



# Costa Rica

## Sea Turtle Rescue



have fun. help people.

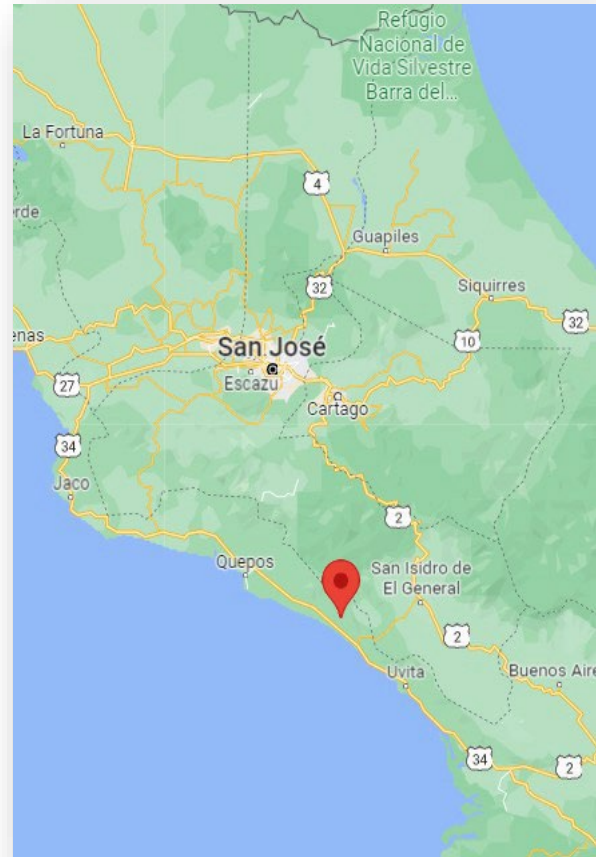
## Introduction to Costa Rica

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. Despite its small size, Costa Rica features greater biodiversity than Europe or North America. This is due to several 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 include a range of habitats, from lowland rainforests 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 for the rainforest.

Ecotourism in Costa Rica began in the mid-1980s to stop deforestation and 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 it would



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 to 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 is to protect and help endangered Costa Rican wildlife indigenous to the country by ensuring the welfare of injured animals and 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

Costa Rica has miles of beaches on its east side to the Caribbean and on its west side to the Pacific Ocean. This unique location has attracted for hundreds of years an animal that now finds itself threatened by the actions of humans- from climate change to fishing obstacles, and even erroneous information on the effects of consuming sea turtle eggs.

Join Globe Aware in our fight to help save this magnificent animal and help to preserve the habitat of the baula (*Dermochelys coriacea*), tortuga verde (*Chelonia mydas*), tortuga carey (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) y tortuga lora (*Lepidochelys kempii*) in Playa Matapalo, near of Manuel Antonio, Quepos. You will find yourself in one of the most unique environments, working to build an ecologically sustainable reforested habitat to give this wonderful animal a second chance. With a volunteer vacation, you can be a part of the solution and help change the fate of sea turtles.

### **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 resources of endangered turtles and offer alternatives to poaching and eggging



## 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 of 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 seabed), 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 seagrass 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

Projects will vary depending on the number of volunteers, which projects were finished with the prior group, what priorities have changed, weather conditions, which supplies are available, and often the interest and fitness level of the volunteers. For these reasons, specific projects are often not fixed until the week before your arrival and can even change upon arrival.

The site also closely monitors the movement of local sloth populations so volunteers can expect to participate in 4 or 5 "sloth walks" per week. Another important responsibility of the project is the cleaning of the local beach and recycling of bottles and cans. This project is being functioning since 2000-2001 and is located not far from Manuel Antonio, Quepos.

- Monitoring the beach at night or early morning to locate the nests and inform the local egg collection committee
- Remove trash, stones, or debris that prohibits the turtles from building their nest
- Replace and monitor the nests
- Guide the baby turtles as they hatch to prevent their going in direction of the rainforest where they would die
- Build sea turtle nurseries
- Help with other animals in their natural habitats, such as birds and sloths.

#### Other Community Work Projects

- Cleaning and painting schools
- Planting coconut palms and almond trees
- Reforesting



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 weekdays, 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.

Please note the following sample itinerary is 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.

# Sample Itinerary

## **Sunday: Day 1:**

- Morning: Meet at Juan Santamaría International Airport and transport to a location with a guide.
- Afternoon: Arrive at to project site. Settle into accommodations and introduction.
- Evening: Welcome dinner, free time, beach bonfire, weather permitting

## **Monday: Day 2:**

- Morning: Breakfast.
- Mid-morning: Explore the area & start with the planned working itinerary.
- Mid-day: Lunch.
- Afternoon: Free time
- Evening: Dinner.

## **Tuesday: 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 newborn turtles' rescue
- Evening: Dinner.

## **Wednesday: 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: Community help. Cleaning, painting, doing gardens, maintenance & repairing facilities
- Evening: Dinner.

## **Thursday: Day 5:**

- Morning: 8:00 a.m. Breakfast.
- Mid-morning: Sloths and other animals Natural Tour.
- Mid-day: Lunch & Free time.
- Afternoon: Free time or explore Quepos, continue projects as desired
- Evening: Dinner.

## **Friday: 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.
- Night: Farewell Dinner Party (Only for groups)

## **Saturday: Day 7:**

- Morning: Breakfast
- Mid-morning: Departure to the airport.

## Packing Information

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 your free time.

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!



### Essential items:

- Work gloves
- Sunscreen
- Sun hat
- 2 - 3 Pants for working
- Toilet paper/tissues or wipes (available locally but if you feel you need a particular kind)
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Toiletries and any prescription medication needed
- T-shirts/Shorts
- Umbrella or rain poncho
- Long socks, especially if you are not bringing boots
- Knee pads (optional for gardening work, super helpful if able to leave behind as donation as well))
- Strong money belt
- Camera / memory cards / chargers
- Money/credit expenditures
- Travel charger
- Rain or rubber boots (these can be bought locally for \$10)
- Pants and Long sleeves for chilly evenings You may enjoy bringing games or books for your free time.
- Day pack / Small backpack

**Please note working/helping at a local primary school needs a more modest dress code. No short shorts, tank tops, or very tight clothing.**



Blankets, towels, or a sleeping bag may help you be more comfortable, as the bedding or linens may not be what you are accustomed to. The vast majority of volunteers find the sheets and blankets completely satisfactory and feel that taking up extra luggage space isn't worth the cost or effort, though this is a personal decision. Others have brought "travel blankets" or "sleep sacks" which are much easier to pack.

## **Leisure Activities**

Costa Ricans know how to relax! You will truly immerse yourself in Costa Rican culture. Life moves at a delightful, slower pace at Matapalo Beach. The program begins with a traditional welcoming ceremony followed by a bonfire at the beach (when conditions permit it), an event the average tourist would never experience. There are plenty of things to do in the area, from walking tours to watching monkeys and sloths, to fishing tours in the community. Cooking and Latin dancing lessons with locals can be also offered.

## **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 empty journals decorated with a child's name or written them a thank you note, singing them a song, etc. People also enjoy seeing simple tokens from homes, 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 recipient's pride negatively. This is not always the case. Do try and consider when donating used clothes, particularly those used during the program, if you felt 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, promoting 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.

## **Laundry**

Available during your stay. Please ask your main coordinator for assistance.

## Accommodations

Volunteers are housed in dorms located inside the project. Western-style bathrooms are available, though they are modest and not as nice as what you might be accustomed to. As of 2018, there is now also reliable wi-fi.



## 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 for Costa Rica.

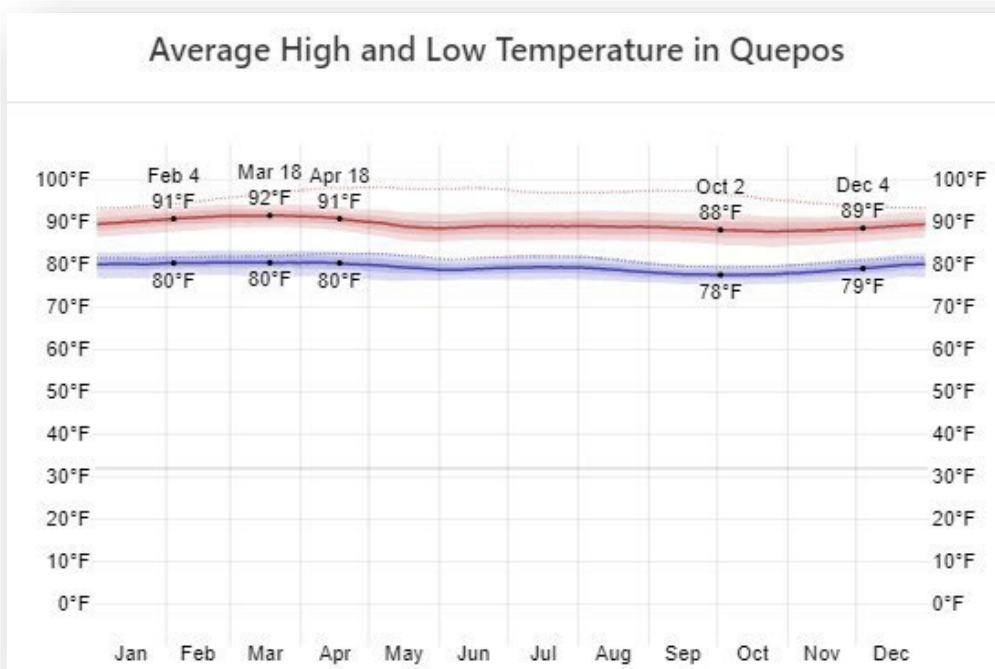
## Food

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, every day. 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 the 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. Another option 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 emails 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 long-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 cannot 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 Coordinators:

My name is Margarita. I am a Costa Rican who lived in New York for a few years. I have worked for Amistad Abroad from time to time since they were founded 18 years ago. I am passionate about working with foreign volunteers and projects. I love to work with ecology, nature, and environmental projects as well as meeting people from other countries. I truly enjoy being in contact with wildlife and helping people. My commitment is to helping volunteers have a wonderful experience in Costa Rica and take advantage of all the beautiful projects and opportunities Amistad has to offer.



My name is Eneas, I am a Costa Rican guy who just graduated from college and loves everything about my country. I like to discover new places in Costa Rica and help people from other countries to experience mine as a local, this kind of feel that makes other people understand better how we are. I really like nature, and animals in the wild, that is why I am I love being part of this project for this activity and hope I can help you really feel and enjoy the Pura Vida!

## 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: the 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 on that flight. If lost or missing baggage will cause a delay in meeting 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: Frente al EBAIS de Barrio Jesús de Santa Barbara de Heredia  
Propiedad de muro blanco con azul**

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

You will need to arrange to be at the meet-up point in San Jose by 12:30 pm on Saturday before your program begins. Volunteers will need to use public transport from the airport to the program location with help of a private guide. The program ends at 10:00 am the following Saturday and it takes approximately 4 hours to return to San Jose. Do not arrange a flight any earlier than 3:30 pm on the return trip

## Safety and Security

Costa Rica is a very safe country and incidents of violent crime are very rare. Please be always vigilant 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.

## Fundraising

Start a fundraising campaign to support a specific program or project, fundraise towards your next volunteer trip, or even donate to other individuals fundraising so they can experience what you did! Adopt a project and continue to raise funds to go towards it - the sky is the limit!

## 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/>

## 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/>

## Further Readings

While no further reading is required, we think it is always nice to have a travel guidebook with you to read about the area. Lonely Planet, Eyewitness, Frommer's, Budget Travel, and 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.

## 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 every day 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>

## Stay Involved

As you leave Costa Rica, you may be asking yourself, "how can I continue to help?".

### **Start planning your next volunteer vacation**

Are you ready for your next volunteer vacation? Many of our volunteers are forever changed by the experience and can't wait for the next one, or to visit a new, exciting place. Maybe you fell so in love with the community you visited that you would like to go back. Globe Aware does not have a minimum number of people to run a trip and most of our programs have no age restrictions, so whether you choose to go by yourself, with your friends, or with family, we invite you to explore our different destinations on our website [www.globeaware.org](http://www.globeaware.org), or plan to return to Costa Rica! All returning volunteers receive 10% off any of our program fees!

**Join us on social media - Use the hashtag [#globeaware](https://twitter.com/globeaware) for your posts!**

Our Facebook page is [www.facebook.com/globeaware](http://www.facebook.com/globeaware) - Don't forget to LIKE us! Our Instagram is [@globeaware](https://www.instagram.com/globeaware) - we would love to have you follow us and share!



## Share your photos

Send in your photos so we can share them with other people in the same program, or people interested in going to Costa Rica.

