



# Costa Rica

## Sea Turtle

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HAVE FUN.

HELP PEOPLE.



**GlobeAware**  
ADVENTURES IN SERVICE

## Introduction to Costa Rica

Costa Rica is bordered by Nicaragua to the north, Panama to the southeast, the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Caribbean Sea to the east. Once a poor and isolated colony, since its independence in 1821 Costa Rica has become one of the most stable, prosperous and progressive nations in Latin America. It constitutionally abolished its army in 1949, as the first and one of the few sovereign nations without a standing army.

Costa Rica is known for its progressive environmental policies, being the only country to meet all five criteria established to measure environmental sustainability. In spite of its small size, Costa Rica features greater biodiversity than Europe or North America. This is due to a number of factors, among them the country's location between North and South America, which enables plants and animals from both continents and the Caribbean islands to establish themselves there. Also, Costa Rica's tropical climate and geographical makeup includes a range of habitats, from lowland rainforest to cloud forests to tropical lakes and rivers.

During the 1970s and 1980s Costa Rica saw rapid deforestation, with land clearing among the highest in the Americas. Rainforest destruction has serious environmental consequences because more than half of all the species on the planet are found in the rainforest. The primary reasons for deforestation include the extraction of hardwood for fuel and clear-cutting land for agriculture and cattle ranching. In response to the rapid deforestation, many environmental groups began to target their efforts toward developing commercially viable and sustainable uses of the rainforest.

Ecotourism in Costa Rica began in the mid-1980s as a way to stop the deforestation and to generate needed foreign exchange for the economy. Encouraging local inhabitants to practice efficient stewardship over the remaining forests is in theory a win-win situation where the environment prospers because it is no longer being clear-cut, and the local inhabitants prosper by using the local environment to their economic advantage. However, challenges remain. Costa Rica is considered to have the highest density of biodiversity of any country worldwide and they would like to stay that way.



The rainforests are indeed beginning to be used in more sustainable ways. Also, the costs of maintaining a rainforest are usually borne by the local inhabitants who have used the land for hundreds of years. Currently, ecotourism presents problems of its own and cannot be seen as a solution for all the problems of the past. Costa Rica has struggled with efforts to establish rules and regulations to ensure minimal negative impact on the environment.

Costa Rica has taken many noble steps to protect its wildlife, including closing any traditional zoos. They do allow for rescue and rehabilitation centers for its many animals, and it is with one of these that you will be working. These centers are nonprofit, and receive no governmental assistance. The aim of these are to protect and help endangered Costa Rican wildlife indigenous to the country by ensuring the welfare of injured animals, helping them recover from their physical and psychological wounds before releasing them to their natural homes. There are currently over 130 animals at the center where you will be working, but this number is always changing.

Spanish is the official language of Costa Rica, and the most commonly spoken, although English is widely used in tourist areas. Ticos (Costa Ricans) are known for being welcoming, kind and fun! Pura Vida!

## Community

Playa Bandera de Parrita is located on the Central Pacific shores of Costa Rica. It is located in the Puntarenas province. The Parrita municipality has a popular tale of how it acquired its name. According to legend there was a madame called Rita who owned a business in the area. She had a thriving business and received many orders from customers. The workers who would write down the orders were told “esto es pa’ Rita” (this is for Rita). Eventually, the phrase was shortened to Parrita and stuck as the name of this municipality.

Parrita’s economy is mainly based on agriculture. Its main export is African oil palm. Other crops that add to sources of employment for the community include rice, pineapple, melon and watermelon, among others. Tourism also contributes to Parrita’s economy. Although its soft, gray volcanic sandy beaches do not attract as many tourists as other nearby spots, it does attract a long-time resident of these beaches who come to lay claim every year, mainly, the green turtle (*chelonía mydas*).

Globe Aware has partnered with the local Turtle Association, which facilitates a variety of community development projects that range far beyond simple turtle protection.



### **The Turtle Association hopes to:**

- Supplement the basic aid that the community is already receiving; volunteer presence means that projects will be able to go forward in a timelier fashion

- Foster community development, pride, and solidarity
- Build capacity for fledgling volunteer program and opportunities for local employment
- Help preserve important resource of endangered turtles and offer alternatives to poaching and egging

## More About the Green Turtle

As of May 6, 2016, the green turtle is listed as an endangered or threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The greatest threat is from the commercial harvest for eggs, food and shell souvenirs. The green turtle is also in danger due to commercial shrimp fishing where, when caught accidentally, can drown. In addition, popular beachfront development threatens its nesting sites along with light and noise



pollution which can confuse or scare nesting females or hatchlings. Green turtles nest at intervals of about two years. Each season they can lay on average 115 eggs with three to five nests per season. A full grown adult green turtle can weigh upwards of 600 lbs. and can be 5 feet long.

Green turtles are herbivores and eat mainly seagrass, algae and other marine plants. Because green turtles are grazers (like the lawn mowers of the sea bed), they provide a valuable benefit to the sea ecosystem. Seagrass consumed by green turtles is quickly digested and becomes available as recycled nutrients to the many species of plants and animals that live in the sea grass ecosystem. Seagrass beds also function as nurseries for several species of invertebrates and fish, many of which are of considerable value to commercial fisheries and therefore important to human food security.

## Work Project

The work schedule to protect the green turtle can be affected by factors beyond our control. To add to the enrichment of the community, other volunteer projects will be available. You may be involved in cleaning and painting a local school (\*note-please wear appropriate clothing around the children. No short shorts, tank tops, or tight clothing\*). Maybe learn about coconut oil production or even plant coconut palm trees. There may be a chance for reforestation activities with the goal of benefitting Red Macaws and Capuchin monkeys.



The community chooses your work projects before your arrival based on the progress of prior groups and the immediate needs of the community. Please remember that concepts of scheduling and organization are not universal. It is best to keep an open mind and not be judgmental when visiting a foreign country. Remember that your way of doing things may not be the best way here – the locals usually also have a very good reason for completing a task in a certain way, and their priorities may be different than yours.

We understand your desire to know as much as possible about the project you will be working on. It is important to understand that projects are often not established until one or two weeks prior, as they are based on factors such as which projects were finished (or not) by the last group, what supplies are available, how many volunteers are in your group, weather conditions, the changing priorities of the community, and can even be modified throughout the week. It is best to approach the experience with an open attitude, knowing you'll be working approximately 6.5 hours a day during the week days, usually concentrated earlier in the day. You will also have a couple of hours of unstructured free time every day. There are typically three to four planned but optional leisure and cultural activities throughout the week. Communicate with your coordinator. If you find the work level is too much, or not enough, he or she will do as much as possible to work with you.



## Sample Itinerary

Please note that this is only a sample itinerary meant to give you a better idea of what a typical day MAY look like on site. Schedules can and will change due to a variety of factors. If at any point you feel unclear about your itinerary, please ask your coordinator for clarification.

**Saturday: Day 1:**

- Mid-Day: Pick up at Juan Santamaría International Airport.
- Afternoon: Arrive to Playa Bandera Sea Turtles Project. Orientation and settle into accommodations.
- Evening: Welcome dinner and free time. Bonfire at the beach.

**Sunday: Day 2:**

- Morning: Late breakfast.
- Mid-morning: Explore Bandera Beach & relax at the beach.
- Mid-day: Lunch at Parrita City.
- Afternoon: Free time to explore Parrita.
- Evening: Dinner.

**Monday: Day 3:**

- Early morning: 5:00 a.m. Turtles arrivals & nests monitoring walk.
- Morning: 8:00 a.m. Breakfast.
- Mid-morning: Beach cleaning.
- Mid-day: Lunch & Free time.
- Afternoon: Making signs, painting trees or new born turtles' liberation. If we have baby turtles.
- Evening: Dinner.

**Tuesday: Day 4:**

- Early morning: 5:00 a.m. Turtles arrivals & nests monitoring walk.
- Morning: 8:00 a.m. Breakfast.
- Mid-morning: Beach cleaning.
- Mid-day: Lunch & Free time.
- Afternoon: Helping in the local school. Cleaning, painting, doing gardens, fixing things.
- Evening: Dinner.

**Wednesday: Day 5:**

- Morning: 8:00 a.m. Breakfast.
- Mid-morning: Monkeys & Red Macaws Natural Tours.
- Mid-day: Lunch & Free time.
- Afternoon: Free time.
- Evening: Dinner.

**Thursday: Day 6:**

- Early morning: 5:00 a.m. Turtles arrivals & nests monitoring walk.
- Morning: 8:00 a.m. Breakfast.
- Mid-morning: Beach cleaning.
- Mid-day: Lunch & Free time.
- Afternoon: Costa Rica Cooking Lesson.
- Evening: Dinner.

**Friday: Day 7:**

- Early morning: 5:00 a.m. Turtles arrivals & nests monitoring walk.
- Morning: 8:00 a.m. Breakfast.
- Mid-morning: Beach cleaning.
- Mid-day: Lunch & Free time.
- Afternoon: Visit the Coconut Products' Factory and learn the process to make candies, coconut virgin oil, coconut milk, organic coconut fertilizer.
- Evening: Farewell Dinner Party.

**Saturday: Day 8:**

- Morning: Depart for San José.
- Mid-morning: Arrival to the airport.

**Important notes:**

- As it is a sea turtles project, sometimes the nests & turtles monitoring walks could be at night. We will let the volunteers know in advance.
- Volunteers have to be very careful with the ocean and tides even if they are expert swimmers.
- Working/helping at local primary school needs a little different code of dressing. Not really short shorts, tank tops or very tight clothing.
- Weather conditions at the beach can change monitoring walks schedules.

## Packing Information

*Please refer to the general orientation handbook for a general suggested packing list.*

Our program location is very humid, wet and often muddy. Pack light and quick drying clothes.

**Your work clothes may be ruined with paint or mud.** We recommend bringing work gloves that may get dirty, a few snacks and Ziploc bags. Strong insect repellent is essential. Make sure to pack enough clothes to be comfortable, considering sweat, mud, paint, etc. Also, you may enjoy bringing games or books for free time.

### Essential items:

- Bug repellent with at least 20% deet
- Sunscreen
- Flashlight
- Water bottle
- Umbrella
- Rain Jacket or poncho
- Long pants to protect against mosquitoes and wear for cool nights
- Dark, long sleeved shirt for night turtle patrols
- Tennis shoes to cover feet

**Please note** that the packing list is meant as a guideline. There is no single item that you can't live without for one week. Pack what you think you will need to be comfortable, but do not get preoccupied about items that you didn't bring, weren't on the list, etc. Everyone has different opinions about essential items.

## Leisure Activities

Volunteers will be housed in a villa-style home very near the project location. There is no A/C but each room does have a fan. Western style bathrooms are available with the basic functions expected. Please be aware, however, that toilet paper can not be flushed down the toilet because it will very likely clog the toilet and render it useless for some time.

There is fairly reliable wi-fi as of recently.

## Gifts / Donations

At the end of your stay, you might feel inclined to give something to community hosts who have been particularly helpful or courteous. In the past, volunteers have given an



empty journal decorated with a child's name, or written them a thank you note, sung them a song, etc. People also enjoy seeing simple tokens from home, such as postcards of your hometown, or photos of your family.

Please be aware that bringing donations can also be awkward. In some instances, receiving donations can affect the recipients pride negatively. This is not always the case. Do try and consider when donating used clothes, particularly those used during the program, if you feel the local community members would actually want them. It is best to discuss donations with the coordinator for these reasons.

We discourage giving any more money than you are already giving to the program and community via your program fee. Globe Aware funds are spent on program expenses, as opposed to giving cash donations -- this helps ensure that the money is being spent in meaningful ways. We understand the good intentions of our volunteers. Giving cash out to community members contradicts the goal of promoting sustainability, promotes expectations that foreigners are 'made of money' and can create an atmosphere that begging may solve a community's challenges. However, if you feel like giving a gratuity to your coordinator this will be very appreciated though not necessary.

## Accommodations

Volunteers will be housed in a villa-style home very near the project location. There is no A/C but each room does have a fan. Western style bathrooms are available with the basic functions expected. Please be aware, however, that toilet paper can not be flushed down the toilet because it will very likely clog the toilet and render it useless for some time. There is fairly reliable wi-fi as of recently.



## Electricity

Electrical outlets in Costa Rica are similar to the ones in the U.S. Some locations will have a 2-pronged flat type plug and other places will have a 3-pronged type plug. Your accommodations



can accept both 2 and 3 pronged devices. The voltage is 110 volts with 60 cycle electricity. A converter will not be necessary in Costa Rica.

## Laundry

Available on the premises, includes twice a week service.

## Food

Breakfast, lunch and dinner will be had at your accommodations. Flavorful traditional Costa Rican style meals are cooked fresh, with your help, throughout the day. Abundant, safe drinking water is always available in the home and throughout your working vacation.

## Weather

Costa Rica is warm and humid year-round. There are 2 seasons, wet and dry. The rainy season lasts from May to December, but do not expect rain all day, everyday. The dry season is more accurately described as the less-rainy season. During the rainy season, you are likely to get one shower a day that will last for 1 or 2 hours and then clear up. The temperatures tend to range from 70s at night, and up to the high 80s in the day all year round.

## Money

Playa Bandera has a small grocery store (called mini super in Costa Rica) with an ATM available. Other options for withdrawing colones (Costa Rica's currency) is to exchange dollars at the airport or at a bank. There might be some incidentals that will require some access to funds such as when eating out or visiting the local market for souvenirs or buying snacks at the mini super. Please also keep in mind that it is much easier to use small bills, as it is often difficult to get change when you make small purchases.

You will also need cash for any excursions booked outside of the regular program itinerary.



## Phone and Internet

Please do not plan on spending a lot of time on the phone at the program site. We will have a busy and short week to be immersed in the culture and in your volunteer contribution. Enjoy the turtles! If you must use your cell phone, first contact your cell service provider to inquire about

charges for using your phone in Costa Rica. Wi-fi is available at your accommodations but be prepared for slow connectivity.

## Health

You should be up to date on routine vaccinations while traveling to any destination. No special vaccines are required to travel to Costa Rica. For additional information on travel health in Costa Rica, please refer to the CDC's website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/costa-rica>

You are provided insurance as a part of your Globe Aware program. To access your profile go to <https://coretravelinsurance.com> and click on traveler log in. Enter your information and use Globe Aware as the organization. You can view your coverage included with the CORE package and can also opt to increase if desired at an additional cost to the volunteer.

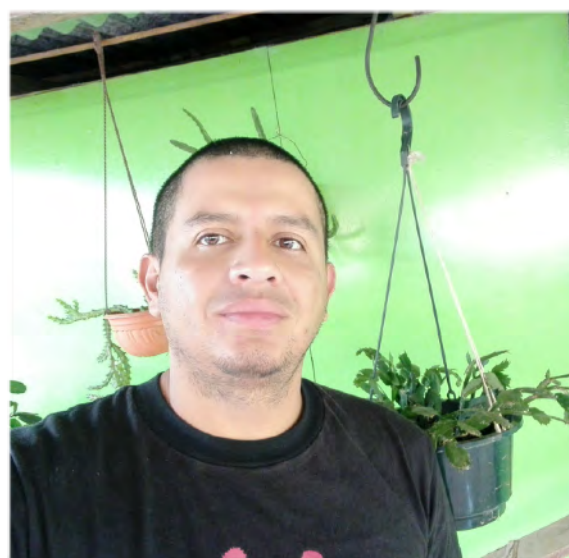
## Your Fellow Volunteers

You will receive a Fellow Volunteer Report attached to our "Ready, Set, Go!" email about 3 weeks before the program starts. It will include information on your fellow travelers, as well as their email so that you can start to get acquainted with them before you leave.

The animal rescue project is one of two projects Globe Aware offers that work with animals and hence involve local animal specialists that receive volunteers from sources other than Globe Aware. Most of these come from Europe and most are longer term. You are likely to get to know some of these volunteers. They do volunteer under a different set of circumstances and regulations, for example they are not covered by medical or liability insurance and the excursions aren't included for them, etc. Those that are particularly long term often help as veterinary assistants to the surgeons, something in which shorter term volunteers can not participate. We think the variety of people coming from these various sources is essential in bringing the animal rescue center the stability it needs to sustain its operations, and we are grateful to your taking part.

## Your Main Coordinator: Douglas

My name is Douglas Picado Parra. I live in Tarrazu, San José, Costa Rica. I studied the basic education in the Liceo de Tarrazu. I have unfinished university studies. I like listen to music, all different kinds of music. I like play a bass guitar in my free time. I like visit the nature, forest, mountains, beaches, and rivers. I like visit a friends and enjoy life. I am passionate about meeting new people from different cultures and learn something new every day and grow as a person. The last three years i have worked in the Amistad Institute as coordinator with volunteers in Playa Bandera, in the turtle project.



## Your office Coordinator: Marcos Bunillo

Marco is the program director for our turtle program. He mostly does all of the day to day running of the program from the behind the scenes. Marcos may help out with volunteer activities and will likely be the one to pick you up from the airport.

## Entry Requirements

U.S. and Canadian citizens may visit Costa Rica for up to 90 days. You must have a valid passport, which will need to **have at least 2 blank pages**. Citizens from other countries do not need a tourist visa if they have permanent residency or a valid tourist or business visa from the following countries: United States, Canada and any country in the European Union. If you meet neither of these requirements, please contact the closest Costa Rican embassy or consulate to verify whether you need a visa.



If you are traveling with a minor without BOTH parents traveling, it is a good idea to get a notarized letter from the non-traveling parent authorizing travel to and from Costa Rica, including dates of travel and authorized companions. While this is not 100% enforced, sometimes your airline or Costa Rica immigration may ask for it, and if you do not have it, you may find your travel plans stopped in their tracks, as you may not be able to leave your country of origin or be refused entry into Costa Rica.

Once you land in San Jose, you must proceed to immigration, as this is your first point of entry into the country. There you will present your documentation (passport). Depending on the number of planes landing at the same time and the time of year, this can take anywhere from 10-20 minutes to over an hour. Mid-day arrivals usually wait longer. You will then proceed to baggage claim where you will pick up your luggage. If any of your luggage is damaged or missing, you should report it to the airline immediately and provide the address where you will be staying or wait for the next flight as it is likely to come in that flight. If lost or missing baggage will cause a delay in meet up, you should notify us immediately (See Emergency Section for information on how to reach Globe Aware 24 hours a day).

For delayed baggage to be delivered to the program site, use this address and phone number:

Frente al EBAIS de Barrio Jesús de Santa Barbara de Heredia

Propiedad de muro blanco con azul

Marco A. Bolaños Cubillo +506-8834-5353

Once you have picked up your luggage (or reported if delayed), walk to customs. The red/stop-green/go system will tell you if you are going to be inspected or questioned. Do NOT bring any drugs, firearms or illegal substances into Costa Rica. If you go to jail in Costa Rica, your rights are minimal. The Costa Rican legal system is very different from the U.S. You can and will go to jail, and you will very likely not be able to post bond. You can be held for months with only a formal complaint while the prosecutor investigates and builds a case against you. You are not innocent until proven guilty under Costa Rica Law.

After customs, you will proceed down another corridor where you will exit the airport.

## Meet-Up

There is a bus stop outside the airport for the Alajuela-San Jose and Alajuela-Heredia route in both directions. Buses from other routes also stop there. If you are not fluent in Spanish, we recommend to not attempt to figure out the bus system. It is better to arrange a private transfer service or a regular licensed taxi.

Licensed taxis are available at the airport and will generally accept both colones and U.S. dollars, but not other currencies. Licensed taxis are red with yellow triangles on the doors, and additionally there is an airport taxi service which is licensed and employs orange taxis. A licensed taxi costs about \$10 from the airport to the meet up hotel. All licensed taxis should have working door handles, seatbelts and meters (called “marias”). Passengers are encouraged to use seatbelts. You can also hire your own private transportation directly at the airport exit. A private van is usually the same as a regular taxi. If you stay in downtown San Jose and then go to the meet up hotel, it is further, and costs between \$30 and \$40. If you have an international data plan or have access to Wi-Fi at a restaurant or hotel, you can take Uber (though it is not considered legal, it exists and operates fine as the government has not found a way to regulate). We include this information as we are frequently asked about it but do not condone or condemn your choice. Uber from downtown San Jose to the meet up hotel is about \$10.

You are responsible for making your own arrangements from the airport to the meet up point, unless otherwise arranged. The meet-up point is at the Courtyard Marriott San Jose Airport located 1/4 mile from the airport. If you are arriving the day before the program starts, this is also a great place to stay, however please note that you are in no way obligated to do so. If you stay at the meet up hotel, they provide a free airport shuttle from 4am to midnight. Many volunteers choose to stay here if they arrive in Costa Rica prior to the Saturday their program begins, and we have chosen this as our meet-up point because of its central location, safe neighborhood and pleasant environment. Hotel rates range between \$87-\$130 per night depending on the number of people and size of the room. Some rates include breakfast for the next day. To make reservations you can contact the hotel at [Marriott.com](https://www.marriott.com)

The address for the meet up point is: Courtyard Marriott San Jose Airport Alajuela Radial Francisco J. Orlich, Plaza los Mangos Alajuela 20109 Costa Rica.

A less expensive alternative which is also convenient to the meet up point is the Hotel Catedral Casa Cornejo. If you are arriving the day before the program starts, this is also a great place to stay, however please note again that you are in no way obligated to do so. Many volunteers choose to stay here if they arrive in Costa Rica prior to the Saturday their program begins. Hotel



start at \$50 and include breakfast for the next day. To make reservations you can contact an online hotel reservation service.

A taxi from the airport should be \$5 - \$10. If you choose to stay here, you are also responsible for getting yourself to the meet up location. A taxi from the airport should be \$5 to \$10 USD. Please anticipate heavy traffic on Saturday and make sure you give yourself plenty of time to get there, a taxi from Hotel Casa Cornejo to the Courtyard should be no more than \$10.

**Volunteers will be picked up at the Courtyard Marriott San Jose Airport at 12:30 p.m. on the Saturday the program starts.**

## **Safety and Security**

Costa Rica is a very safe country and incidents of violent crime are very rare. Please be vigilant at all times when in San Jose as pickpockets are common, especially in crowded areas. Secure your personal belongings and do not carry your passport or credit cards in easily accessible places.

You should always be wary of where you leave your belongings, as unattended items may disappear (day packs, cameras, etc.). Our accommodations are very safe, but as a precaution in any of our locations, we recommend purchasing a baggage lock and putting all your valuables inside your largest bag and locking it when you leave for your daily activities.

## **Exit Procedures**

Before departing Costa Rica there will be a departure tax that you will need to pay. You should check with your airline and see if it has been applied as part of your airline ticket cost. Nowadays, most airlines include the departure tax in the airfare, but it is recommended to confirm either way. If not, the desk where you will pay this tax can be easily found near the departure area at the airport.

## **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)**

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program is a free service provided by the U.S. government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to a foreign country. STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency, keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements, and help your friends and family get in touch with you in case of an emergency. The link to STEP is <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>

## **Global Entry**

Global Entry is a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) program that allows expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travelers upon arrival in the United States. Due to sequestration and during busy travel seasons, long lines have been reported at customs and immigration when coming back into the United States. Global Entry approved travelers can use the automated kiosks at immigration to reduce wait times considerably. For more information, visit <http://www.globalentry.gov/>

## In Case of Emergency

United States Embassy Location: In front of Centro Comercial del Oeste Pavas, Costa Rica  
Street Address: Calle 98 Via 104, Pavas, Costa Rica Main Line: +506 2519 2000 From the U.S.  
dial 011 506 2519 2000

**Globe Aware's 24-hour phone line- Please note our email is not attended all day everyday so if you have an emergency please use this phone number (214) 824 4562**

State Department Travel Information: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/costa-rica.html>

## Further Readings

While no further reading is required, we think it is always nice to have a travel guide book with you to read about the area. Lonely Planet, Eyewitness, Frommer's, Budget Travel, Rough Guides are some of the titles we have recommended in the past. Many people also enjoy reading books like The Costa Ricans by Richard Biesanz et al, which provides a historic perspective on Costa Rica's political and social change. La Loca de Gandoca by Ana Cristina Rossi is a conservation-related novel by a prize winning tica novelist.

