



Rick Steves'
EUROPE

CLIMATE SMART COMMITMENT

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

\$1.1 Million Invested in 13 Organizations



\$1.1 Million Invested in 13 Organizations to Help Fight Climate Change

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In 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 in climate-smart projects around the world (with roughly 30,000 travelers annually, that's a total of about \$1 million a year). Our twofold mission: 1) Help farmers in the developing world do their work more productively while contributing less to climate change and 2) help organizations advocate for government policies that take the threat of climate change more seriously and hold companies accountable for their climate damage.

Climate change and hunger are inexorably linked. The poorest people in the poorest countries are hit the hardest. Roughly half of the world's population (4 billion out of 8 billion people) is made up of small-holder farmers and their families, and in their desperation to grow enough food to survive—and have some left over for the market—their farming practices contribute substantially to climate change. But with climate-smart technology and training, these hardworking farmers can grow more food to escape extreme poverty while substantially reducing their contribution to climate damage. Plus, because these programs provide farmers with the tools to be more productive, they help create financially independent small businesses. To us, that's a win-win-win.

The purpose of this report: to show our travelers what we've accomplished in the past year. The organizations we support are good examples of developmental work done right. They have restored biodiversity, refo-

rested degraded land, saved entire forests from becoming firewood, prevented tons of carbon from being emitted, enabled farmers to escape extreme poverty, improved living conditions, and helped enact major climate legislation. They inspire us. (And we're proud as a tour business to share how we grapple honestly with this important challenge. It's ethical as a business practice for any tour operator. And it's simply good global citizenship.)

Unfortunately, all the combined actions of all the world's nonprofit organizations won't be enough if the US doesn't lead. As we head into 2025, the changing political landscape and the new administration have placed the future of any climate-related and foreign development work at risk. But after five years of running our program, we are committed to generating lasting change through our unique mix of hands-on work and advocacy. That's why we're proud to offer those who take our tours the peace of mind that our "self-imposed carbon tax" effectively mitigates the carbon that they create when they join us in Europe. And beyond paying for the carbon costs of travelers who join us on a Rick Steves tour, we're honored to be the charity of choice for the thousands of like-minded independent travelers who have donated to the Rick Steves' Europe Climate Smart Fund at the National Philanthropic Trust or through our annual Seasons Givings promotion. Together, we are making a difference.

Happy climate-smart travels,

Rick Steves
Chief Executive Officer

Craig Davidson
Chief Operating Officer

2024 DONATION: \$260,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$879,000

Our donations allow 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 don't meet the world's growing demand for food and don't generate enough income for the farmers growing the food. In rural Latin America, Agros believes that there is a solution to break the cycle of poverty for farming families: land ownership, market-led agriculture, financial empowerment, and sustainable climate-smart farming practices.

Since joining our Climate Smart program, Agros has transformed their development model to incorporate climate-smart techniques, created new performance indicators to track the effectiveness of their programs, and seen outstanding results. In the three climate-smart villages created since our partnership began (San José, Nueva San José, and La Bendición, Nicaragua), Agros has enabled the farmers to raise their average daily income from \$2.42 to \$5.69—a threshold that the World Bank denominates as lower middle income—while building prosperous communities out of what was essentially nothing (as Agros builds new villages from scratch). They then took their learnings to the next level by creating the Harvest of Hope Center (HHC) in La Bendición—a facility designed to teach farmers market-oriented, climate-smart agricultural skills that increase incomes, improve household conditions, and provide economic opportunities that keep families together and reduce migration.

Agros has also developed a vermicompost production and training facility (which reduced the use of chemical-based fertilizers by 40 percent), created a nursery, carefully cultivated over 41,000 seedlings, reforested over 47 acres of land, registered 226 acres under a sustainable forest management program, installed a water irrigation system and community hydroponic modules, and built family-oriented greenhouses. Their ecological latrines, showers, stoves, and water filters protected water recharge zones and saved over 1.6 million gallons of water and 90,000 kg of wood per year, their certification with the Rainforest Alliance allowed farmers to increase their incomes (by taking advantage of the higher selling price for organic goods), and they've given women the opportunity to diversify their household income by selling surplus produce to other community members.

With our ongoing support, Agros will include the village of El Galope in La Dalia in their development program, add 120 more families, build approximately 110,000 square feet of greenhouses and mesh structures, increase their production of bio-inputs (organic fertilizers) and plant more than 250,000 trees.



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



2024 DONATION: \$50,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$80,000

Our donations allowed Andando to add 675 rural Senegalese farming families to their women's cooperative gardening program, germinate over 15,000 beneficial tree seedlings, construct a Tree Nursery and Agroforestry Center in Podor (including sinking a borehole to provide water security to the facility), and teach climate-smart agriculture practices.

In Senegal, hundreds of years of destructive colonial agricultural practices have led to severe deforestation and loss of soil fertility. Andando combats this by constructing women's cooperative gardens, installing solar pumps for water generation, partnering with local farmers to incorporate native trees into field crop production, and reforesting lands using the forest garden permaculture method (intentionally placing plants to mimic the natural environment). The result: a reduction in water consumption, fertile topsoil, and the installation of natural barriers (live thorny fences and windbreaks) that protect the land and sequester carbon.

On average, Andando's 42 women's gardens yield 500,000 pounds of nutrient-dense, carbon-absorbing produce each year, and generate over \$150,000 of profits (supporting 4,000 women and their families) without the use of any pesticides, herbicides, or synthetic fertilizers. In 2024, Andando added 367 families to their garden program, planted 30,243 beneficial tree saplings, contributed trees and support to Senegal's National Tree Day, and completed improvements to the solar well system at their tree nursery and agroforestry center in Keur Soce.

With our continued donations, Andando will operate two native tree nurseries in the Kaolack and Podor regions (with plans to reforest 100,000 trees), add 400 families to their program in rural Senegal, fund 200 entrepreneurs through their microloan program, and pilot a reforestation project in the severely degraded pastoral lands of the Diery.

Andando works to alleviate poverty through community development in rural Senegal.



BEADS FOR EDUCATION

2024 DONATION: \$115,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$176,000

Our donations allowed BEADS for Education (“BEADS”) to teach another 125 students about climate-smart farming practices, expand their school farm, and provide climate education workshops for more than 7,000 people in Kajiado, the Amboseli National Park region, and the Maasai Mara.

Due to the ongoing deforestation in Kenya, the traditionally pastoral Maasai communities have embraced farming for their food security needs. BEADS, through their Tembea Academy, teaches students creative and critical thinking while instilling a philosophy of returning everything that came from the earth back to the earth. Their school is completely solar powered, and they grow all their own food (for 300 daily meals), practice no-till gardening, don’t use pesticides, use greenhouses, and compost all their organic and paper waste. With over 52 million girls in sub-Saharan Africa not in school, programs like this are essential.

Over the past year, BEADS added new solar panels to the school, built a lasting water solution to the ongoing drought (by buying a plot of land, drilling a well, and creating water storage facilities), helped communities build solar ovens, and organized 15 town cleanup days—including the Maasai Mara Game Reserve, the Amboseli National Park, and the Mombasa Coast—to teach the students about the detriments of plastic and how their actions impact the climate. In so doing, the students not only learned about wildlife and marine biology, but they also had a chance to experience the world like never before—as they had the opportunity to visit game parks and marvel at the ocean for the first time (and some learned how to swim!).

The climate-smart work didn’t stop there. During school breaks, each student volunteered to teach their farming families and communities how to generate higher yields and implement a more sustainable farming process by using less water, planting crops to attract and feed insects (along with pollinators, beneficial insects can act as living pesticides to protect crops), and reforesting the indigenous and medicinal plants that have been decimated. Then, each student petitioned the Kenyan parliament to take action on climate change—with one previous student being so successful, she was invited to be a Yale Young African Scholar, selected to be an Ashoka Changemaker, and had her book on climate change and drought published and translated into four languages by World Reader.

BEADS provides a well-rounded, climate-smart education to girls in the vulnerable Maasai communities in Kenya.





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

2024 DONATION: \$80,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$295,000

Our donations allow Food 4 Farmers (“F4F”) to partner with six cooperatives representing over 6,200 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. Many small-scale coffee-farming families in Latin America—along with millions of others—live below the Global Poverty Line on less than \$2.00 per person, per day. This is largely due to their dependence on a single commodity crop and a lack of local opportunities to improve their livelihoods. 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’s families maintain almost 900 gardens and care for more than 120,000 replanted trees—using sustainable farming practices, including making 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. Their Beekeeper and Farmers Markets Program helps to diversify the farmers’ incomes and reduce their dependence on their single commodity crop (coffee) by helping them establish supplemental on-farm businesses that have the added benefit of reforesting land to provide pollinators with food and shelter. And their Community Promoter Program trains and empowers young women and men to bring these climate-smart techniques from the workshops to the farms and ensure the farmers thrive long-term.

Over the next year, our donation will enable F4F to build water dams and increase water security in drought-stricken Colombia, provide fruit and shade trees for families in Guatemala, and continue to engage women and young people to lead their communities to healthier diets, stronger local economies, and climate-smart farming practices.



RAINFOREST ALLIANCE

2024 DONATION: \$50,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$210,000

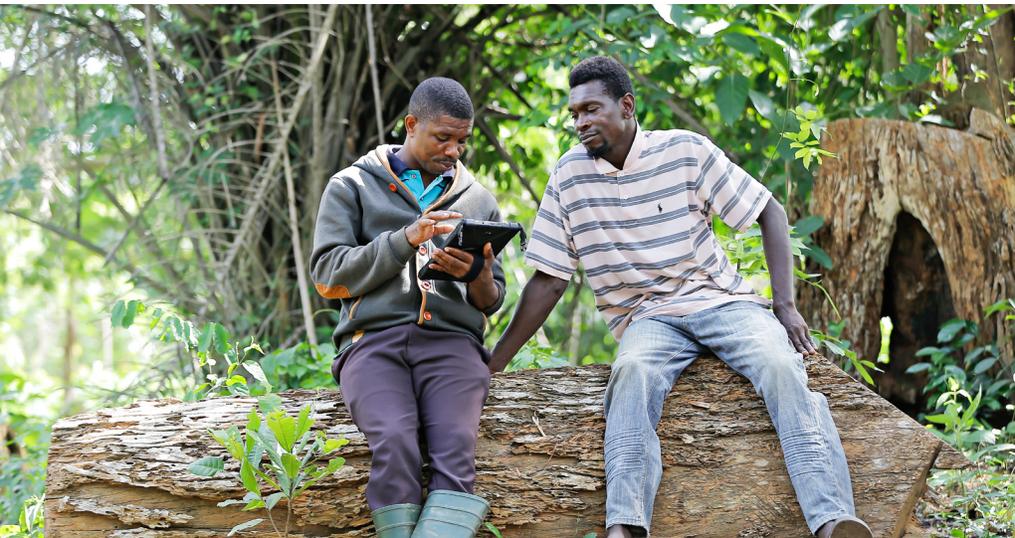
Our donations allow the Rainforest Alliance (“RA”) to expand their climate-smart agriculture work in Ghana—benefiting 3,600 local farmers across 76 communities by providing the climate-smart tools and training necessary to conserve Ghana’s forest landscape and produce cocoa sustainably.

In Ghana, unsustainable cocoa production is a key driver of deforestation and causes close to half of the forest loss in the high forest zone—resulting in an unbalanced ecosystem with more erosion, heavier rains, longer droughts, and lower crop yields. RA works to conserve Ghana’s forest landscape and support agricultural livelihoods of local farmers by providing them with the skills and resources necessary to produce cocoa more sustainably and an incentive to manage their shade trees. Properly managed shade trees act as a carbon sink, improve soil conditions, restore tree cover, create a suitable habitat for wildlife, and improve the cocoa yield—resulting in more resilient crops and land, higher incomes for farmers, and greater food security.

Over the last five years, RA has enabled communities to implement climate-smart practices that improve soil conditions, established 23 tree nurseries, produced 508,000 seedlings, restored 6 hectares of degraded land, developed GPS technology to monitor tree survival rates and changes in land use/cover in over 2,100 hectares, and conducted training classes for 6,800 farmers in 106 communities.

Our donation will allow RA to continue their work in the Bibiani-Anhwiaso-Bekwai district and incentivize hardworking farmers, create nurseries, grow and register more trees, conduct more trainings, and transition accountability to local management boards—who are responsible for ensuring 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.





2024 DONATION: \$100,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$500,000

Our donations allow the Zeitz Foundation (“ZF”) to continue implementing its Tree of Life Reforestation Initiative in Laikipia, Kenya, which combines women’s education and vocational training with reforestation, conservation, and biodiversity. In so doing, ZF offers women an opportunity for independent incomes and financial freedom while regenerating the landscape (with a goal of reforesting over 3 million acacia trees), enhancing soil stabilization and fertility, recapturing water, and ensuring the survival of a biodiverse ecosystem. This initiative follows ZF’s sustainable “4C” approach by combining conservation, community, culture, and commerce—a philosophy shared globally through the Long Run network.

ZF has had outstanding results despite an ongoing drought and Covid restrictions slowing down the planting of trees and delaying the launch of their 4C Learning Centre. Since our partnership began five years ago, they have created a nursery; sourced, germinated, and planted over 1.2 million acacia seedlings (with the help of over 60 community members); built over 21 km of fencing to protect new forests; purchased 15 acres of land for use in their vocational teaching; sunk a borehole to create new water access; and installed a solar pump, panels, storage tanks, and other plumbing works to generate up to 40,000 liters of water a day for the land, wildlife, and their newly established nursery.

This work is vital, as over the last decade, Kenya has lost much of its forested land and is currently recovering from the worst drought in over 40 years. Taken together, the impacts of deforestation and drought contribute directly to climate change, degrade the land, and affect 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, more destructive agricultural activities (like the expansion of cattle farming), and less stability.

With this year’s funding, ZF will advance plans to reintroduce rhino back to the region (establishing an umbrella species that will protect the biodiversity of the entire area), finalize the design and curriculum for their new 4C Learning Centre (intended to educate the next generation of conservationists and prevent young adults seeking employment—or education—from leaving the community), ensure regional water security by finishing construction of a dam on the Segera River, and continue their reforesting efforts.

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

DARING GIRLS

2024 DONATION: \$25,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$42,000

Our donations help Daring Girls (“Daring”) provide leadership and mentoring skills to over 2,500 young girls in the Kilimanjaro and Arusha regions of Tanzania. Through a series of 2-Day Challenge Projects and university prep courses, Daring teaches girls to take control of their future, lead positive social change in their communities, and solve environmental and health problems at the local level.

Last year, students benefited from a curriculum that focused on environmental protection and personal responsibility on a global and local scale. By learning that climate change disproportionately affects women and girls, Daring’s students were emboldened by the research that shows female leaders create more protected land, ratify more environmental treaties, create stricter climate change policies, and produce smaller climate footprints in their home country. Then, more than 1,100 graduating scholars completed community projects that ranged from planting fruit and drought-resistant trees, to teaching younger girls how to make reusable sanitary pads, to creating a school environmental club.

In the upcoming year, Daring will continue to provide women and girls an environmentally focused curriculum, fund another 50 community projects, and start a pilot initiative aimed at expanding their mentoring program into Kenya, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.



Daring Girls provides knowledge, tools, and mentorship to young girls in Tanzania.

GLOBAL COMMUNITIES

2024 DONATION: Global Communities continued to use funds they received from us in 2023 to support their programs in 2024

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$395,000

Our donations allow Global Communities (“GC”) to help women and farmers in the developing world adapt to climate change and build skills they need to lift themselves out of poverty. By promoting low-cost, climate-smart, and sustainable agricultural practices, GC works with local governments to ensure women have the opportunity to create income and food security.

In the first four years of our partnership, GC transitioned 488 households (2,900 individuals) in the dry western highlands of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, away from traditional open fires to climate-smart cookstoves and water filters; built drought-resistant, water-conserving gardens; and reforested 30,300 seedlings. In so doing, they significantly reduced deforestation, eliminated 18,216 tons of carbon emissions, and saved future generations from smoke-related health problems. Then, GC shifted to Tanzania, where our donations provided 734 farmers with an education on sustainable crop production and resource management—resulting in over 25 hectares of maize and 15 hectares of beans being produced sustainably.

Next year, through their Food-for-Education program, GC will help over 1,000 women farmers access climate-smart fertilizers and seeds, increase their production, and improve their yields.



Global Communities brings together local ingenuity and global insights to save lives and secure strong futures.

RAINFOREST ACTION NETWORK



2024 DONATION: \$100,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$330,000

Our donations allow the Rainforest Action Network (“RAN”) to hold multinational corporations responsible for using unethically sourced resources while protecting the Leuser Ecosystem of Sumatra, Indonesia, from the deforestation caused by the illegal expansion of pulpwood and palm oil plantations. In this way, RAN not only protects rainforests from destruction—which is vital to keeping our climate ecosystem intact—they also help consumers “vote with their pocketbook” by identifying companies that don’t walk their climate talk.

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. Then, by publishing reports and using high-profile local and international media coverage, RAN focuses public scrutiny on the multinational corporations that benefit from this behavior. RAN’s work can be summed up in three campaigns: Stop Deforestation, Defund Climate Change, and Support Communities.

In 2024, RAN’s Keep Forests Standing campaign saw positive results, as some brands, traders, and palm oil mills committed to using ethically harvested palm tree products and the local Aceh government committed to supporting smallholder farmers with sustainable, smaller-scale palm oil production (which can be certified as deforestation-free, per the EU’s Deforestation Regulations). In addition, RAN stopped plantations from encroaching on the 80,000-hectare Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve and the 1.75 million 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).

Over the next year, our donations will help RAN expand their work to East Kalimantan on Borneo, grow their Keep Forests Standing campaign in Indonesia, help rural Indigenous communities build the local capacity to defend their land and their rights, and push the global financial sector to implement reforms that stop illegal logging, deforestation, and rights abuses.

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



BREAD FOR THE WORLD

2024 DONATION: \$125,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$475,000

Our donations allowed Bread for the World (“Bread”) to 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. Climate change is a major contributor to global food insecurity, especially in low-income countries. Extreme weather events such as drought and floods are increasing, affecting food production and making it harder for those living in poverty to feed their families and provide a nutritious diet.

Last year, Bread’s advocacy secured \$9 billion in emergency humanitarian assistance that provided food, nutrition, shelter, water, and medical supplies to tens of millions of people facing starvation. Then, to further develop their models, Bread traveled to Kenya to learn climate-resilient agriculture, food system development, and research directly from the farmers, nonprofits, and agricultural leaders implementing the new technologies.

With a new administration in Washington, DC, Bread’s work will be more important than ever. They will continue to educate policymakers and the public about the moral and practical reasons for supporting climate-smart policies that enhance food security and promote sustainability.

(Note that Rick Steves’ Europe donates much more to Bread each year, but the contributions here are earmarked specifically for their climate change advocacy work.)



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

CITIZENS’ CLIMATE EDUCATION

2024 DONATION: \$50,000

DONATIONS TO DATE: \$230,000

Our donations help Citizens’ Climate Education (“CCE”) train, support and provide tools to a growing nationwide coalition of climate advocates, equipping them to engage policymakers and the public on smart solutions to climate change.

CCE empowers a bipartisan coalition of more than 230,000 advocates across 369 local chapters and 62 national action teams. Bipartisan support is essential to creating lasting climate solutions. 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.

In the last year, CCE’s volunteers generated 106,762 calls and messages to Congress, held 1,205 meetings with congressional staff, and achieved 1,761 local media hits about climate action. Their efforts have contributed to the passage of eight federal climate laws and the establishment of bipartisan climate caucuses in Congress.

Our ongoing donation will help CCE continue to generate bipartisan support for climate solutions, recruit and train more volunteers, and acquire endorsements from influential businesses and community leaders.



Citizens’ Climate Education is an advocacy organization that educates policy-makers and the public about smart solutions to climate change.



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