



# Returning to Our Roots

Indigenous Tourism from Within

—— COSTA RICA ——





## **In Costa Rica, the worldview of indigenous peoples is fundamental to biodiversity conservation.**

Their territories protect sacred sites and vital resources for their culture, identity, and subsistence, reflecting their deep connection with nature.

The relationship these communities have with their environment is not only reflected in their worldview and sustainable practices but also in their role as guardians of vast areas of national territory.





# **Indigenous communities cover 7% of Costa Rica's national territory, which equals more than 350,000 hectares, 70% of which are covered by forests.**

Furthermore, these territories include a significant portion of the country's essential ecosystems, such as:

**16%** of rainforests

**15%** of wetlands

**5%** of mangroves

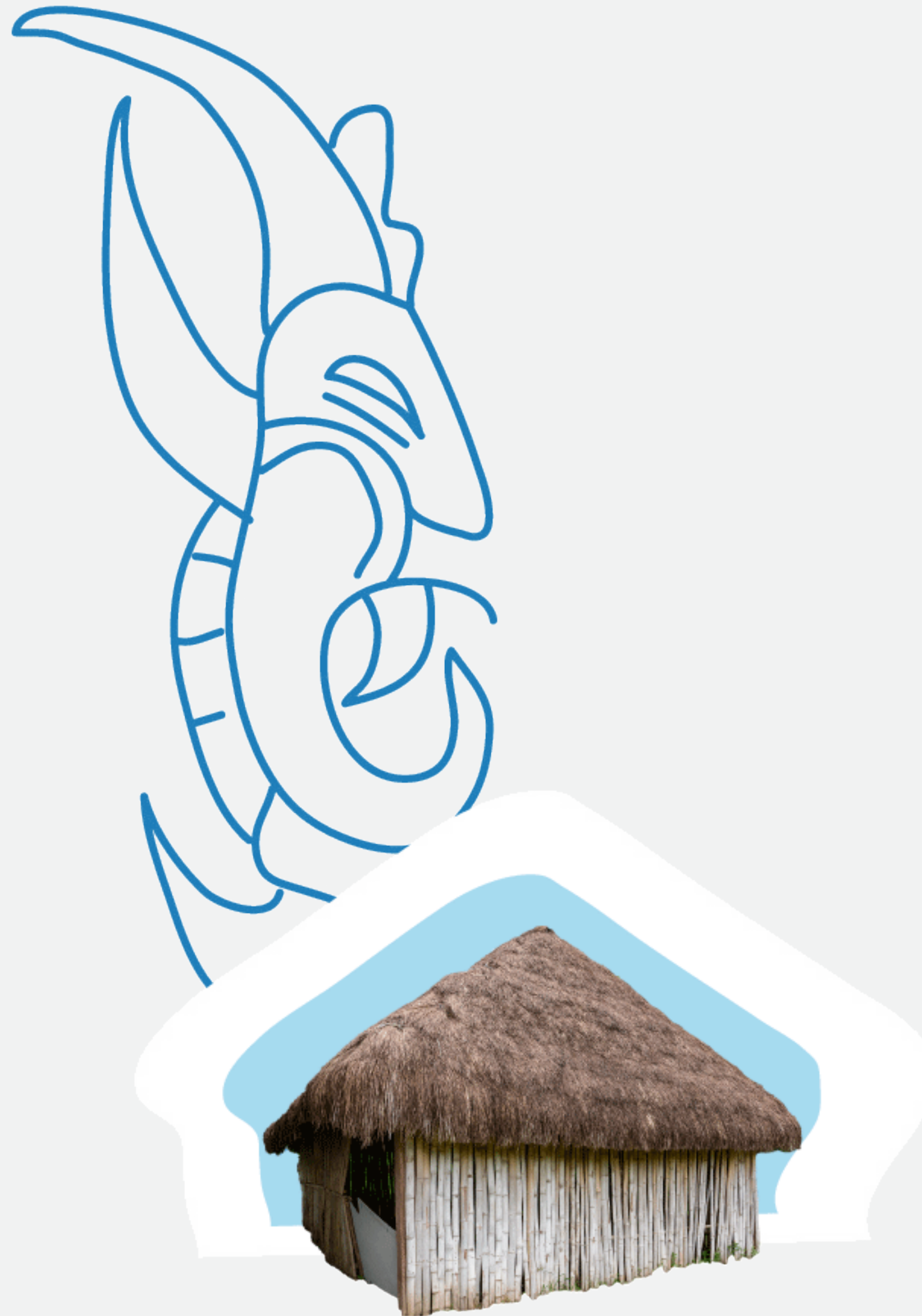
**3.2%** of nesting beaches for sea turtles

**3.1%** of seagrass meadows

**2.9%** of páramo forests

**1%** of coral reefs.





**However, their territories' abundant natural and cultural wealth does not translate into a better quality of life for indigenous peoples.**

Approximately 70% of indigenous households live in vulnerable conditions, with significant deficiencies in fundamental needs, such as health, education, and housing.



**For this reason,  
indigenous communities  
expressed the need to  
support initiatives  
aligned with their  
worldview.**

This was formalized in Goal 63 of the National Biodiversity Strategy, which aims to promote the economic and productive development of indigenous territories through tourism activities linked to biodiversity.





**For Doris, Paulino, Johana, and Elides, nature conservation and the strengthening of their identities are more than just a commitment – they are a daily struggle.**

They are part of the first and second generations of the Raíces program and engage in ecotourism as a means of their livelihood, nature conservation, and protecting the cultural identity of indigenous territories.





**Raíces is a financial mechanism that promotes sustainable tourism in indigenous territories by supporting business ideas and turning them into tourism enterprises.**

The program connects indigenous entrepreneurs with resources, training, and networks, driving a tourism model that is economically viable and environmentally sustainable, and places indigenous communities at the forefront of their own development.





*“Raíces, for me, is an opportunity to fulfill a lifelong dream of growing as an entrepreneur, especially in tourism, but with a vision that is deeply important to me – the perspective of indigenous communities.”*

**Doris Ríos Ríos**

Indigenous woman from the Cabécar China-Kichá Territory





Built by Our Territories

**Doris Ríos Ríos**  
Indigenous woman from the  
Cabécar China-Kichá Territory





**Raíces' first and second generations have mobilized \$1.45 million, benefiting 1,112 people and supporting 30 enterprises as well as 114 community infrastructure projects that enable indigenous tourism.**



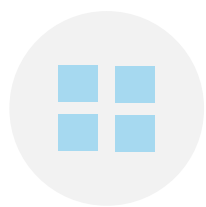


*“The program has had a positive impact on the community by creating jobs and promoting collaboration among local producers. This not only encourages the consumption of local products but also provides opportunities for young people and women who are unemployed.”*

**Elides Rivera Navas**

Indigenous woman from the Térraba Territory





## **67% of Raíces enterprises are led by women.**

*"In the most difficult moments, what kept me going was the need to become an entrepreneur. Women are entrepreneurs out of necessity... My motivation is to improve my family's well-being and support other mothers in my community, contributing in my own small way."*

**Johanna Lázaró Morales**

Cáu^shá^s Farm Boruca

Indigenous woman from the Boruca Territory





**Over three generations,  
Raíces has impacted  
2,221 hectares,  
promoting sustainable  
practices that  
contribute to  
environmental  
conservation and  
strengthening  
biodiversity.**





**Paulino Nájera Rivera found his motivation to become an entrepreneur after an environmental crisis in Térraba, where deforestation and chemicals used in agriculture contaminated the sole water source.**

He decided to take action to restore the forest, and as it recovered, the idea of organizing hikes and creating a space for ecological and cultural tourism emerged.





Raíces came to strengthen my dreams

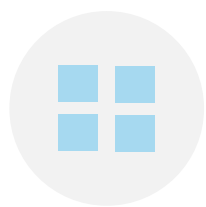
**Paulino Nájera Rivera**  
Ecological and Cultural Corner  
Indigenous Territory of Térraba





Raíces empowers indigenous entrepreneurs with training, funding, and technical support, strengthening their projects and opening doors to ecotourism.





## Learn more about the Raíces initiative:

[Raíces Project](#)

[Raíces Travel](#)

[Podcast](#)

[Youtube](#)

Raíces is a project co-financed by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Government, with support from the European Commission and the Governments of Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Flanders, Belgium, Canada, the United Kingdom, and France.

### Sources:

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- United Nations Costa Rica (2024). UN Recognizes Costa Rica for Progress in Land Restitution and Calls for Greater Efforts to Address Discrimination and Violence Faced by Indigenous Peoples and Individuals.
- National Indigenous Roundtable of Costa Rica (MNICR) (2023). Progress in Achieving Goal 63.
- PNUD Costa Rica (2024). Open Call for 2024 Incubation Program "Raíces," Aimed at Financing Sustainable Tourism in Indigenous Territories.

### Photos:

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