainforest Alliance works with rural communities in over 70 countries to conserve forests and support sustainable livelihoods.





Zeitz Foundation

2021 DONATION: \$100,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$200,000

Our donations allowed the Zeitz Foundation (ZF) to continue implementing its Tree of Life Reforestation Initiative in Laikipia, Kenya. Since the program started, ZF has sourced, germinated, and planted over 250,000 acacia seedlings; built a tree nursery; drilled a borehole for irrigation; and installed a solar pump and other plumbing works to generate up to 40,000 liters of water a day for the land, wildlife, and reforestation effort. They also developed the curriculum for a permaculture-focused vocational training program for women and the founder, Jochen Zeitz, co-produced a movie entitled: *Breaking Boundaries: The Science of Our Planet* on Netflix.

ZF's Tree of Life initiative combines women's education and vocational training objectives with reforestation, conservation, and biodiversity. In so doing, ZF offers women an opportunity for independent incomes and financial freedom while reforesting over 1,000,000 acacia trees—regenerating the landscape, enhancing soil stabilization and fertility, recapturing water, and ensuring the survival of a biodiverse ecosystem. And thanks to this program, over 55 members of the local villages were trained in reforesting techniques and are integral to the planting program.

To ZF, this is essential. Kenya has lost much of its forested land over the last decade. The effect of this deforestation contributes directly to climate change, affecting not only the biodiversity of plant and animal life but also the well-being of the communities who rely on the land. It's a vicious cycle resulting in more hunger, increased land degradation, more destructive agricultural activities (like the expansion of cattle farming), and less stability.

Now, ZF plans to build a 50-acre water dam that will ensure water security in the area, germinate another 50,000 trees for planting in spring 2022, support their All-Women Anti-Poaching Rangers (who protect the lands from illegal encroachment as well as from poachers), and launch their new Vocational Training Academy for Forestry and Permaculture.



The Zeitz Foundation develops and implements ecologically responsible projects in the Greater Segera Region of Kenya.
