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Costa Rica Sea Turtle Conservation

Adventure Relaxation Culture

Trip Name: Costa Rica Sea Turtle Conservation **Trip Code:** CRST **Duration:** From 1 week

Trip Highlights

- Releasing tiny baby turtles into the sea
- Helping to construct a turtle hatchery
- Collecting eggs you find on the beach, and taking them to the hatchery (“vivero”) for protection
- Searching for marked turtles and collecting data
- Live on the pacific coast of central America with it’s beautiful beaches

Overview

For the turtle species to continue to exist, much help is needed from both local communities and volunteers. One way in which you can help is to assist during the turtle-nesting season, and this turtle conservation project in Costa Rica provides you with the opportunity to do just that.

At present, only a tiny number of the eggs laid will grow to become an adult turtle. Human interference cannot be held solely responsible; however, our behaviour has greatly diminished turtle population sizes.

Destination Info

Costa Rica is a very popular destination, with attractions that appeal to all tastes it is easy to see why. Costa Rica's national parks are its greatest glory, resulting from a desire to conserve the outstanding natural beauty and encouragement of eco-tourism.

These parks contain some of the best campsites in the world. The country has a stunning variety of landscapes, microclimates plus flora and fauna, making it a haven for nature lovers.

You will be based at one of two project locations for your programme, this will be decided by our in-country team

and is dependent on the project needs at the time of your visit:

- Buena Vista, located 3km from Samara, Guanacaste
- Playa Matapalo, in the province of Puntarenas about one hour from Quepos

Itinerary

The aim of the project is to help protect and preserve some natural nesting sites that do not hold an official category of protection from the Costa Rican Government.

Four different species of sea turtles frequent the Pacific coast of Costa Rica - Lora (olive ridley), Negra (green turtle), Carey (hawksbill) and Baula (leatherback turtle).

These species are in danger of extinction as a result of various human activities such as infrastructure development, light pollution, transportation of vehicles and the capture of adult turtles.

This means it is increasingly important to help conserve nesting sites, which are crucial to the continued existence of the turtles; by volunteering on this amazing programme you will be able to play your part in securing the future of these fascinating creatures.

Costa Rica Sea Turtle Conservation

During your time as a volunteer on this programme you may undertake various activities such as those listed below. These activities may depend on the project you are located at:

- Helping to construct a turtle hatchery
- Describing the nesting dynamics of the female sea turtles that arrive on the beach, enabling their protection for the next season
- Protecting and closely monitoring the recovered eggs in the hatchery
- Patrolling the beach to look for sea turtles and nests at night, on a rotational basis
- Usually for two or four hours, however during the high season, the patrols could last up to four or five hours

- Marking turtles that are nesting, trying to build a nest or returning to the ocean

  Searching for marked turtles and collecting data

- Collecting the eggs you find on the beach, and taking them to the hatchery ("vivero") for protection

- Gathering information on the whole process by monitoring the hatchery and keeping track of every event

- Releasing "neonatos" (baby sea turtles) from the hatchery, by taking them to the beach and letting them go near the ocean

- Helping with maintenance of the facilities of the project (the shelter), and ensuring the beach is kept clean during the day

- Planting trees in different areas of the beach and town

Accommodation

On arrival into Costa Rica, you will be taken to a hostel in Alajuela where you will spend your first two nights during your orientation.

Following this you will transfer to your project location, this will be decided by our in-country team, and is determined by the requirements of the project at the time of your visit.

Buena Vista: The accommodation at the project is very basic and rustic; however it is comfortable and has a great, relaxed atmosphere. There will be no electricity; however a shower and a bathroom are available (cold water only).

Matapalo: The accommodation at this project is also very basic with just cold water for showers, however there is electricity. Nearby there is a local supermarket, internet access and a number of local and international style restaurants.

Programme Services and Facilities

Internet

There is no Internet access at the project sites but you will find access available in the nearby towns and villages, which you may like to visit on your day off.

Telephone

There are public phones in the nearby towns and villages for which you may need to purchase phone cards, available in local shops. Please check the phone card you buy is suitable for international calls.

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.

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

It is important that you bring some travel wash, as you will need to do your own washing by hand.

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

There is an on-site cook at both locations who will prepare breakfast, lunch and dinner for you while at the project. Meals will mainly consist of beans, pasta, rice, meat, cereals and a variety of vegetables and seasonal fruits.

What's Included

- Accommodation
- All meals during the project (breakfast, lunch and dinner)
- Airport pick-up
- Support from in-country co-ordinators
- 24-hours emergency support number

What's Not Included

- All flights
- Personal travel insurance
- Visas
- Return airport transfer
- Local transport
- Items of a personal nature including spending money

Additional Information

Orientation

Your orientation will be held in Alajuela on the first Monday of your stay, you will be collected from your accommodation at around 12.30pm and taken to the offices of our in-country team.

During the orientation you will be given a welcome pack containing lots of useful information regarding your programme. Your orientation will cover:

- Local culture – social norms, traditions and culture
- Expected behaviour - safety whilst on the programme
- Safety - areas and places to avoid, what to do in an emergency
- Locations of important amenities - banks, hospitals, embassies

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
- Credit card in case of an emergency
- Proof of inoculations (please speak to your GP about necessary immunisations)
- Guidebook on country - recommended Lonely Planet or Footprints

General

- Camera / Film / Batteries
- Alarm clock
- Notebook and pen / diary
- Torch / Plenty of extra Batteries (ideally with a red-light filter)
- Watch
- Sunglasses
- Pocket-knife (comes in handy for general use)
- Water bottle - at least one litre
- Day pack/rucksack for everyday use
- A 3-Season Sleeping bag
- Sleeping bag liner
- Mosquito Net
- Personal enjoyment - books, cards, music, to enjoy with your fellow volunteers etc.
- Personal toiletries (deodorant, soap, shampoo, toothbrush etc)
- Spanish dictionary, verb book etc

Clothing

- Hat
- Comfortable walking shoes
- A pair of thick socks for walking
- Dark clothing for turtle work-including trousers and long sleeve shirts
- Sandals – flip flops
- Waterproof Jacket in a dark colour
- Fleece/pullover (for cool evenings)
- Beach wear
- Warmer clothing for winter
- Swimwear
- Towel

Medical Kit

- Personal Medication
- First Aid Kit (ex. Antihistamines, Anti- diarrhoea tablets, headache tablets)
- Sunscreen

- Mosquito and insect repellent

As you will be sharing your accommodation with other volunteers and there are no lockers available it is a good idea to use a lockable luggage.

Please do not bring a suitcase with you as you may need to cross a river to get to the project site, so a suitcase will not be practical. We would recommend that you use a large backpack for your main luggage.

Minimum Age

Minimum age 17 years with parental consent, maximum dependent on health and fitness of potential participant.

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

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. **I am 17 years old, can I take part on this placement?**
   Yes 17 years is fine.

2. **Is it ok to be a vegetarian?**
   Yes that's fine as the food is mainly beans, rice, vegetables and fruit.

3. **What are the start dates?**
   The 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month.

4. **What are the durations of this trip?**
   1 to 4 weeks.

5. **Do I have to know Spanish to take part on this placement?**
   It’s helpful to have a basic knowledge of Spanish. You can take part on a week’s Spanish school before you start your volunteer project.

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.

You will be assigned a personal travel advisor who will co-ordinate your program with you. Feel free to contact them at any time before you go, or when you are on your travels. They will provide you with competent assistance and help with any questions or advice you may need during your stay.

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 Rican is the Colón (CRC; symbol ?), 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
USA: www.travel.state.gov
Australia: 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 dias!*
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.

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 Vietnam, please see the link below:

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 make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of reommended 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

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