

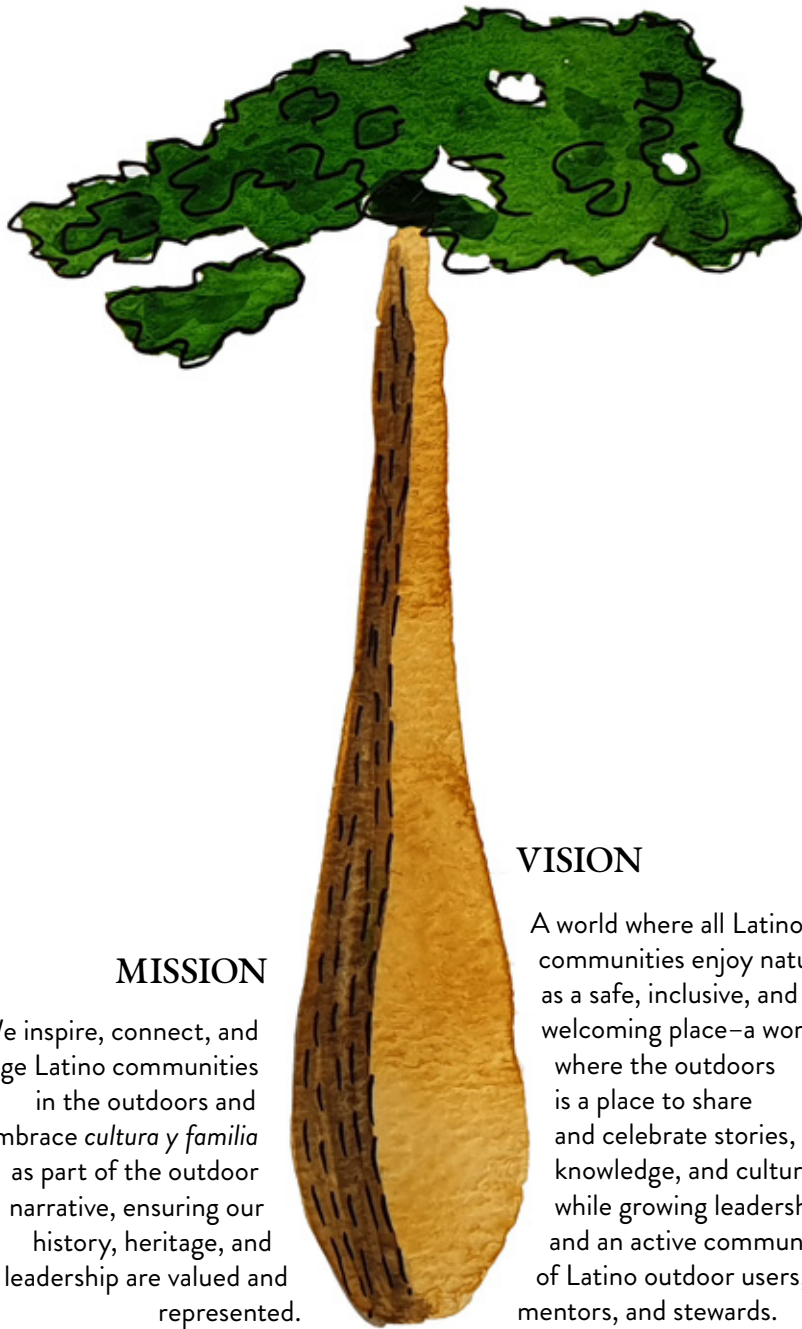
Un Año Outdoors

2023 • CELEBRATING TEN YEARS



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MISSION

We inspire, connect, and engage Latino communities in the outdoors and embrace *cultura y familia* as part of the outdoor narrative, ensuring our history, heritage, and leadership are valued and represented.

VISION

A world where all Latino communities enjoy nature as a safe, inclusive, and welcoming place—a world where the outdoors is a place to share and celebrate stories, knowledge, and culture while growing leadership and an active community of Latino outdoor users, mentors, and stewards.



familia
comunidad
cultura
access
service
diversity
life-long learning



“What seed do you have in your pocket that you can plant and share with people?
Because everybody has at least one. And the world would be a wonderful place if we all
felt empowered to lay it down somewhere. Especially in community with someone else.”

—Sarah Thornbrugh, Latino Outdoors Volunteer, Western Massachusetts

ABOUT US

It began as a blog and grew into *comunidad*.

In 2013, José González created Latino Outdoors (LO) as an online space for Latine community members to share our connections to the outdoors and to connect with each other. Those seeds that were planted more than ten years ago have grown into a national organization powered by a network of leaders dedicated to delivering experiences outdoors, expanding what it means to be “outdoorsy”, and fostering new leadership in outdoor recreation, conservation, and environmental education. The growing LO community includes over 200 volunteers in more than 30 [locations](#) across 20 states and the District of Columbia. LO’s volunteers and national support staff, alike, are motivated by the understanding that a diverse outdoor community is key to being a thriving outdoor community.

“comunidad”





Celebrating and holding tight to the moments in nature that bring joy, community, and respite from a busy and increasingly challenging world is what characterized [2022](#) for Latino Outdoors. For the first time since the pandemic, we were able to start the year outdoors together in-person. More people joined us *en comunidad* in 2022 than in any previous year. Nearly 150 individual LO leaders helped lead over 260 outings for more than 4,700 participants. Yosemite National Park's towering granite walls were the backdrop to our annual leadership campout for 55 volunteers, staff, board members, and founder. We continued to expand our

community. In 2022, nearly 90 new volunteer leaders found their way to LO, and regional teams sprouted in Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Houston, Philadelphia, and San Luis Obispo. That growth ushered us into 2023, a milestone year as LO turned ten.

2022 RECAP

Three fundamental priorities shape the programs of Latino Outdoors: expanding equitable access to the outdoors, nurturing new outdoor leadership, and diversifying the collective narrative around people’s connections with the outdoors. Our programs have a symbiotic relationship—bolstering and complementing one another. *Vamos Outdoors* (Let’s Go Outdoors) is focused on fostering outdoor experiences primarily through organized family and community-friendly outings. *Yo Cuento Outdoors* (I Matter/ I Tell a Story/ I Count Outdoors) is aimed at filling out the collective narrative of outdoor recreation, conservation, and environmental education to include the voices of Latines and other under-protagonized groups. *Creemos Outdoors* (We Grow Outdoors) supports the leadership development of our volunteer network and the broader LO *comunidad*.



Vamos Outdoors

La fiesta le tocó a LO this year, with 2023 marking our 10-year anniversary. Latino Outdoors leaders in Colorado began the festivities by hosting a *Día de los Reyes Magos* hike during the full moon on January 6th. Participants bravely stepped into the new year on fresh snow guided by headlamps and joyful hearts. The chilly night culminated in a traditional slicing of the *Rosca de Reyes*, a colorful, wreath-like sweet bread with a baby figurine hidden inside. Tradition says whoever cuts the slice with the hidden baby is responsible for hosting a subsequent celebration. *¡Que siga la fiesta!* The following day on the West Coast, LO Los Angeles hosted community members on a moonlit stroll along the hilly trails of Griffith Park taking in panoramic views of the iconic Hollywood sign and the expansive city lights below. The weather and locations may be different, but the magic of hiking together by moonlight set the stage for the celebratory year ahead.

We leaned into the year’s festivities the best we know how—by hosting our LO *comunidad* outdoors across the country. We exceeded all previous annual engagement levels with over 360 outings for more than 8,300 participants. We got outside! We biked through Saguaro National Park, danced *bachata* in Central Park, rock climbed at Joshua Tree National Park, explored bayous in Houston, surfed in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and identified birds, mushrooms, insects, trees, and even marine life while hiking on trails all around the U.S. With each outing, we planted and tended seeds of *cultura* and *comunidad* outdoors.

Photography:

1. Aurora Cortés, Regional Coordinator, San Francisco Bay Area
2. Verónica Miranda, LO Volunteer, San Francisco
3. Verónica Miranda, LO Volunteer, San Francisco



“Why do I love nature the most? It’s because sometimes I get to spend time with my family in nature. I get to go to the park, walk around, and play in the grass...Nature has nice scenery. I love the scenery.”

—Samuel, a *semillita*

Festejamos our second year of *Semillitas* Outdoors, LO’s week-long initiative centering children in the outdoors, by hosting over 30 outings and events, including two webinars exploring youth leadership in the outdoors and outdoor careers. In Fresno, CA, Latino Outdoors leaders hosted over 100 children and their caregivers at Yo’ville Community Garden. They provided an opportunity for the kids to play and connect with the soil and plants. Many had been previously unaware of this garden oasis in a neighborhood with little access to grocery stores and fresh produce. The young participants tended to

the worm compost bins and took home pots they painted and filled with soil and seeds. On the other side of the country, LO Baltimore teamed up with Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and Friends of Herring Run Park to celebrate Earth Day together with kids *y familias* who were treated to a day of park stewardship, native seed planting, hiking along a story trail, and delicious Puerto Rican *empanadillas*. When we center children and support their parents in the outdoors, biophilia sprouts, a lifelong connection to nature takes root, and whole families can tap into the wellness benefits of time spent outside.

Above: Photo by Rhiannon Herrington, LO Volunteer, Colorado



“I have been seeing a greater number of QTBIPOC folks reclaim space in the outdoors and use it as a tool for healing. Being at the intersection of identity, the toll oppression can take on the body and soul is insurmountable at times. When I connect with nature, it’s a deep relief and lets me exhale from the wider systemic forces and allows me and others like me to get out of our heads.”

—Lucy Delgado, Latino Outdoors Volunteer, Baltimore, MD

At Latino Outdoors, we celebrate pride all year long. In June however, we explicitly provide space to *festejar* the beautiful spectrum of Latine queer identities in nature through programming both online and outdoors. This year marked LO’s second installment of *Orgullosamente* Outdoors, with several outings such as “Birding con Orgullo” at the U.S. National Arboretum hosted by LO DC/Maryland/Virginia where members celebrated diversity in birds and people. In the southwest, LO Albuquerque literally brought the circus to town to celebrate LGBTQIA two-spirited communities with a “Queer Hike and Brunch” at the *Tijeras* BioZone Education Center. This vibrant gathering included an exploration of Conservation Carnivale’s traveling circus exhibit van. The laughter and joy of our *Orgullosamente* outings build inclusive community and provide respite from a world that will hopefully grow to be more supportive.

We know that some community members can’t always attend an LO outing. So throughout 2023, we continued our *Todos* Outdoors quarterly challenges where we invite our online community to get outside independently, tell us about their experience, and possibly receive a special gift. This year’s challenges included a *Cuidando el Planeta* litter clean-up and nature journaling, among others.

Above: Photo by Vanessa Barela, LO Volunteer, New Mexico

Yo Cuento Outdoors

Our stories bind our community together. Whether we tell them by moonlight around a campfire, write them in a blog, share them visually on social media, or connect through them during conversations online—our *cuentos* convey the power and strength of our *culturas*. Stories are at the root of who we are at Latino Outdoors. *Yo cuento. Tú cuentas*. We count. We matter. We tell our stories.



This year, we wanted to commemorate LO's 10th anniversary through visual storytelling. So, we commissioned art from Latine artists asking them to interpret our mission and their personal connection to nature through their medium. The paintings, poems, music, and graphic design pieces they created captured the vibrant diversity of Latino Outdoors outings and community. This art, along with photos of *nuestra comunidad* from our archives, was featured as part of the [Crecemos Outdoors art show](#) that toured REI stores in Washington DC, San Antonio, and Los Angeles, evo's location in Denver, and Clif Bar's campus in the San Francisco Bay Area. The traveling exhibition and celebration helped bring our anniversary to communities we serve around the country.

The blog that started it all continues to be an integral part of LO's storytelling. During the year, we posted twelve new stories, including a series of Then and Now reflections from leaders who helped lay down LO's roots along with fresh perspectives from those planting the *semillas* to take Latino Outdoors into the next decade. Contributors included our program coordinators in [Albuquerque](#) and [DC/Maryland/Virginia](#) exploring how their time with LO has shaped their careers and outdoor pursuits.

For the Latino Conservation Week Photo Contest during the summer, we put out a call for images that tell stories. Our grand prize-winning submission came from 30-year-old Colombian-American Carolina Ramírez, who began snowboarding barely three years ago. The picture of her facing a wintry backdrop at the top of a run in Chamonix, France while wearing a playful fox onesie with the Colombian flag draped over her shoulders evokes pride and playfulness. "Growing up, I didn't see myself represented in snowboarding and it wasn't something that was really accessible to me. So I wanted to bring the Colombian flag to capture that moment for myself and my family. If there's something that I've learned through snowboarding and I think is perfectly encompassed through this theme of "Then and Now", it's that it's never too late to get started," shared Carolina. We hope that our community continues to lean into trying new activities outside. Whether you are a *semillita* or an elder, the outdoors offers something *para todos*.



Left: Photo by Corey Mendez, LO Community Member

Right: Photo by LCW Photo Contest Winner Carolina Ramírez



The audience for LO's storytelling continues to grow steadily, reaching 106,000 across our various social media platforms by the end of the year, an 8% increase from twelve months earlier.

Thanks to today's ubiquitous virtual spaces, we are able to connect across great distances. This year, we hosted approximately 25 virtual conversations and speaker panels, including some that took us beyond Indigenous land acknowledgements, helped us explore ways in which youth outdoor leadership can be nurtured, and introduced us to Latine leaders in marine conservation. Connecting online with LO community members was also an opportunity to learn about outdoor skills such as making your own backpacking food and getting started with fly fishing. Telling and sharing stories through virtual spaces can also bridge the distance between us and Latine community members whose voices we don't often hear from, such as Drag Story Hour and AfroLatino Travel with Kim Haas.



The story of Latino Outdoors took the form of a children's book. Written and illustrated by a creative team that included LO's founder and members of our national volunteer network, [Pepe Plantasemillas](#) is an allegorical account of LO's first ten years told through the adventures of a colorful bird sharing a magical seed of *cultura y comunidad*.



In 2023, we marked our first full year with our policy advocate on staff. Latino Outdoors' advocacy priorities for the year included expanding equitable access to parks and the outdoors, particularly through our work with Parks Now in California, protecting public lands through national monument designations and expansion, and connecting people to policy by offering tools for them to advocate for the places they love and the issues they care about. Among some of the year's efforts, LO actively participated in coalitions working to expand both the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument in northern California by including Molok Luyuk, an area of cultural significance to local tribes, and the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument so that millions of people in southern California benefit from more equitable access to nature and improved watershed protection. Our approach to advocacy is relationship-driven, centers community, and amplifies our personal and cultural ties to place.



Photo by Lucy Delgado, LO Volunteer, Baltimore

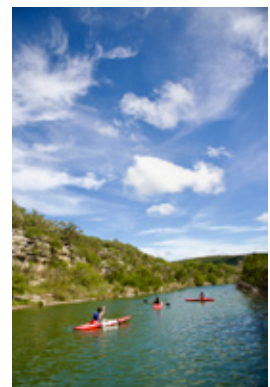
*Crece*mos Outdoors

Together, *crece*mos outdoors. If we want a strong outdoor community, we need it to be diverse. Latino Outdoors started off as California-centric and focused on a particular Latino demographic. Time, along with constructive feedback from the communities we serve, helped change that. We still have more to do, but when looking at the LO *comunidad* today, we see more geographic, ethnic, racial, generational, political, professional and recreational diversity. LO is powered by volunteers. Some are new to outdoor leadership, others are seasoned park rangers, environmental educators, and conservationists. Regardless of their experience and career trajectory, we aim to support their continued growth and together with them, continuously co-create a space for collaborative learning. This year, 96 new volunteers joined the LO network, which grew to include regional teams in the Chicago-Great Lakes area, Miami, Phoenix, Dallas, and Bakersfield. Over 30 LO leaders received capacity-building support in 2023, including several wilderness first aid and wilderness first responder certifications and recertifications, as well as training in Leave No Trace and even relocating snakes. LO leaders also networked and learned together with peers beyond LO through their participation in gatherings such as the America the Beautiful For All Coalition Advocacy Fly-In and the GreenLatinos National Summit.

The Jobs+ Opportunity Board on latinooutdoors.org is one more resource that is available to LO leaders and our broader audience. It provides community members with access to employment and other opportunities in outdoor recreation, environmental education, and conservation that they may not otherwise know about. In 2023, more than 1,900 jobs, internships, and fellowships were shared.



With fall's arrival, we found ourselves in the Lone Star State for the LO Leadership Campout. It was our largest national retreat to date and our first outside of California. The 2023 edition of our annual gathering took place at the H.E. Butt Foundation Camp in the Texas Hill Country—the homelands of the Caddo, Karankawa and Coahuiltecans, Apache, Jumanos, and Comanche Indigenous peoples. In all, 87 LO leaders and special guests participated. Papa Bear, from American Indians in Texas, welcomed us with a land acknowledgement and stories of the Hill Country's traditional stewards. After saluting the four cardinal directions, he invited us to dance with him and share in the spiritual nourishment and joy that the moment offered. We spent our time together learning about and enjoying the Hill Country's beauty. By day, we fished, hiked, canoed, and broke bread together. By night, we gathered to listen to our root stories—allowing space for our founder and trailblazing volunteers to share *cuentos* of the early days of Latino Outdoors. It was a joyful experience for our growing *comunidad*.



Photos by Verónica Miranda, LO Volunteer, San Francisco



Photo by Christian La Mont, LO Staff

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

LO Great Lakes joined our network in February of 2023. This regional team is powered by the high-energy, passionate duo of Juan Reyes and Ariel Barrios Jr. Together with their fellow LO leaders in the Chicago/Milwaukee area, they have created a robust outdoor *comunidad* with outings taking place on an almost weekly basis. Juan and Ariel are both avid climbers who enthusiastically send it in the gym, on the outdoor wall of Chicago's Steelworkers Park, or at their local crag. They take pride in welcoming LO Great Lakes participants into the climbing community and providing a space where people can comfortably move between Spanish, English and Spanglish as they move upwards. Together, Ariel and Juan have hosted indoor and outdoor climbing events, led hikes, organized campouts, and kayaked with their community in both Chicago and Milwaukee's city centers. They are quick to crack a joke and thoughtful in their approach to community-building in the Great Lakes region. We are happy to have them as part of *nuestra familia aquí con Latino Outdoors. ¡Mil gracias, Ariel y Juan!*



MIL GRACIAS | MANY THANKS

Our work is collaborative. It could not happen without the support of sister nonprofits, land management agencies, foundations, companies, and the many other groups and organizations that work alongside us to advance equitable access and protection for the outdoors. Every year, the level of collaboration grows, and that is a testament to the growing constituency of people who love and care for the outdoors.

Latino Outdoors collaborated and connected with [approximately 500](#) organizations and groups in 2023. Some of the year's collaborative breadth is reflected by the following list:

11th Hour Project/The Schmidt Family Foundation • Arc'teryx • Asian Climbing Collective • Baltimore American Indian Center • BIPOC Birders • Black Women Who • Brown Folks Fishing • Buffalo Bayou Partnership • California State Parks • Capital One • Chicago Park District • City of San Antonio - Parks & Recreation • Clif Bar • Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition • Colorado Parks and Wildlife • Conservation *Carnivale* • Conservation Lands Foundation • *Convivir* Colorado • *Corremos* Sacramento • Cycle Homies • Defenders of Wildlife • *Defensores de la Cuenca* • Elkhorn Slough Foundation and Reserve • *Escaladores Unidos* • Families in Nature • Femmes + Them's Bike Chicago • H.E. Butt Foundation • Hispanic Access Foundation • Humboldt Bay Aquatic Center • Jacob & Terese Hershey Foundation • *Juntos Afuera*, Oregon State University • Justice Outside • Kelson Foundation • Klean Kanteen • Latino Health Initiative • lululemon • Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation • Miami Hiking Club • Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District • Missoula Urban Demonstration Project - Missoula Tool Library • National Park Service • Nature For All • New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division, Outdoor Equity Fund • Noyo Food Forest • NYC Audubon • Outdoor Afro • Outdoor Asian • Parks California • Patagonia • Pisces Foundation • *PUENTES* • Rails-to-Trails Conservancy • REI Co-op • REI Cooperative Action Fund • Resources Legacy Fund • Richard King Mellon Foundation • Save the Redwoods League • She Moves Mountains • Sierra Club • *Somos El Poder* • Summits in Solidarity • Texas Parks & Wildlife • The North Face • The Wahine Project • *Tortugas* Hiking Club • Waverley Street Foundation • Western Conservation Foundation • William and Flora Hewlett Foundation • Wyoming Latina Youth Center • Wyoming State Parks



Gracias Outdoors

Gracias for the seeds and the soil.

Thank you for the rain and the sun.

Gracias for the raíces and leaves that soak up all the nourishment from below and above.
Thank you for the solid trunk and sturdy branches that although dispersed, remain connected.

Gracias for the growth of our *comunidad* outdoors.

Looking Ahead

The interesting thing about a tree's growth is that it creates more distance between the newest parts of itself and the very thing that makes that growth possible: its **roots**.

For more than ten years now, Latino Outdoors has grown. From a simple declaration of love for *latinidad* in the outdoors to a robust *comunidad* of people who love and care for the outdoors and each other, LO's first decade is a testament to what is possible when the impetus for inception and the inspiration for innovation are firmly connected by a clear through line. For LO, that through line is our [mission and core values](#).

Latino Outdoors was founded on the principles of celebrating *familia y cultura*, serving *comunidad*, and expanding access and representation, particularly for those who need it most. These are the **raíces** of LO. And for LO's entire existence, the connection between our roots and our new growth has remained unbroken.

In a movement for change, a broken connection to its roots can derail it. The "why" behind the movement is forgotten. A taste of "progress" leads some to abandon the effort, whether knowingly or unwittingly, in favor of maintaining that smattering of newfound privilege and thus, the status quo is also upheld. Those initially kept outside the gates become the gatekeepers. The grasp of oppression and injustice's root causes, essential for working towards systemic change, slips away.

If 2023 was about celebrating LO's growth, then 2024 will be about honoring our roots and remaining firmly committed to the "why" of Latino Outdoors and the broader movement that we are a part of. To thrive, a movement, an organization, a community must all continuously strike a balance between tending to new growth and maintaining the foundation from which that growth sprouts forth. With those sprouts reaching for the sky and towards the possibilities of tomorrow, Latino Outdoors will stay firmly rooted in the nourishing soil that has made today possible.





Latino Outdoors is a space for the community to be present, share our voices, and showcase how an ethic of conservation and roots in nature have been ingrained in *la cultura latina* for generations.

latinooutdoors.org

