

## Costa rica electric vehicle infrastructure

Q COSTARICA (BBC ) On the way to Monteverde, Costa Rica, a mountain town nestled in a cloud forest like something out of another world, El Sol restaurant sits on the edge of a cliff. It's the last stop before a steep uphill drive of misty views and hairpin turns.

It looks like a traditional "soda", a roadside restaurant that serves "casado" (rice, beans and meat) and fresh juices. Except it also has a silver cylinder with green lettering in the parking lot - the first electric vehicle (EV) charging terminal in the area.

"It's like with smartphones," says Minor Oliverio, owner of El Sol. "Eventually, everyone will have chargers and vehicles. But someone has to be first."

The station is part of the Ruta Eléctrica Monteverde (Monteverde Electric Route), the only charger network in Latin America created to avoid the anxiety that electric car drivers feel about not having enough charge to reach their destination.

Until before the pandemic, Monteverde received more than 200,000 visitors per year, most of them traveling in large vans that created traffic jams in the commercial corridor.

"We are not waiting for the government to install chargers," says Katy Van Dusen, a Monteverde neighbor and founder of the Monteverde Commission for Climate Change Resilience (Corclima), which devised the Electric Route.

While installing it is expensive for most rural businesses, Van Dusen and his team involve hotel and restaurant owners, coffee shops, tour operators and nature reserves to offer free chargers to customers.

At the Hotel Belmar, the free charging offer has attracted electric vehicle drivers. "In rural areas like Monteverde, people are more environmentally conscious," says Richard Garro, the hotel's sustainability manager. "It's part of the reason people come here."

"We want companies to spend as little as possible [on recharging people's vehicles]," says Daniel Castillo, technical advisor for Ruta Eléctrica and founder of Energías Limpias de Costa Rica (Elco), a Costa Rican recharging company.

Castillo is now focused on selling portable chargers to car dealerships to include them in electric vehicle sales. "All a local business has to do is install connection points."

Milena Ramírez, the current coordinator of the Monteverde Electric Route and director of the city's



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tourism board, recently borrowed Van Dusen's electric car to visit all of Monteverde's charging points to ensure functionality.

"More communities are needed to build freight corridors. It is not just one company offering this service. We all benefit when there are many companies involved."

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