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MCALLEN, TEXAS UNITES WITH SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA
TO BECOME SISTER CITIES

**Two Cities Share Appeal As Popular Birding Destinations;
Natural Home Bases For Wildlife Viewing Travel Destinations**

McALLEN, Texas (September 10, 2005) — The Cities of McAllen, Texas and the capital of Costa Rica, San Jose, recently announced their agreement to become Sister Cities through the Sister Cities International program. The official signing ceremony will take place on January 26, 2006 when Mayor Richard Cortez of McAllen and Mayor Johnny Araya Monge of San Jose will sign the formal agreement in San Jose. With the approaching opening March 2006 of the World Birding Center in McAllen, the two destinations share equally in their appeal as popular birding destinations, the major attraction in forming their union. McAllen is the center of the United States' most popular birding and butterflying destination, just as San Jose is to Costa Rica. By forming this relationship, the two cities are able to complement their wildlife viewing resources. Each is a natural home base as a wildlife travel destination.

“This is the first time a Sister City relationship has ever been established for tourism purposes, much less for nature tourism,” said Nancy Millar, Vice President and Director of the McAllen Convention & Visitors Bureau. “McAllen recognizes the potential value of economic development in forming this union with San Jose based on birding, as the marketing opportunities are endless.”

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Costa Rica is arguably the most popular Central American destination for U.S. birders, offering a tremendous variety of birds as well as other wildlife. Costa Rica has 840 recorded bird species and the McAllen metro area boasts 507. Because San Jose offers the convenience of several chain hotels and a variety of superb restaurants located near the airport, it's a natural base city for visiting the surrounding area, just like McAllen.

“The idea of partnering with San Jose has been in progress since last year,” said McAllen Mayor Richard Cortez. “We created an awareness to our contingent of the value of partnering with Costa Rica’s capital. Now, this partnership focusing on nature tourism, which is a first, will open up possibilities for Sister Cities around the world.”

According to Millar, McAllen is promoting the two cities as a package to birders who want to visit both destinations with easy access on one trip. With McAllen organizing these individual trips, visitors will not have to incur language barriers in making their own travel arrangements to Costa Rica or have any concerns of being unfamiliar with the area’s hotels, guides and other amenities.

McAllen’s first organized trip to San Jose will be April 3-7, 2006, following the city’s 10th annual Texas Tropics Nature Festival. Participants will leave together from McAllen and travel via air to San Jose.

SIGNIFICANCE OF A SISTER CITY

The Sister City program is an international program that promotes peace through mutual respect, understanding and cooperation, one community at a time. Traditionally, sister cities are established for economic development or cultural exchange. To be official, a Sister City must have the endorsement of the local authorities from each city who support the efforts of community volunteers. Sister City agreements are then signed by the highest elected

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officials and ratified by each city council or its equivalent. This process opens global initiatives for participation by all people at the local level such as citizens, government, businesses, media, private voluntary organizations and educational institutions. For more information on Sister Cities International, see www.sister-cities.org.

McAllen currently has 12 Sister Cities, 10 in Mexico (Irapuato, Guanajuato; Ciudad Guadalupe; Tampico, Tamaulipas; Reynosa, Tamaulipas; Garcia, Nuevo Leon; The triangle of the Sun: Acapulco, Taxco, Ixtapa, Zihuatanejo; Cadereyta Jimenez, Nuevo Leon; and Monterrey, Nuevo Leon) one in Gonzhou, Jiangxi, China, and another in Ville Saint Laurent, Ontario, Canada. For information on the Texas Tropics Nature Festival trip to Costa Rica, packages to San Jose or the Sister City program, contact Nancy Millar toll free at 877-622-5536 or visit www.mcallencvb.com.

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