

## 14 Days Rainforest & Turtle Conservation Programme Costa Rica

This conservation programme takes place in Costa Rica's most biodiverse and vital conservation areas, offering students a hands-on introduction to wildlife research in Costa Rica.

Discover the energy of the tropical rainforest at the Camaquiri Conservation Initiative (CCI) and explore the remote Urpiano Wildlife Refuge.

These locations are critical for many endangered species, as ongoing conservation work plays a key role in preserving Costa Rica's rich natural heritage.

Throughout your trip, you'll practise a range of new skills, such as setting up camera traps, collecting data, and analysing your findings. You'll also monitor monkeys, sea turtles, and birds and participate in reforestation and beach cleanups.

Your help is crucial, as by collecting real data and supporting conservation actions, you directly contribute to protecting local wildlife and fragile ecosystems.

Your group will also have the opportunity to become immersed in local life, culture, and history as they learn to salsa dance, play football with community members, and explore all the country has to offer!

### Programme Highlights

- Protect nesting sites, care for hatchlings, and support marine conservation through hands-on fieldwork.
- Conduct surveys and camera trapping while learning about biodiversity and data collection methods.
- Plant native trees to combat climate change and restore habitats with local community involvement.
- Engage with local people through dance, sport, and shared conservation goals.
- Visit the Irazu volcano and national park to explore biodiversity and Costa Rica's conservation efforts.
- Explore the natural beauty of La Fortuna through a rainforest hike, waterfall visit, and relaxing in volcanic hot springs.





### Accommodation

Conservation Lodge

### Transport

Mini-bus, Boat

### Responsible Travel

We offset 110% of carbon emissions associated with your programme, from in-destination transport to food & accommodation. We are partnered with Ecologi to offset the carbon footprint.

By travelling with us, you contribute positively to local economies, environmental protection, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Don't take our word for it; we're B Corporation Certified!

### United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Adopted by the United Nations in 2015, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals are targeted to help build a greener, fairer, and better world by 2030.

Projects Abroad have also adopted these goals, with each project having different aims.

This programme works towards the following SDGs:



## Day 1

## Sunday

### All Day

On arrival day, a Projects Abroad staff member will be waiting to collect your group from San Jose International Airport (SJO). As you walk through the airport, you'll be met by a Projects Abroad staff member. Our staff members are easy to spot because they're by the airport exit holding a sign.

A bus will then collect you, taking you to Cartago, where you will spend your first night.

### Evening

This evening, you'll attend a briefing session to learn more about your schedule for the next few weeks. Ask questions, get to know staff, and look forward to the journey you're embarking on together.

Round off the day with dinner at the hotel before heading to bed, ready for your first full day tomorrow.

## Day 2

## Monday

### Cartago

This morning, you will explore the ruins of Cartago, once home to several churches, with the oldest being built in the mid-16th century. This church was destroyed by an earthquake in 1630, a disaster that would continue to impact Costa Rica's Central Valley for centuries.

### Irazu

After this, you will visit Irazu, Costa Rica's highest volcano at 3432 metres, just another 45 minutes away. This composite volcano has had 23 recorded eruptions since 1723, with the last one being in 1994.

Head to the summit, where you will take a one-kilometre walk to view four of its five craters. Diego de la Haya is the most visited crater at Irazu and contains an acid lake within its 600-metre diameter.

On a clear day, you may be lucky enough to see both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of Costa Rica from the summit.

Learn about the impact the volcano has had on the nearby Cartago City and plantations while also discovering the local legends surrounding its history.

### Afternoon

After enjoying lunch at a nearby restaurant, you'll continue making your way to Urpiano Wildlife Reserve. From Cartago, this journey will take around three hours.

On arrival, you will check in, drop off your bags, and begin your inductions. Listen to staff as they tell you about the, safety, and wildlife monitoring methods and protocols.

### Evening

After a day of exploration and travelling, you'll enjoy dinner at your accommodation.



## Day 3 Tuesday

### Morning

Waking up at Urpiano, you're eager to get stuck into a week of conservation activities, focusing on sea turtles.

Spend the morning participating in an induction session where you'll meet the staff here and learn about your schedule.

### Afternoon

Continue your induction as you learn about ongoing studies, conservation challenges, and the importance of this refuge for sea turtle survival.

### Evening

Enjoy dinner at your accommodation and rest before heading out on a turtle patrol later this evening. One group will guard current nests, while the other will patrol the beach and collect eggs for planting.

## Day 4 Wednesday

### Morning

Participate in minor renovations around the site and assist with maintenance tasks such as removing debris and broken trees.

This afternoon, we'll combine conservation action with education by participating in a beach cleanup.

### Afternoon

Marine debris poses a significant threat to sea turtles and other marine life, so by removing trash from the beach, we'll directly contribute to creating a safer environment for these magnificent creatures.

### Evening

Continue your turtle patrol work from last night. The groups will switch to ensure all participants have experience protecting and patrolling.



## Day 5 Thursday

### Morning

Contribute to a healthier environment by joining our reforestation project.

By planting native trees, you'll be helping to restore degraded habitats, provide habitat for wildlife, and combat climate change.

### Afternoon

This afternoon, you will share your exciting discoveries and important findings from your time on the programme with your group. Present your new knowledge, reflect on your experiences, and discuss global issues.

### Evening

Continue your turtle patrol work.

## Day 6 Friday

### Morning

This morning you will conduct point count surveys.

Learn how to establish point count locations, identify bird species by sight and sound, and record data on bird abundance and habitat use.

### Afternoon

After enjoying lunch, you'll begin patrolling the beach to locate sea turtle tracks and nests.

This is a great way to learn how to differentiate between tracks of various sea turtle species, identify potential nesting areas, and properly mark and record nest locations.

### Evening

Dance away into the night together with a salsa lesson and take a new skill home with you!

As the evening draws in, you'll head out on another evening turtle patrol.



## Day 7 Saturday

After breakfast, you'll head to the Camaquiri Conservation Initiative (CCI) for the second part of your conservation programme. This journey will take you three hours.

### Morning

On arrival, you'll have a moment to drop off your bags and meet the staff you'll be working with. Shortly after, you'll head out on a guided natural history hike, exploring the area and learning about the local flora and fauna. This is a great way to develop your knowledge of the surrounding biodiversity and ecosystems while exploring your home for the next few days!

### Afternoon

Following lunch at CCI, you'll participate in a bird survey, contributing to ongoing research by documenting bird species along established transects.

### Evening

After a day of hiking and research, you'll enjoy dinner.

You'll then listen to a lecture about community ecology, using camera traps, and the presentation of recent wildlife findings from CCI's camera trap programme.

## Day 8 Sunday

### Morning

Start the day with a workshop introducing you to camera trapping for wildlife research. Reflect on the lecture from last night and the recent findings from camera traps.

### Afternoon

Put your camera trapping skills into practice by setting up cameras to investigate how wildlife ecology differs between forest edge and forest interior habitats. This hands-on experience will reinforce the concepts discussed in the morning and provide valuable insights into study design.

### Evening

After dinner, you'll listen to a lecture about the primate species of Costa Rica. This engaging lecture will introduce participants to the fascinating world of primate behaviour and ecology, with a special focus on the diverse primate species found in Costa Rica.

## Day 9 Monday

This fieldwork session provides a unique opportunity to apply the knowledge gained in the primate behaviour and ecology lecture to a real-world research scenario. Work alongside experienced researchers at CCI to complete activities such as:

### All Day

- Survey Design and Planning:** Review the survey objectives and methodology, discuss the specific primate species targeted, and plan survey routes within CCI.
- Primate Identification and Observation:** Learn to identify the primate species of CCI by visual cues (size, pelage, facial features) and vocalisations. Practice observing primate behaviour, including foraging, social interactions, and locomotion.
- Data Collection:** Use standardised data sheets to record information on areas including, but not limited to:
  - Primate species observed. number of individuals (age/sex class if possible).
  - Location of sightings.
  - Behaviour observed (e.g., feeding, resting, grooming).
  - Habitat characteristics.

### Evening

Tonight you have the evening to rest and relax with your group! The Camaquiri Pulperie cafe is a great place to do this.

## Day 10 Tuesday

This morning, we embark on an exciting phase of our camera trapping project: retrieving the cameras and uncovering the wildlife stories they've captured.

### Morning

This hands-on session will provide you with practical experience in downloading, organising, and analysing camera trap data, transforming raw images and videos into valuable scientific insights.

### Evening

Rest and relax with your group.

## Day 11 Wednesday

### Morning

After breakfast, you'll make the journey back to the hotel in San Jose.

### Afternoon

Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before relaxing in the hotel for the rest of the day.





## Day 12 Thursday

**Morning** Depart from CCI and journey through the lush Costa Rican countryside toward La Fortuna, a vibrant town known for its views of the Arenal Volcano. The travel time will be around 2.5 hours.

**Afternoon** Take a short walking tour of La Fortuna town. Learn about local life, culture, and the area's connection to ecotourism and sustainability.

**Evening** Relax in the region's famous thermal waters, naturally heated by the nearby Arenal Volcano. It's a perfect way to unwind after your travels and experience one of Costa Rica's most iconic natural wonders.

**Evening** Dinner, rest, and relaxation.

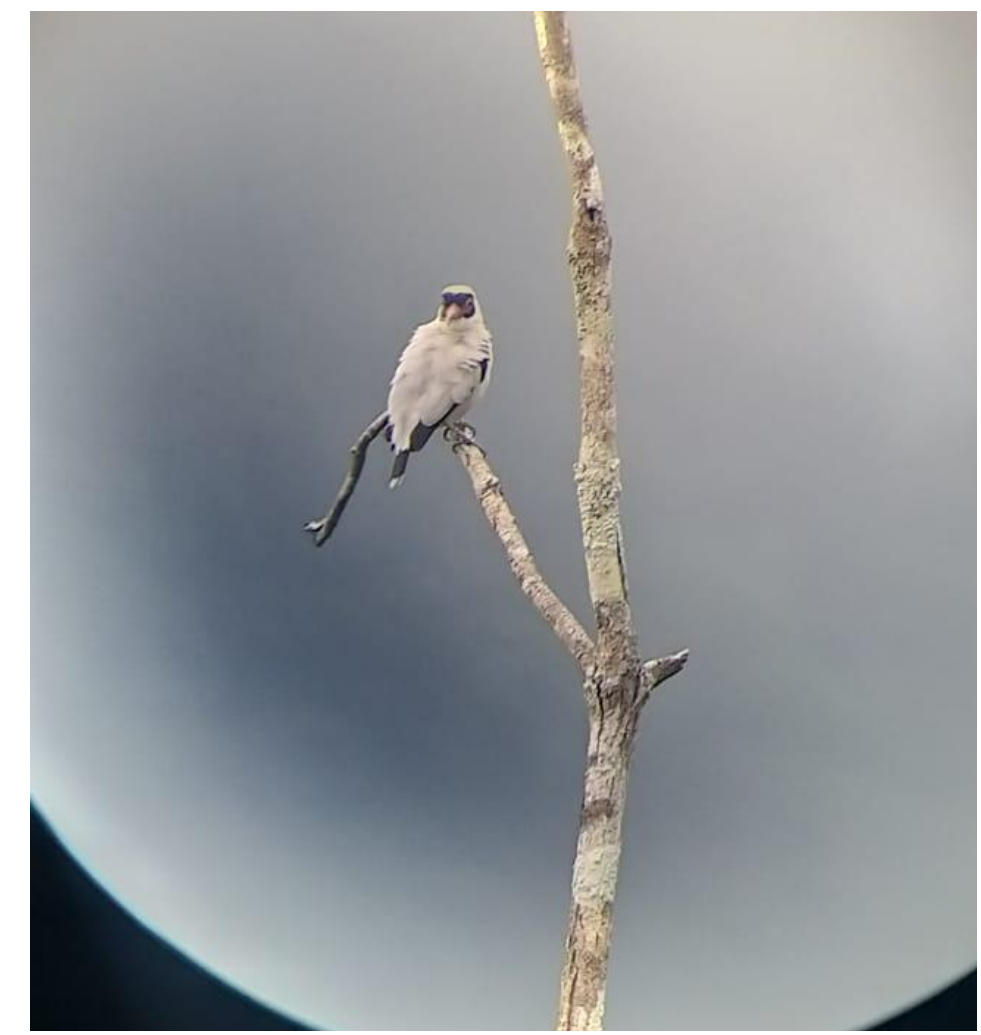
## Day 13 Friday

**Morning** Set out on a guided hike through tropical rainforest trails to one of La Fortuna's breathtaking waterfalls. Along the way, learn about local plants, wildlife, and the importance of conservation efforts in Costa Rica.

Enjoy lunch before making the three-hour journey back to San Jose.

**Afternoon** Begin the return journey with a stop at SyS Souvenir Shop, where you can browse local crafts and sustainably made souvenirs.

**Evening** It's time for your final meal together! Make a few more memories with your group before getting ready to leave tomorrow as you enjoy dinner and reminisce over the journey you've all been on together.



## Day 14 Saturday

**Morning** Take a trip into Heredia and learn about its famous coffee plantation with a 1.5-hour tour. Costa Rica's climate is perfect for coffee production, providing a balance of rainfall and sunshine, while the landscape is ideal for growing the beans at the best altitudes.

Walk around the green areas and gardens, see the exhibition of giant puppets of Costa Rican folklore, the coffee bush nursery and the coffee roaster, and finish the day with a coffee-tasting demonstration.

**Afternoon** As you head to the airport and wave goodbye to the Projects Abroad staff, you'll have a moment to reflect on everything you've achieved during your time in Costa Rica.

From developing your knowledge of conservation work to building connections with the local community, your experiences here will stay with you forever!

We wish you the best of luck with whatever you go on to do next.





## Seasonality

Seasonality plays a key role in shaping the activities you'll participate in, particularly when it comes to sea turtle conservation.

Your programme will be adapted to work with the natural rhythms of Costa Rica's coastal ecosystems, ensuring that your group can engage in meaningful and relevant conservation work all year round.

Depending on the time of your visit, your turtle conservation work will focus on either the nesting or hatching season, and the species of turtle you work with—Green or Leatherback—will vary by location and time of year.

### March to July

From March to July, participants work at Urpiano Turtle Camp, where efforts are centred on the endangered Leatherback Sea Turtle.

During the nesting season, which runs from March to May, you will conduct guided night patrols to locate nesting turtles, collect data, and help mark and protect nests.

From May to July, the hatching season begins, and your focus will shift to monitoring turtle nurseries, checking egg development, and helping release hatchlings safely into the ocean.

Beach clean-ups are crucial throughout to ensure a safe nesting and hatching environment.



### Mid-June to October

From mid-June to October, turtle conservation activities move to the Barra del Colorado Wildlife Refuge, home to the Green Sea Turtle.

Here, you will participate in night patrols during the nesting season (mid-June to August), followed by nursery management and hatchling releases from August to October.

This seasonal approach ensures that all participants contribute to real-time conservation needs, supporting the life cycle of these remarkable species while developing skills and knowledge in line with the most critical conservation priorities of the moment.



# Programme Aims and Impacts

Throughout your programme, you will gain valuable hands-on experience and insight into ecotourism, sustainability, and conservation. You'll also integrate with the local community as you engage with local people, learn about their culture and traditions, and participate in social and cultural activities. Everything you do and encounter during this trip will be an incredible learning experience!



## Learning Outcomes

Our volunteer trips are aimed at leaving an impact on both the communities visited and the participants themselves. Below, discover the five key student learning outcomes that volunteers will achieve by joining one of these projects:

### INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Participants will be immersed in new cultures, gaining an understanding of their role within our global community and developing cultural awareness.

### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Participants will be pushed out of their comfort zones. They will build their confidence and resilience through team activities and life experiences.

### HEALTHY ACTIVE LIVING

Participants will be encouraged to prioritise self-care, enhancing their physical and mental well-being.

### EMPOWERMENT

Participants will be empowered to think for themselves, challenge the status quo and cultivate transformative decision-making mindsets.

### GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Participants will be exposed to new perspectives, engage with real-world challenges, and contribute to sustainable development initiatives.





# Costa Rica Fact Sheet

Costa Rica is a small Central American country nestled between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. It's renowned worldwide for its biodiversity and commitment to ecological protection.

Your role whilst here is to support these conservation efforts. At the same time, you'll learn about Costa Rican culture while leaving a positive impact on the local community.

## FUN FACTS

- ▶ Costa Rica abolished its army in 1942, investing the money in healthcare and education
- ▶ A natural paradise, Costa Rica has been rated as among the world's happiest countries
- ▶ This tiny country is home to over 500,000 species of wildlife
- ▶ 25% of Costa Rica's land area is dedicated to the protection of wildlife

Destination Information	
National Language:	Spanish
Population:	5 Million
Currency:	Costa Rican Colón
Time Zone:	GMT-6
Capital:	San José
Calling Code:	+506
Dominant Religions:	Christianity
National Dish:	Gallo Pinto
National Animal:	Sloth



## Wildlife

Costa Rica is home to a huge range of wonderful creatures. Visitors may be able to spot jaguars, tapirs, sloths, snakes, dolphins, sea turtles, and toucans.

During this conservation project, you will mostly spot the fun-loving howler monkeys as well as the bright red, blue, and yellow macaws.

Many of these animals are considered threatened or endangered, which is why volunteers are needed.



## Food

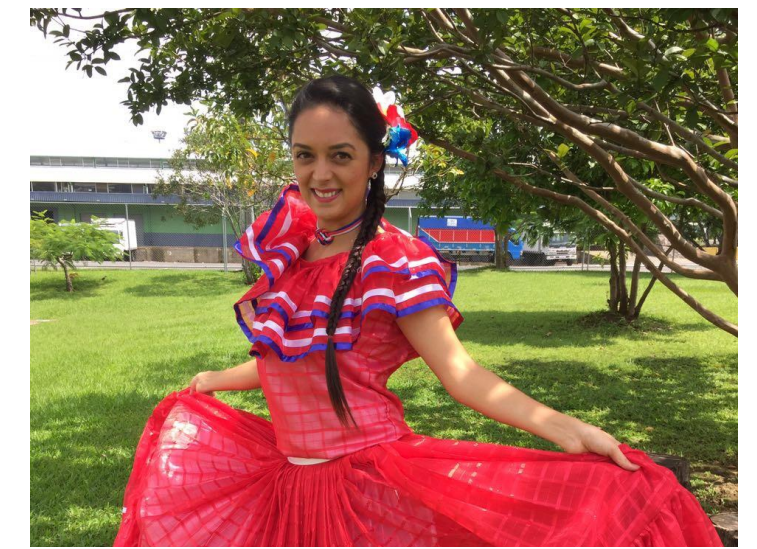
A tropical destination, Costa Rica's produce is bright, fresh, succulent, and delicious. The group will enjoy a healthy diet while staying in this beautiful country. At the same time, it's influenced by Spanish culture.

Gallo Pinto is considered the national dish. Comprising of rice and beans, it's a staple of many local diets and can be served at any time of day. This is the kind of delicious cuisine volunteers can look forward to during their project.

## Get in Touch!

We've designed our trips to maximise your impact and experience. If you have any questions or specific requests, please don't hesitate to get in touch!

We have Partnership Managers available 9:00-17:30 (GMT) Monday-Friday to help you with anything you might need.



## Culture

The residents of Costa Rica are in touch with their beautiful natural surroundings, often preferring a slow, laid-back approach to life.

This vibrant culture has been influenced by indigenous peoples, Spanish colonists, and other immigrant groups.

Become immersed in Costa Rican culture, and will no doubt take lessons from it, applying them to your everyday life.



## Community

Costa Ricans value community highly, and everyone is expected to live in harmony with each other, as well as with animals and plants.

While protecting the wildlife of this country, volunteers will also help maintain the community, ensuring it's positive for the local people who live here.

Prepare to engage with and learn from the local community through cultural events and activities.

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