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## Costa Rica Care For Vulnerable Children

Adventure



Relaxation



Culture



**Trip Name:** Costa Rica Care For Vulnerable Children    **Trip Code:** CRVC    **Duration:** From 4 weeks

### Trip Highlights

- Helping the overworked staff to run the homes thus creating more “fun time” for the children
- Using your free time at the weekends to trek the volcanic crater lakes, whiz through the rainforest on zip wires or visit tropical beaches
- Exploring the beauties of San Ramon and Palmares in the picturesque Alajuela province
- Giving something back to the local community through your volunteer work



### Overview

In Costa Rica a number of homes and care centres have been set up to care for the children who have been abandoned, neglected, abused or orphaned, as well as those whose parents simply can't afford to take care of them during the day.

Although this has been done in coordination with government authorities there is a huge shortage of help available. This is where you come in. Without your help in these Costa Rica schools, the children are missing out on getting the care and attention they greatly deserve.

If you're thinking of travelling to Central America and have a gift for working with children, we couldn't recommend this trip further!

### Destination Info

This programme is based in the town of San Ramón or neighbouring Palmares in the picturesque Alajuela Province of central Costa Rica. San Ramón and Palmares lie approximately 30 miles north of the capital San José and 28

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miles inland from the beautiful central Pacific beaches, making it a great base for exploring the highlights of Costa Rica during your free time. The towns themselves are small and traditional towns surrounded by dramatic mountainous landscapes. This is a close knit community with some of the friendliest people in the country, so you can be sure that a warm welcome awaits you!

## Itinerary



### Sunday-Monday: Arrival in Costa Rica and Orientation

Today you will get your first glimpses of this stunning country as you are met at the airport by one of our representatives and then transferred to spend your first night in a guest house in Alajuela. Alajuela is a small city that is close to San Jose (Costa Rica's capital), the perfect place to spend your first two nights. On Monday you will have a detailed orientation, covering all the great work you will be doing at the projects, while letting you know how to make the most of the rest of your time in Costa Rica.



### Tuesday: Transfer to your homestay and project site

Following your first two days in Alajuela you will transfer by public transport to your homestay, either in Palmares or San Ramón depending on your choice of location. Once you have had a chance to settle in and meet your host family, you will go to your project to meet all the people that you will be helping. Once you have finished introductions, you may have time to spend with the children and get started straight away.



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## Wednesday – Friday (and Monday to Friday for all following weeks)

Wednesday will be your first chance to get fully immersed into the project. You will be involved in a variety of activities to interact and help the children who will be looking forward to learning from you.

During your time on the project, your working hours will be divided between centres and homes. You will generally be volunteering between 8am and 4pm, with evenings and weekends as your free time. You will be free to explore this stunning country or get to know the local culture while improving your Spanish.

**Please note:** Itineraries and activities are subject to change.



This project has been set up to help the underprivileged children and over worked staff at adoption homes and care centres in and around San Ramón, Costa Rica. While the homes and centres have been set up by government agencies to house vulnerable children they do not have the staff or 'tias' to give these children the time care and attention they greatly deserve. The children at the homes are not able to live with their families anymore for various reasons and so any time that can be given to them is appreciated. The care centres have been set-up to help low income working parents, specifically single mothers, who have to work during the day and can't afford to pay for child care during that time.

The homes and centres help children up to twelve years of age. You will be able to get involved in a range of activities that will help a number of children, even just playing with the children or talking to them makes a huge difference to their lives. The placement in which you will be placed will depend on the need of the projects at the

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time. The more you put into the project, the more you and the children will get from your time with them. The activities that you will be able to get involved in will vary between the homes and care centres however will generally include:

- Taking care of the children
- Helping to organise recreational/teaching activities
- Playing games and activities with the children
- Helping them with school duties
- Teaching English
- Feeding the children
- Practicing outdoor activities
- Helping the babysitters with daily activities to give the 'tías' more time for their other duties
- Helping the 'tías' with the upkeep of the house when the children are at school

## Accommodation

On arrival into Costa Rica, you will be taken to a hostel in Alajuela where you will be spending your first two nights for your orientation. Following your orientation you will then be transferred to your homestay accommodation in San Ramón or Palmares.

By volunteering on this project not only will you be helping the children, but also spending time in a rural area with a local 'tico' family, an unforgettable cultural experience. While staying with a host family you will be able to truly immerse yourself into Costa Rican culture, and experience their way of life. You will be staying in a semi private room (up to three sharing) with a shared bathroom. For both project locations the host families are members of the community the project is based in. Therefore giving you a great insight into the community as a whole, while making it easy to help at the project during your free time if you would like to.

## Programme Services and Facilities

### Internet

You will be able to use the internet cafes in town during your free time, this will be at your own additional cost.

### Telephone

Your mobile phone may or may not work in Costa Rica, depending on your network, if it does, please be aware that in many areas you may not always get signal. It is not possible to buy a SIM card in Costa Rica unless you are a landline owner, which can take up to four months to achieve, so please bear this in mind when deciding whether or not to take your mobile phone.

Your host family may have a landline phone where you will be able to accept incoming calls.

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The international dialing code for Costa Rica is +506. To place an outgoing direct dialed international call, dial +44 for the UK followed by the telephone number. For example to call Real Gap dial +44 1892 516164.

## Laundry

Your host family will be able to do your laundry for you, however you may prefer to wash your own underwear, it is possible to purchase washing powder locally if required.

## Electricity

Please note there is no electricity available at Buena Vista project site, but it will be available at the hostel used during the orientation at the beginning of your programme.

## Meals

Also included in the programme are three daily meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner which will be provided by the host families. The meals are traditional Costa Rican cuisine, and includes rice, beans, corn, meat, pasta, vegetables and seasonal fruits.

## What's Included

- Airport pick-up
- Accommodation
- Orientation
- One way public transport to your home-stay
- Three meals per day at the home-stay
- Laundry once a week
- Full support and assistance
- 24-hour support number



## What's Not Included

- Flights
- Visas
- Travel Insurance
- Alcoholic beverages/extra snacks



## Is This Trip For You?

Please note that this project is for female volunteers only

## Reality Check

Having an intermediate level of Spanish is very important and experience of working with children is preferred but not essential. This means you need to be a creative self-starter who enjoys working with children, as well as possess flexibility, perseverance and tolerance. You also need to be able to handle difficult situations as children come from very difficult backgrounds.

You may be the only volunteer at your chosen project at any one time. However, you will still have the full support of your in-country team and those at the project. If you are looking for a group volunteering experience we have plenty of options for you to consider.

## What to Pack

Please note that this kit list is intended to help you plan what you may need to take with you and therefore you may not need all of the listed items on your travels.

## Personal Admin

- Passport, insurance certificates and personal documentation
- Photocopies of all the above to be left at home with your next of kin
- Spending money
- Cash for airport departure tax
- Proof of inoculations (please speak to your GP about necessary immunisations)
- Guidebook on country - recommended Lonely Planet or Footprints

## General

- Camera / Film / Batteries
- Notebook and pen / diary
- Torch / Extra Batteries
- Sunglasses
- Pocket-knife (comes in handy for general use)
- Water bottle - at least one litre
- Day pack/rucksack for everyday use
- A three-season sleeping bag (especially useful when on weekend excursions)
- Mosquito Net (if required)
- Personal enjoyment - books, cards, music, to enjoy with your fellow volunteers etc.
- Personal hygiene items (deodorant, soap, shampoo, toothbrush etc)
- Spanish dictionary, verb book etc

## Clothing

- Hat
- Comfortable walking shoes
- A pair of thick socks for walking
- Sandals
- Waterproof Jacket
- Fleece/pullover (for cool evenings)
- Long trousers
- Warmer clothing for winter
- Swimwear

- Towel

## Medical Kit

- Personal medication
- First Aid Kit (e.g. Antihistamines, Anti- diarrhoea tablets, headache tablets)
- Sunscreen
- Mosquito and insect repellent

## Minimum Age

The minimum age to participate is 18 years and there is no maximum age.

## Minimum Numbers

There are no minimum numbers on the trip.

Please note: you may be the only volunteer at your chosen project at any one time. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to contact us

## Flights

Your flight to Costa Rica should arrive at Juan Santamaria International Airport (SJO), San Jose, Costa Rica at any time on your programme start date, and your return flight should be arranged for your programme end date.

To book your flights, please contact your travel advisor who will do their best to get you the best deal on the day. Please provide them with your full name as it is stated in your passport. Before you make the call please make sure you have your required departure dates, return dates and other details you may require.

**Please note:** If you are flying to Costa Rica via the USA you will need to obtain Travel Authorisation by registering online through the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA) no later than 72 hours before departure. This is compulsory and will cost USD\$14 to register. To register, please visit: [www.esta.cbp.dhs.gov](http://www.esta.cbp.dhs.gov)

It is important that once you have booked your flights you add these details to your Online account, or alternatively you can contact us with your departure date, the flight number and arrival time at your destination.

## FAQs

1. **Do I need qualifications?**

No, as long as you are pro-active you will be more than welcome to volunteer.

2. **Do I need to speak Spanish?**

You do not but you would enjoy your time more and get more out of it if you took lessons before. Please note, Spanish lessons are not included however can be booked at extra cost. Please ask our team for details on Spanish classes in Costa Rica.

3. **Do I need a visa?**

Depending on your nationality, you would receive a 90 day visa on arrival.

#### 4. **How much money do I need?**

We normally advise between £60-90 spending money per week, although you can get away on less.

#### 5. **Can I volunteer with my friend?**

Yes, and we can make sure you live together as well.

## Police Check

This trip requires a Police Check to be carried out - please contact us for further information on how to do this.

## Support & Advice

Your safety is paramount which is why all our programs have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimized.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our staff at any time should you need to. In addition our overseas partners and coordinators are on hand in-country to assist you.

## Financial Security

We know that the last thing you want to worry about when you're planning your trip of a lifetime is whether your money is in safe hands. As a leading global gap year provider it's our job to make sure your finances are secure, so when you book with us you can be confident that we do just that.

Real Gap Experience is part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

## Insurance

Whether you're traveling for two weeks or two years, trekking the Amazon in Ecuador or on safari in Africa, insurance is an essential part of your adventure and will help you enjoy your travels, secure in the knowledge that you have the protection you need. In fact, everyone traveling with us must have adequate cover before their trip begins.

Of course you are free to buy insurance from any provider, however at Real Gap Experience, we have partnered with World Nomads to offer policies that have been specifically designed to meet the needs of global travel. If you think you're already covered by an existing policy, such as those offered by credit card providers, check the policy wording very carefully to ensure it covers you for your Real Gap Experience.

For more information on travel insurance please contact us to speak to one of our travel advisors.

## Money Matters

The currency in Costa Rica is the Colón (CRC), which is subdivided into 100 Céntimos. Coins come in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 25, 50, 100 and notes come in denominations of 500, 1,000, 2,000, 5,000 and 10,000.

While Costa Rica's close proximity to North America means that US Dollars are widely accepted at most establishments in Buena Vista and some large country towns, it is advisable to have some local currency to pay for transportation or goods at smaller establishments.



Credit cards such as MasterCard and Visa are accepted in cities and most tourist areas, though use in less commercial areas may be limited. This is also true of ATM machines or 'Cajeros automáticos'. ATMs commonly dispense both US Dollars and Nuevos Soles and usually charge for using international cards.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant \$8.46  
Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) \$1.66  
Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) \$1.29  
Water (0.33 litre bottle) \$0.96

(Prices quoted in US Dollar)

## Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information offered below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

Citizens of the European Union, the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia will be issued a Tourist Visa on entry for stays of up to 90 days. For longer stays or other nationalities, please consult your nearest Costa Rican Embassy or High Commission.

## Cultural Considerations

Costa Rica is caught between old cultural forces and new ones. Family ties are strong, and the major traditions within family are often strongly religious, such as: baptisms, first communions, engagement parties, weddings and funerals. Gender roles tend to be fairly traditional, though in urban areas women's opportunities are improving all the time. The Costa Ricans are friendly people and it is customary to greet and part with handshakes.

## Religion

Roman Catholicism is the official religion and about 90% of the population is Roman Catholic. Religion is an important part of life in Costa Rica, and we would urge you to be respectful at all times in and around places of worship. Do not be surprised to see individuals crossing themselves when passing any object of religious significance or reciting religious adages at appropriate times.

## Clothing

Casual dress is fine but you should avoid beachwear away from the coast and dress conservatively, especially in rural areas, which tend to be fairly traditional and religious. When entering a religious area, please make sure you are appropriately covered.

## Tipping

A 10% service charge and 13% tax is automatically added to restaurant bills. Taxi drivers are usually not tipped.

## Vaccinations & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad. The risks to your health whilst travelling will vary depending on your general health and the type of activities you are going to be partaking in and the length of your stay.

Since we are not medically qualified, it is recommended that you consult with your Doctor or a recognised Travel Medical Advisory Service who will assess your particular health risks before recommending vaccines and/or anti-malarial tablets and advising you on what precautions you should take.

## Safety

Unfortunately, tourists are often targets for pickpockets and thieves. Please educate yourself about South America and Costa Rica in particular, before you leave, so that you can be alert to all types of situations. Safety guidelines will be covered in detail at your orientation session upon arrival but please familiarise yourself with the following general travel safety rules.

- Avoid travelling alone, especially at night.
- Find out where the unsafe areas are and avoid them.
- When travelling keep all-important documents and valuables in a safe place, like an inner hidden pocket or money belt.
- Carry only as much cash as you think you will need for the day.
- Don't wear expensive jewellery or watches.
- Be wary of people who seem too friendly too fast.
- Keep cameras out of sight. Always keep bags and purses in your sight, especially on public transport.
- Before swimming, ask how safe the area is.

In Costa Rica you should avoid sleeping on beaches or camping outside of official sites, as unprotected areas can be dangerous at night. Riptides (or ripcurrents) are a problem in the seas of Costa Rica, and can be very dangerous. Always follow beach guidelines and do not swim or surf against the advice of the coastguard.

We advise that you check your government's advice before travelling abroad. For UK, American and Australian customers please see the relevant links below;

UK: [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

USA: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

Australia: [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)

## ATM Theft

It is very likely that you will need to withdraw cash at some point during your travels. Please be cautious when withdrawing money from an ATM and ensure that you are vigilant of other people near the ATM, especially those that offer unsolicited assistance if your card is detained. It has been recognised that individuals are operating unlawful withdrawals by placing 'traps' in ATMs whereby personal bank cards are being detained, causing the victim to believe their card transaction has not been completed, and leaving their bank card in the ATM which is then later retrieved by the thief.

## Language Guide

The main spoken language in Costa Rica is Spanish. Here are a few basic phrases that should help you get by during your trip. We also suggest you obtain a Lonely Planet or language guide for the destination(s) you are travelling to.

Hello - *Hola!*

Good day - *Buenas días!*

How are you? - *Como estas? ('Como estas usted?' if you need to be extra formal!)*

Goodbye - *Adios*

Please - *Por favour*

Thank you - *Gracias*

I don't understand - *No entiendo*

I don't speak Spanish - *No hablo espanol*

Sorry/excuse me - *Lo siento*

Where is...? - *Donde esta...?*

The bill please - *La cuenta por favour*

## Food & Drink

The standards of health and hygiene are among the best in Latin America - milk, ice cream and other dairy products are safe. Avoid uncooked meats. If you are at all unsure about something, remember it is always better to be safe than sorry. Typical dishes of Costa Rica include:

- Gallos - Filled tortillas
- Casado - Rice, beans, beef or fish, fried plantain, chopped cabbage
- Arreglados - Puff pastries filled with beef, chicken, vegetables or cheese
- Sopa Negra - Soup with black beans and an egg in it
- Gallo Pinto - Rice & beans with sour cream or fried eggs

## Drinks

You can drink tap water in most major towns, though be advised that it is heavily chlorinated. In other locations bottled water is readily available.

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There are many types of cold fruit drinks, (made with milk or water). They are very popular and most of them are delicious. Coffee is usually good. The local beers are Bavaria, Pilsen, Imperial and Tropical.

## Smoking / Alcohol / Drugs

Smoking and drinking is acceptable in Costa Rica, and readily available. However, please respect other volunteers. Smoking is not permissible in volunteer apartments or the host families' homes. Many regions in Costa Rica have banned or limited smoking in public places and many restaurants will have a separate seating area for those wishing to smoke.

It is absolutely forbidden to bring drugs into Costa Rica. Always keep an eye on your luggage while travelling. Never bring anyone else's luggage through customs. If you get caught there is little chance that you will walk away without punishment. As in most countries, Costa Rica has very strict rules when it comes to the possession of drugs. All drugs, including "soft" drugs like marijuana, are ILLEGAL. Please do NOT use any illegal substances whilst travelling – it is not worth the risk and is not acceptable at the project.

## Public Holidays

To view a list of the public holidays for Costa Rica, please see the link below:

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays/costa-rica/](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/costa-rica/)

When planning your trip, you should be aware of the major national holidays celebrated throughout the country. Many schools, government offices, stores and banks are closed on National Holidays. Please note that there may be slight date variations for some of the holidays each year and that the list is not exhaustive.

## Weather

Temperatures in Costa Rica are high throughout the year with the warmest weather on the lowlands and the Caribbean and Pacific coasts. San Jose and other mountainous areas are cooler and vary between 16-26°. The hottest months of the year are between March and April with the rainy season falling between March and November; the coast is humid and rainy for most of the year.

## Time

Costa Rica is six hours behind GMT.

## Electricity

In Costa Rica the electric system is 120 Volts and frequency 60 Hertz. If your device does not accept electricity at this voltage you will need an adapter.

Outlets in Costa Rica generally accept 1 type of plug:





Flat blade plug

## Trip Note Disclaimer

The information contained in this trip note has been compiled with great care and is provided in good faith. Any itinerary featured is correct at time of release. However, our itineraries may change as we make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of recommended travel advice.

You can rest assured that it is always our goal to provide you with the most rewarding trip and experience ever!

## Our Details

If you have any questions about this trip please do not hesitate to contact us and we'll be happy to answer them.

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