



GAP AFRICA PROJECTS



**COSTA RICA - GROUP
EXPEDITION**

SUGGESTED ITINERARY

COSTA RICA - EXPEDITION



INTRODUCTION

Patrol for sea turtles laying their eggs, chill out on the beach and watch the waves lap at the coast, search for the elusive quetzal bird, take the opportunity to ride horseback along jungle lined tropical beaches.

From the pristine rain forests of the Caribbean to the Pacific coast's famous surf, experience some of the world's most incredible scenery and exotic wildlife—and make a lasting impact while you're there. Spend five days volunteering with a sea turtle project to help ensure these endearing creatures are around for future generations to admire. Then, hike through forests and marvel at their beauty from the aerial tram. Get as close as you dare to crocodiles, before heading over the central hills to walk in an active volcanic crater and bathe in thermal baths. You will enjoy a comprehensive introduction to the variety and beauty of this amazing country.

Give some of your time to this beautiful country and a worthy cause, and you'll be rewarded with an experience you can really treasure.

Gain a real sense of accomplishment and take home more than photographs.



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COSTA RICA - EXPEDITION



LOCATION

With the greatest concentration of biodiversity in the world, Costa Rica is a must for any conservationist. Over 25% of the country is protected in national parks due to the country's progressive policies on environmental protection and sustainable ecotourism. The rainforests, tropical forests, marine areas, and wetlands of Costa Rica are the subject of many university and scientific organisation studies. This "biological crossroads" of the world offers a visitor an unforgettable glimpse of a tropical paradise with over 500,000 species of animal including endangered sea turtles, monkeys and jungle cats, and over 800 species of bird. Seen as an example of political stability in the area, Costa Rica has enjoyed democracy for almost 60 years and is an oasis of calm among its turbulent neighbours.

Costa Rica is located on the Central American isthmus, bordered by Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the south, while the east coast borders the Caribbean Sea, and the North Pacific Ocean lies to the west coast. It has a total of 1,290 km of coastline with a total area of 51,100 km². Costa Rica's terrain is a coastal plain separated by rugged mountains which run down the spine of the country, and is part of the Neo-tropic eco zone which includes more tropical rainforest than any other eco zone and is one of the most important reserves of biodiversity on earth. Some of the eco regions in Costa Rica include seasonal moist forests, Bocas del Toro, San Bastimentos Island, San Blas mangroves, Mosquitia, Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast mangroves, Southern Dry Pacific Coast mangroves, Central American dry forests, and Talamancan montane forests. The country is host to many environmental treaties and is noted for its national park system which oversees over 160 protected areas which comprise over a quarter of Costa Rican territory. The largest national park is Cocos Island, "Isla del Coco", Costa Rica's Galapagos, which is an island about 500 km from the Pacific coast and 24 km² in area.



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PROJECT DETAILS

Volunteer Work at Sea Turtle Conservation Projects:

- ✓ Night beach patrols
- ✓ Assisting in the collection of biometric data from nesting turtles
- ✓ Assisting in the relocation of nests
- ✓ Day/night hatchery duties
- ✓ Nest monitoring
- ✓ Hatching liberation
- ✓ Beach cleaning
- ✓ Basic construction work (in relation to hatchery for example)
- ✓ Reforestation work – collecting and sorting seeds, planting saplings etc
- ✓ General maintenance
- ✓ Upkeep of volunteer accommodation

Work during the day time will depend on the situation when you arrive. Prepare to be doing very physical work, for instance collecting and carrying sand to rebuild defenses from the ocean, or for establishing a new hatchery. Work at projects often includes maintenance and improvements to the accommodation, clearing paths, and beach cleaning. Just be prepared to go with the flow! When working in the sun you need to remember the importance of drinking water, staying in the shade on your breaks, and wearing lots of sun cream. It is perhaps advisable to bring rehydration sachets. Often volunteers not used to physical work, and/or being in such strong sun find the first few days a little difficult. It is important to take care of yourself.

Night Patrols: Generally there are two nightly patrols that are arranged in relation to the tide, (you could be patrolling at 11pm or 3am). Volunteers will be required to attend patrols as designated by a supervisor. The length of patrol normally takes around 4 hours, depending on number of turtles encountered. You will receive approx a 10 min break at each end of the beach. This can vary depending on project

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
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The patrols are lead by an experienced patrol leader and walk a sector of the beach searching for nesting females. Once a turtle is encountered the leader with the aid of the volunteers will collect information; the length and width of the turtle, nest location and its dimensions, and the number of eggs laid. The eggs will be carefully removed by the group leader and relocated to the hatchery. Turtles are sensitive to light, if any light is to be used on the beach only red light is permitted. NO PHOTOGRAPHS.

Hatchery Shift: Hatchery shift requires the presence of normally 2 people to watch over the hatchery. Hatchery shifts can generally last from 2 - 4 hours. Those in charge of the hatchery during their shift are required to:

- Check for baby turtles who have left the nest and need to be placed on the beach to return to the water
- Help with the relocation of eggs found on patrol into the hatchery
- Record data: e.g. how many eggs have been relocated, where the nest was originally and to which area it has now been placed etc.
- Watch over the hatchery, removing any crabs or other potential threats to the nest.

Please be aware: Being involved in turtle conservation is one of the most incredible experiences, with your time and contribution to the project being very valuable. However please be aware and keep in mind that it can be hard work. Patrols take place regardless of weather conditions (including pouring rain), and there will be many nights when no nesting turtles are encountered. There may be times when the volunteers are required to undertake more work than usually expected. Long hatchery shifts can be tiring and tedious. Accommodation is basic, as is the food (expect lots of rice and beans!). Electricity is solar, so not always reliable. In reading this we hope you will not be discouraged, we just want you to realize it can be hard, but of course ultimately it is very rewarding. It is an experience second to none in a place of extreme natural beauty.

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
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Day 1: Arrival into San Jose (SJO) airport. Your Group Guide will meet you, and will transfer you to family run volunteer accommodation in Esparza. Welcome dinner dependent on arrival time.

Day 2 Please leave your luggage packed and ready in the main area before breakfast at 0800. Please ensure you take your passport with you. Travel to Goshen de Bataan in the Caribbean for boat transfer to Pacuare Turtle Project. The journey will take approx 4 hours by coach, 45 by boat, with lunch en route. Dinner will be served at the Project.

Day 3 – 7 You will work as a volunteer, being part of a conservation effort to protect 3 species of endangered sea turtles. You will actively be taking part in night patrols to help protect the beach during nesting season. Other work may include the construction of the essential hatchery, gardening, general maintenance, and helping in the kitchen.

Day 7 Braulio Carrillo National Park, driving through park. Lunch. Rainforest Adventure: Aerial Tram above the jungle, guided nature tour (butterfly garden, terrarium (snakes, frogs, turtles), orchid garden, hummingbirds)

Day 8 Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve, with views of both the Pacific and Atlantic. Lunch followed by Lecture & Natural History Tour.

Day 9 Whale and Dolphin Combo. To Playa Uvita, Marino Ballena National Park for 0845. Search for Humpback Whales and two species of resident dolphins. Possibly also see Bryde's Whales , Pilot whales, False Killer whales and other marine life. Visit the coral and rock reefs to snorkel and observe the wonderful marine wildlife of the Ballena Marine Park. View the caverns of Ventanas Beach.

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
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Day 10 Carara - Crocodile boat tour on River Tarcoles and the mangroves. See crocodiles, birds and monkeys up close. Lunch. Horse Riding along the beach.

Day 11 Toucan Rescue Ranch. Introductory talk about sloths and conservation. Tour of the ranch, where you will meet sloths, toucans, and other birds and mammals.

Day 12 Maritime Park Puntarenas. Introduction to their world-leading approach to maritime conservation. Tour of the park. Lunch. Macaw and wild bird Sanctuary (also includes jaguars) - interactive workshop and tour.

Day 13 Amazing views and adrenaline! Ocean View Zip Lining in the cloud forest, including a 700 meters (2200 ft) long cable done as a Superman flight. Hiking trails with guide. Lunch. Sunset at the beach, plus feeding monkeys.

Day 14 Manuel Antonio National Park. Talk on conservation and guided tour. Time dependant.

We say goodbye to beautiful Costa Rica! We will organize transport back to the airport in the morning.

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Accommodation

Accommodation On the turtle project you will stay in shared beach huts, which are basic, clean and comfortable. The project is located in a quiet remote area, bordered by the sea on the front and a canal on the back, accessible only by boat. Everybody has small lockers available for personal valuables like passport; you will only need to bring a padlock. Electricity is solar and has to be used rationally.

The rest of the time you will sleep in our family run volunteer centre, in Esparza, a small agricultural town near the Pacific Ocean. The centre is two linked houses with a large central living, dining and games area, a large garden, TV, free WiFi, tea and coffee, table tennis, badminton & BBQ. Electricity is hydroelectric, and very reliable, and the WiFi is excellent. All rooms are lockable.

Food

Food Whilst in Costa Rica we will provide you with 3 meals a day. This will be local food (Rice and beans!!) You may be eating in the volunteer accommodation (our cook is excellent!), on site during activities, or in selected restaurants while travelling. You will grow to love Costa Rican food, recently referred to by Jamie Oliver as "honest simple and delicious". It is important that you let us know in advance of any dietary requirements – whether allergies, intolerances or just plain taste! We need to be able to advise the projects of this in advance – so if we do not know, then you will not be catered for adequately.



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