

Campo Escuela Nacional Iztarú

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Campo Escuela Nacional Iztarú (CENI) is the official national center for training and events for the Association of Girl and Boy Scouts of Costa Rica. It was acquired by the Association in 1978. Due to its location, landscapes and facilities, it is a privileged place to hold meetings, courses, seminars, conferences, field trips, and non-formal education activities, as well as research and recreation opportunities.



Located in La Carpintera Protected Area, and 17 kilometers (10 miles) from San José, CENI holds 77 hectares (190 acres) of tropical rainforests; surrounded by beautiful landscapes, wild fauna, water springs, and waterfalls. The annual average temperature is 16.6° C (62° F).

CENI has camping zones to accommodate 2500 young people at the same time. The camping zones are named after native indigenous leaders: Quepo, Kamaquiri, Chirripó, Aquitava, Garabito, Curime, Cocorí, Nosara, and Coó.

The place has a newly built dining room for 400 people comfortably seated. Also three collective bedrooms, each with a 50-people capacity, six huts with two bunk beds each, three classrooms for 50 people each, a nursing area, a meteorological station, storage spaces, and a workshop. The place also has a climbing tower, an adventure trail, and two ecological trails.

CENI is a model center for environmental conservation practices for the more than 12,000 visitors coming every year: At CENI we recycle, reforest, produce alternative energy (solar and eolic); we also save electricity, water, paper, and fuel.

In 2009, CENI also proudly became a ?Scouts of the World Base?

Interamerica

No

No

[CENI](#);

Asociación de Guías y Scout de Costa Rica
San José, CR

9.889298

-83.968013

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CENI is located 17 kilometers (10 miles) East from San José.

The main entrance is located at about 1400 meters (4593 ft) above sea level, and its highest point, at 1800 meters (5905 feet) above sea level.

The administrative area and the camping zones are located at between 1700 and 1750 meters (5577 and 5741 feet) above sea level.



CENI is considered an important area for biological and ecological research. Preliminary studies developed by the Natural History Department at the National Museum, the University of Costa Rica, and the National Biodiversity Institute (INBio) have found many different biological species. Some examples are:

- 663 species of plants, including 93 species of ferns, and many species of orchids. 95% are native species, and 4% (21 species, most of them from the orchids' family) are endemic for the country, which means they can only be found in Costa Rica and nowhere else in the world.
- 31 species of mammals, including 16 species of bats; and other bigger species like coyote (*Canis latrans*), kinkajou (*Potos flavus*), racoon (*Procyon lotor*), armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*), sloth (*Choloepus hoffmanni*), common opossum (*Didelphis marsupialis*), rabbits (*Sylvilagus brasiliensis*), and margay (*Leopardus wiedii*), which is very rare and difficult to see.
- 146 species of butterflies, representing 11% of the butterflies registered for Costa Rica
- 75 species of mushrooms
- 139 species of liquens



Aside the biological importance, other environmental features should also be considered to preserve or develop the area:

1. Water resources. La Carpintera and surrounding mountains are a very important source of drinking water for nearby towns.
2. Risk prevention. The preservation of forest coverage, and water quality in La Carpintera, minimizes the risk of landslides and ensures the safety of populations living close to the mountain.
3. Environmental education and recreation potential. Its nearby location to San José, easy access, and beautiful landscapes, make this site very attractive for school groups and people looking to spend time in a natural setting.

From CENI it is possible to visit several surrounding natural and cultural areas:

- **Irazú Volcano National Park.** Irazú is an active volcano, which highest point can be seen from CENI. The park covers 2300 hectares of mostly primary forest, and two craters. It is located in Cartago, about 40 Km from CENI.
- **Tapantí-Macizo de la Muerte National Park.** A very important park where most of the Central Valley's drinking water comes from. It covers 6080 ha of rainforests with very distinctive wildlife and variety of trails. It is located about 40 Km from CENI.
- **Guayabo National Monument.** It is a very important archaeological site, at the base of the Turrialba Volcano, currently active. It has an excavated village with working aqueducts. It also has a forest and trails.
- **Braulio Carrillo National Park.** Located close to San José, capital of Costa Rica. Its impressive, endless primary cloud and rainforest (44 000 hectares), contains many geographical features, such as dormant volcanoes and rivers. It also protects

the upper Sarapiquí River watershed, and flora and fauna associated.

• **University of Costa Rica:**

- Lankester Botanical Garden. This 11 hectares garden, hosts more than 900 species of orchids, a secondary forest, and collections of bromeliads, cactus, bamboo, and heliconias. Located in Cartago, about 20 Km from CENI.
- Leonelo Oviedo Biological Reserve, and José Orozco Botanical Garden, at the main campus of the University of Costa Rica in San Pedro de Montes de Oca, only 10 Km from CENI.

• **Basílica de**

Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles. This is a place of cultural and religious interest. The biggest church in the country dedicated to *La Negrita*, the nation's mulatta (mixed-blood) patron saint. Pilgrims from all Costa Rica walk to la Basílica to celebrate its day on August 2nd.

• Unguided environmental education programme examples and samples

- At certain times of the year, students and religious groups, international voluntary community service organizations, among others, visit CENI. Here they can learn about good environmental practices, use the ecological trails, and develop their own programs.

- School camps with students from poor neighborhoods.

- School visits with the National Meteorological Institute to learn about climate change and the meteorological station.

• Guided environmental education programme examples and samples

- Program *“Aventuras con Sentido”* (*“Sensical Adventures”*): This program is a successful, *all-included* program for scout groups, schools and companies offered at Iztarú. It consists of activities to develop team work, self-confidence, and leadership.
- *“Scouts of the World”*. Through the Scouts of the World Award Discovery Phase, participants can learn with different specialists about the projects and environmental management developed at CENI. Last January, six participants learned about and tested the water quality of CENI's water springs, using physical and biological tests. They also learned about the management of drinking water for the whole Center, and discovered some of the environmental challenges to ensure water quality and quantity at CENI and in their own communities.



For the past decade, CENI has been improving its environmental practices as an example for its visitors and the members of the National Association. The following are some examples:

1.

Water, Weather, and Climate Project: Founded in 2002 with the support of the Central American Committee for Hydraulic Resources (CRRH), the project's objective is to promote a new culture in water use. Some activities developed at CENI include:

1. Installation of a meteorological station which sends real-time data to the National Meteorological Institute (<http://www.imn.ac.cr>)

2. Courses, workshops, seminars about water, weather, and climate for leaders and young people

3. Materials for water-based education

4. Participation in fairs and community projects

2.

Environmental Services: Since 2004, more than 60% of CENI's land has been inscribed in the country's carbon

sequestration and conservation program

3.

Clean Energy: In 2005 the National Electricity Company installed a demonstration solar panel and a wind mill. At this moment, the energy supplies Iztarú's main administrative office. We have developed a proposal to add several solar panels and at least one more wind mill in 2010.

4.

Integrated Solid Waste Management Program: This program, created in 2008, involves visitors in the responsible management of their wastes, providing them with alternatives, technologies, and information so they learn how to better avoid or dispose of their materials through the 5 Rs (reject, reduce, reuse, repair, recycle).

5.

Ecological Blue Flag: On 24 March 2009, CENI received the Ecological Blue Flag award, a distinction established in Costa Rica in 1996 to promote clean water, beaches, communities, schools, natural protected areas, watersheds, and also to fight climate change. CENI registered in this last category and fulfilled 90% of the requirements, such as reduction of fossil fuel, electricity, and paper consumption; reforestation; solid and liquid waste treatment; CFC elimination; and correct use of freshwater.



All the previous accomplishments related to the development of environmental friendly practices and ecological conservation and education can be considered big achievements for CENI.

Also, being the first SCENES centre in Latin America is for us a big achievement and honor.

Based on the environmental management CENI's experience, CENI recently presented a proposal to the National Board to develop a national environmental management strategy. This strategy seeks to promote environmental friendly practices (principally recycling, and water and energy conservation, as well as education) with national and local offices and scout groups.

Aside, CENI is participating of La Carpintera Protected Area Committee to create the Management Plan for the whole Protected Area. The committee is in the final stages to present the Management Plan to the community.

• **Infrastructure:**

- Installation of low-flow toilets with composting tanks.
- Accessibility to handicapped needs, in some of the areas.

• **Programming:**

- Design and delivery of specific youth environmental education programs linked to the World Environmental Badge, and promoting youth participation in sustainable property and landscape management, and environmental inventory.
- Design and delivery of specific environmental education workshops for adult leaders linked to the World Environmental Badge and youth training in sustainable and environmental issues, for example the Project Learning Tree environmental education curricula
- Maintenance and improvement of the Ecological Blue Flag award

Spanish, some of them in English