

Extensive information:

Project Sea turtles  
Conservation Program  
Costa Rica



# Table of contents

	<b><u>Page:</u></b>
<b>1. Sea turtle introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Anatomy	4-5
1.2 Daily activities	5
1.3 Reproductive behaviour	5-6
1.4 Diet	7
1.5 Endangered species and your help	7-8
<b>2. The Project</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 Purpose and strategy	9
2.2 Plan of action	9
2.3 The future	9
<b>3. Volunteers</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 Period and season expectations	10-11
3.2 Requirements	11
3.3 Costs (including and not including)	11-12
3.4 Accommodation	12
3.5 The work	13-15
3.6 Working conditions	15
3.7 The project staff	15-18
<b>4. Costa Rica</b>	<b>19</b>
4.1 Geography	19
4.2 Project location	19
4.3 Climate	20
<b>5. Travel information</b>	<b>21</b>
5.1 Flight arrangements	21
5.2 Passport and visa	21
5.3 Insurances	21-22
5.4 Arrival in Costa Rica	22
<b>6. Medical advise</b>	<b>23</b>
6.1 Advise	23
6.2 Required vaccinations	23
6.3 Recommended vaccinations	23
6.4 Medical advise	24

<b>7.</b>	<b>Personal equipment</b>	<b>25</b>
7.1	Essential items	25
7.2	Optional items	26
<b>8.</b>	<b>General information</b>	<b>27</b>
8.1	Food and drinks	27
8.2	Supermarkets	27
8.3	Laundry services	27
8.4	Telephone and Internet access	27
8.5	Electricity	28
8.6	Excursion arrangements	28-29
8.7	Currency	29

**Note: Annually the text of this extensive information will be developed and will be kept up with regularly in cooperation with this project. Because there can be made some changes or because there will be some changes be necessary because of certain and unexpected results, etc., it could be that this text not every time will compare in practise at this project.**

*Join the project with an open mind, and a flexible attitude and you will leave Costa Rica with unique, special and unforgettable memories.*



## 1. Sea turtle introduction

While dinosaurs roamed the land, countless sea turtles swam the oceans. Sea turtles are considered the oldest reptile on Earth. The earliest known sea turtle fossils are about 10 million years old. Sea turtles have long fascinated people and have figured prominently in the mythology and folklore of many cultures.

Sea turtles are large, air-breathing reptiles that inhabit tropical and subtropical seas throughout the world. Their streamlined bodies and large flippers make them remarkably adapted to life at sea. However, sea turtles maintain close ties to land. Females must come ashore to lay their eggs in the sand; therefore, all sea turtles begin their lives as tiny hatchlings on land.

This project is particularly interested in the conservation of 3 species of sea turtles:

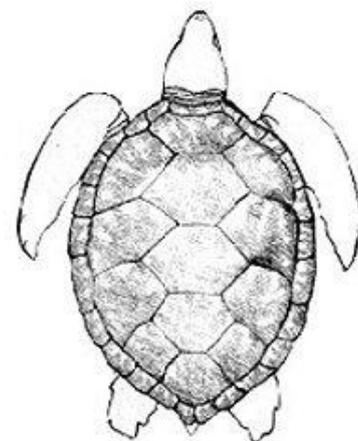
The Pacific Green sea turtle (*Chelonia Mydas*), the Hawksbill sea turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and Olive Ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*).

### 1.1 Anatomy

#### Pacific Green sea turtle

The Green sea turtle is an elegant streamlined swimmer.

They are easily distinguished from other sea turtles because they have a single pair of prefrontal scales (scales in front of its eyes), rather than two pairs as the other sea turtles have. Head is small and blunt with a serrated jaw. Carapace is bony without ridges and has large, non-overlapping, scutes (scales) present with only 4 lateral scutes. Body is nearly oval and is more depressed (flattened) compared to Pacific green turtles. All flippers have 1 visible claw. The carapace colour varies from pale to very dark green and plain to very brilliant yellow, brown and green tones with radiating stripes. The plastron varies from white, dirty white or yellowish in the Atlantic populations to dark grey-bluish-green in the Pacific populations. Hatchlings are dark-brown or nearly black with a white underneath and white flipper margins.

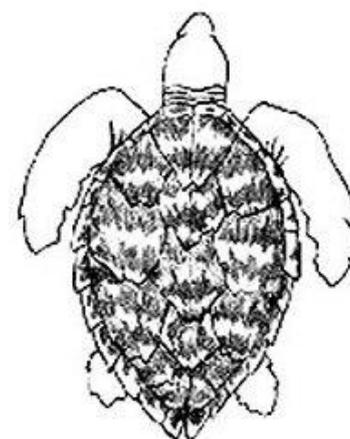


For comparison, the Pacific green turtle (Aka Black Sea Turtle) has a body that is strongly elevated or vaulted and looks less round in a frontal view than other green sea turtles. The colour is where you see the biggest difference with Pacific greens having a dark grey to black carapace and the hatchlings are a dark-brown or black with narrow white border with white underneath.

#### Hawksbill sea turtle

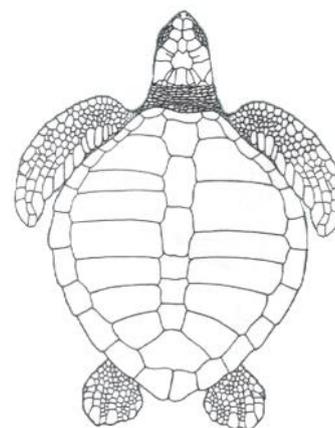
Hawksbill turtles are well known for their beautiful carapace (exterior shell) often referred to as "tortoise shell" which was exploited for many years by the fashion industry. Although the colour of the carapace varies from one geographical location to another, it is predominantly mottled brown with dark and light spots and streaks. The hawksbill sea turtle's underside is lighter yellow or white. This countershading helps camouflage the turtle from potential predators.

The hawksbill is a medium-sized sea turtle weighing up to around 270 pounds and growing to a carapace length of around 3-feet.



### Olive Ridley sea turtle

Olive Ridley sea turtle is one many people are familiar with. The young ones are mainly gray in color and as they get older they will become completely green. They are very small compared to other sea turtles and are categorized as the smallest species of sea turtle.



The males and the females look very similar in color and size. The way you can tell them apart is that the males have a tail that sticks out and the females don't.

## **1.2 Daily activities**

Sea turtles are known to feed and rest off and on during a typical day. When it is not nesting season, sea turtles may migrate hundreds or even thousands of miles.

Sea turtles can sleep at the surface while in deep water or on the bottom wedged under rocks in near shore waters. Many divers have seen green turtles sleeping under ledges in reefs and rocks. Hatchlings typically sleep floating on the surface, and they usually have their front flippers folded back over the top of their backs.

## **1.3 Reproductive behaviour**

### Beach Selection

Most females return faithfully to the same beach each time they are ready to nest. Not only do they appear on the same beach, they often emerge within a few hundred yards of where they last nested.

### Nesting Behaviour

Only the females nest, and it occurs most often at night. The female crawls out of the ocean, pausing frequently as if carefully scoping out her spot. Sometimes she will crawl out of the ocean, but for unknown reasons decide not to nest. This is a "false crawl," and it can happen naturally or be caused by artificial lighting or the presence of people on the beach. Most females nest at least twice during the nesting season, although individuals of some species may nest only once and others more than ten times. Sea turtles are generally slow and awkward on land, and nesting is exhausting work.

### Constructing the Nest

The female turtle crawls to a dry part of the beach and begins to fling away loose sand with her flippers. She then constructs a "body pit" by digging with her flippers and rotating her body. After the body pit is complete, she digs an egg cavity using her cupped rear flippers as shovels. The egg cavity is shaped roughly like a tear drop and is usually tilted slightly.

### Laying and Burying the Eggs

When the turtle has finished digging the egg chamber, she begins to lay eggs. Two or three eggs drop out at a time, with mucus being secreted throughout egg-laying. The average size of a clutch ranges from about 80 to 120 eggs, depending on the species. Because the eggs are flexible, they do not break as they fall into the chamber. This flexibility also allows both the female and the nest to hold more eggs. Nesting sea turtles appear to shed tears, but the turtle is just secreting salt that accumulates in her body. Many people believe that while laying her eggs, sea turtles goes into a trance from which she cannot be disturbed.

This is not entirely true. A sea turtle is least likely to abandon nesting when she is laying her eggs, but some turtles will abort the process if they are harassed or feel they are in danger. For this reason, it is important that sea turtles are never disturbed during nesting. Once all the eggs are in the chamber, the mother turtle uses her rear flippers to push sand over the top of the egg cavity. Gradually, she packs the sand down over the top and then begins using her front flippers to refill the body pit and disguise the nest. By throwing sand in all directions, it is much harder for predators to find the eggs. After the nest is thoroughly concealed, the female crawls back to the sea to rest before nesting again later that season or before beginning her migration back to her feeding ground. Once a female has left her nest, she never returns to end it.



### Incubation

Incubation takes about 45-60 days, but since the temperature of the sand governs the speed at which the embryos develop, the hatching period can cover a broad range. Essentially, the hotter the sand surrounding the nest, the faster the embryos will develop. Cooler sand has a tendency to produce more males, with warmer sand producing a higher ratio of females.

### Emerging from the Nest

Unlike baby alligators, which are liberated from their nest by their mother, sea turtle hatchlings must do it all themselves. To break open their shells, hatchlings use a temporary, sharp egg-tooth which is an extension of the upper jaw that falls off soon after birth. Digging out of the nest is a group effort that can take several days. Hatchlings usually emerge from their nest at night or during a rainstorm when temperatures are cooler. Once they decide to burst out, they erupt from the nest cavity as a group. The little turtles orient themselves to the brightest horizon, and then dash toward the sea.

If they don't make it to the ocean quickly, many hatchlings will die of dehydration in the sun or be caught by predators like birds and crabs. Once in the water, they typically swim several miles off shore, where they are caught in currents and seaweed that may carry them for years before returning to near shore waters. There are many obstacles for hatchlings in the open ocean. Sharks, big fish and circling birds all eat baby turtles, and they die after accidentally eating tar balls and plastic garbage. The obstacles are so numerous for baby turtles that only about one in 1.000 survives to adulthood.

### Green sea turtle

- Nesting mainly October till April
- Hatching mainly December till June

### Hawksbill sea turtle

- Nesting mainly June till March
- Hatching mainly August till March

### Olive Ridley sea turtle

- Nesting mainly June till March
- Hatching mainly August till March

## 1.4 Diet

### Green sea turtle

The diet of Green sea turtles changes significantly during its life. When they are less than 8 to 10 inches in length they eat worms, young crustaceans, aquatic insects, grasses and algae. Once green turtles reach 8 to 10 inches in length, they mostly eat sea grass and algae, the only sea turtle that is strictly herbivorous as an adult. Their jaws are finely serrated which aids them in tearing vegetation.

### Hawksbill sea turtle

The hawksbill's narrow head and jaws shaped like a beak allow it to get food from crevices in coral reefs. They eat sponges, anemones, squid and shrimps.

### Olive Ridley sea turtle

The Olive Ridley's feed mainly on shrimp, crab, lobster, and jellyfish. When these items are hard to find they will turn to consuming various types of algae that are available.

## 1.5 Endangered species and your help

While there were once tens of species of sea turtle only seven remain today, and all of them are either threatened or endangered, two of them critically. The family Cheloniidae includes six of the seven species, characterized by the possession of a hard shell (carapace) formed from scutes: the Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), Green (*Chelonia mydas*), Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), Kemp's Ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*), Olive Ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) and Flatback (*Natator depressus*) turtles. The family Dermochelyidae includes only one species of sea turtle: the Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*). Global populations of sea turtles have decreased by around 80% in the last 30 years, and some populations, such as the Kemp's Ridley and the Pacific Leatherback and Hawksbill, are on the verge of extinction.

The main reason for this dramatic population decline is the incidental capture and suffocation of sea turtles in fishing gear as by catch from intensive industrial fishing practices, such as the use of long-lines and shrimping nets, and sea turtles die in their 100,000s (perhaps millions) in this way every year. Other dangers include plastic waste in the oceans, in which turtles become tangled or which they mistake for food, and nesting habitat destruction through coastal development, light pollution and oil spills. Irresponsible tourism also takes its toll as sea turtles are frequently killed by collisions with boats, and nests are destroyed by tourists riding horses or quad bikes on beaches. A major threat in Central America, however, remains the poaching of eggs and predation by domestic animals, and the program is designed to protect sea turtles from these threats.

The ecological consequences of the impending extinction of sea turtles could be severe. Sea turtles are keystone species in coastal and oceanic marine ecosystems, and the natural predation of their eggs transfers vital nutrients from marine to terrestrial ecosystems. Each species also fulfills a specific ecological role, such as the Atlantic Green turtle for example: it consumes vast quantities of sea grass and keeps it cut short, permitting the continued growth of the grass and the survival of the myriad species of fish, shellfish and crustaceans that call it home. The extinction of sea turtles would also bring about the collapse of the very ecotourism industry intended to facilitate their conservation, resulting in the loss of revenue and jobs within developing communities where they are desperately needed.

The situation is serious and sea turtles need our help right now to save them from extinction. You can help them indirectly by recycling and re-using plastic and by avoiding seafood caught using unsustainable or indiscriminate fishing practices, but most of all you can help directly by donating your time, money and effort to conservation projects around the globe by working as a volunteer.

Working with sea turtles is an unforgettable experience that changes many people's lives forever. By protecting this endangered animal you help to undo some of the damage done by humans to the planet's precious ecosystems. Saving the turtles is hard work, and it is simply not possible without the help of volunteers. Your time, effort and generosity are hugely appreciated!



## **2. The project**

This project originally began in 2006 in order to protect sea turtles and their nesting beaches in Drake Bay in the Osa Peninsula.

### **2.1 Purpose and strategy**

The program strategy was built around the creation of a viable socioeconomic alternative to consumption of sea turtles for the local communities, while promoting environmental conservation activities at the same time. The project aims to sensitize local communities about the importance of protecting and preserving sea turtles, coupling this protection with the opportunity to increase their incomes directly from contracted work at the conservation project and the development of community-based ecotourism initiatives. In this way, it aims to achieve a reduction of the consumptive use of the sea turtles in the region through the preservation of this natural resource.

The project is proud to announce that the project in Drake Bay was handed over to the local association in February 2016. Prior to 2006, 85% of sea turtle nests in Drake Bay were lost to poaching. Since then, the program protected 90% of nests, tagged over 450 sea turtles and released over 77,000 babies into the ocean! The project also paid in salaries to locals, and families of the host family network. The program trained more than 50 residents in sea turtle conservation and hosted hundreds of volunteers.

The successful strategy work to combine environmental education and conservation activities to give local communities a viable socioeconomic alternative to poaching.

### **2.2 Plan of action**

The primary objective of the program today is to promote the conservation and sustainable recuperation of the sea turtle populations that nest on Rincón beach, whilst simultaneously attending to the needs of the local communities with which they interact. The program incorporates the following areas of work to realize this objective:

- A Sea Turtle Conservation Program using standardized scientific methods to promote the long-term survival of the nesting population, by protecting the turtle eggs from illegal poaching and natural predation.
- An Environmental Education Program to increase awareness of the negative impact of the exploitation of natural resources.
- An Economic Development Program led by an association of trained local conservationists, designed to foment sustainable socio-economic alternatives for the community through ecotourism and regular contracted work at the program.

### **2.3 The future**

After 10 years doing conservation work at Osa Peninsula, the project would like to keep working like this, increase the number of people that know and learn about conservation. Help the population of in danger sea turtles like Green and Hawksbill sea turtles to rise up, and improve the way that the local people use the natural resources.

### 3. Volunteers

By being a volunteer on this project you will support this project's work in two ways:

1. Volunteer contribution help conserve and protect the sea turtles and their environment and as well as help the local community.
2. Volunteer participation in the work of the project is essential, as each volunteer brings unique skills and perspectives to the organization.

#### 3.1 Period and season expect experience

Volunteers are welcome in the sea turtle nesting season from 01 July – 31 December. The minimum stay is 2 weeks.

The Olive Ridley turtle nesting season is the rainy season, and broadly speaking the wetter it is the more turtles there are. Heavy rain cannot be ruled out at any time between July and December though, so it is always wise to be prepared to get very wet and for plans to be disrupted without warning. Remember that the Osa Peninsula receives around six meters of rain annually!

Below is a guide to what kind of experience you can expect to have during each month of the season, which we hope you will find helpful.

#### July and August

July and August are all about constructing the field stations, setting up the beaches and starting night patrols. In July, work is mostly during the day, starting early in the morning when it is cooler. Activities include construction, beach cleaning, placement of reference posts, repairing infrastructure, and organizing the camps. Morning patrols take place every day until nests are registered, after which night patrols begin in July. The weather is hot, humid and sunny with frequent but short downpours. Volunteer numbers are usually very high and the good weather means that planned group excursions often go to plan.

Weather	Temperature	Workload	Nesting turtle	Hatchling
				

#### September and October

The peak of the Olive Ridley nesting season and the peak of the rainy season; be prepared for some extreme weather! Working in October is especially challenging as the storms affect everything, but the challenge is all part of the fun. It is not for everyone, and volunteers need to have patience and take the rough with the smooth – Pura Vida! Work is mostly during the night so there is lots of downtime in the day, although morning patrols continue and there is daytime work available.

The nights in October can be quite chilly, so it is worth packing a long-sleeved sweater or two.

Working at the beach becomes logistically complicated and the roads to and from the conservation sites can become flooded. The weather plays havoc with our plans, and so planned group excursions are often interrupted.



### November and December

As the rainy season passes its peak the weather slowly gets better, but it takes a long time. November can still be pretty wet but by the end of December the days are generally dry and sunny again. The Olive Ridley season is still going strong and Pacific Green turtles are nesting in greater numbers every day, making it a great time to work! At the end of December, the program treats volunteers to a wonderful family Christmas and of course a big closing party on New Years' Eve!



### 3.2 Requirements

There are no specific skills, nor previous animal care experience, required to participate at the project.

- Minimum age for participation is 18 years old.
- Volunteers must be able to communicate in English (or Spanish)
- Friendly and be able to work in extreme weather conditions (4-6 hours a day)

### 3.3 Costs (including and not including)

The costs per person to participate at this project are as specified in the Global Spirits' website.

These costs include:

- Accommodation
- 3 meals per day and refreshments
- Training, coordinating and supervision
- Donation to the project
- Administration costs

These costs not include:

- International flights and travel to the project site
- Passport/visa
- Airport departure taxes (about \$ 29)
- Travel insurance, which is compulsory for all participants (and a cancellation insurance)
- Private luxuries like snacks, etc.
- Personal expenses like souvenirs, etc.
- Other excursions etc.

### 3.4 Accommodation

Accommodation is at a nice eco-lodge in the community of Rincón de San Josecito, Osa Peninsula.

This location is also used as an hotel, but a part of this property is used by the project as volunteer accommodation. (the hotel is in the rain season usually closed).

Volunteers stay in mixed rooms (mostly 2 or 3 people sharing the room) with private bathrooms. The accommodation includes bed linen and three meals per day.

The camp has several communal areas with hammocks, football, volleyball, ping-pong and hand-wash laundry facilities.



### 3.5 The work

#### Activities and monitoring

In order to achieve the goals of the research project a number of activities and protocols have been established. Upon arrival at the camp, you will be introduced to the methodologies of the project, and the techniques that you will be required to master, by means of a number of training presentations and workshops on the beach. Once trained, volunteers may participate in the following conservation activities:

#### Morning patrol (Censo):

The purpose of this activity is to record the number and distribution of tracks left on the beach by nesting turtles, and to survey the work of the patrols from the night before in the daylight. New nests are also camouflaged and protected from poaching. The morning patrol is normally conducted by two volunteers and takes around three hours.

#### Night patrols:

Night patrols offer volunteers the chance to meet endangered sea turtles face to face and protect their eggs from being poached. These patrols are led either by local Patrol Leaders, Coordinators or Research Assistants and typically last for four hours. Nesting sea turtles are tagged in order to identify females, monitor hunting and incidental fishing, identify habitats and migration patterns, and determine the longevity and reproductive lifetime of the turtles. Each patrol group consists of at least two people who work a section of the beach, locate nesting turtles and tag them either whilst they are laying eggs or immediately afterwards. Biometric data are collected in order to monitor the distribution and frequency of nests left on the beach, the number of eggs laid in each nest, and the size and condition of each turtle found.





**Other work:**

Volunteers will also take part in a host of other work activities, ranging from the preparation and cleaning of beaches, construction and organization of field infrastructure, gardening, maintenance of trails, ecotourism development, environmental education activities, and community work such as painting schools, building recycling stations, and assisting with community events and fundraising activities. We always like to find out if volunteers have any special skills so that we can put them to good use too, so if you are a teacher, carpenter, rocket scientist, juggler or acrobat, let us know!

The work detail changes dramatically as the season progresses, consistent with the changes in the number of nesting turtles and hatchlings, and as such the volunteer experience changes considerably too.



A rotation system is in place so that all volunteers get a chance to participate in camp chores, such as preparing the patrol equipment. During the day there is plenty of free time, but there is also lots of opportunity to contribute to the maintenance, organization and development of the field station.

Typically, each volunteer will be allocated around five-six work shifts per week, the workload will equate to around 4-6 hours of work per day, six days per week. There is, of course, always more work available, so if you are ever bored, just ask a Coordinator or Research Assistant how you can help.

As a volunteer, you will be allocated one free day every week, during which you may decide to take advantage of the tours offered, explore the local nature on foot, or simply use the day to relax. In addition, the program makes an effort to organize an inexpensive group excursion or activity once a week, so that everyone gets a chance to spend some free time together; however, these are dependent upon weather and workload. At all other times it is expected that each volunteer will be fully engaged with the work schedule. It is important to note that, in addition to the pre-arranged schedule, other tasks will emerge on a daily basis as we respond to changing conditions, construction projects or activities with the community, and the availability of materials or labor.

### **3.6 Working conditions**

The work at the project can be extremely tough and is not necessarily for everybody. Weather conditions can be extreme, with heavy rainfall and localized flooding often a daily occurrence. The majority of the work is nocturnal and it will be necessary to adjust to sleeping in the daytime, often enduring high temperatures and humidity. It can be very difficult to plan activities too, as priorities can suddenly shift according to what resources are available at the time, and volunteers will often find that the work plan changes with very little notice. The way of life is rustic and more spontaneous than you may be used to, but the people are warm and genuine and the environment is full of jaw-dropping natural beauty and extraordinary biodiversity. For many volunteers, this is exactly what they were looking for; for others it can be harder to adapt. But the most important thing is just to be prepared. You will soon find yourself letting go of your first-world precepts and adjusting to the life of a local – Pura Vida!

### **3.7 The project staff**

The project program is managed by several Coordinators and Research Assistants who are responsible for implementing the protocol of investigation and for coordinating most day-to-day operations. These staff supervise the volunteers during work activities and collaborate with the community to coordinate local patrol, workshops and training exercises, and also fun activities such as excursions and party nights.

Volunteers come from around the world to work at the project, and the number involved at any one time can change: some weeks there may be up to 40 engaged with the program; other weeks there may be as few as five or six.

The Official language of communication on the project site is English and Spanish.

Although you may not speak any Spanish, we suggest that you at least learn the work related words below:

La tortuga	The turtle
La Baula	The Leatherback turtle
La Verde/Blanca	The Green turtle (these are locally called the Blanca (white) for the white glow that comes off the shield caused by algae)
La Carey	The Hawksbill turtle
La Lora	The Olive Ridley turtle
La Cabezona	The Loggerhead turtle
La capa, caparazón, concha	The shell
La aleta	The flipper
Derecha	Right
Izquierda	Left
Delante	Front
Atrás	Back
El rastro	The track (which the turtle leaves on the beach)
El nido	The nest
El huevo	The egg
Fértil	Fertile
Vano	Non fertile (some of the eggs are fertile and some are not)
Escarbar	To dig
Rayar	What the turtle does when she comes to the beach without laying eggs
Poner	To lay eggs
Ella puso	She laid eggs
El foco	The flashlight
Cuidado	Carefull
El palo, el tuco	The tree trunk
El hueco	The hole
La marea	The tide
Marea alta	High tide
Marea baja	Low tide
Relámpago	Lightning
Trueno	Thunder
La lluvia	The rain
La luna	The moon
El mojon, el poste	The distance post
Norte	North
Sur	South
El huevero	The poacher
El caballo	The horse
El radio	The walkie talkie
Escribir	To write
Esperar	To wait

Espére	Wait!
Vamonos	Let's go
No	No
One	Uno
Dos	Two
Tres	Three
Cuatro	Four
Cinco	Five
Seis	Six
Siete	Seven
Ocho	Eight
Nueve	Nine
Diez	Ten

The Spanish spoken throughout Latin America differs a lot between each country. Costa Rican (Tico) Spanish is particularly distinct, especially in rural areas, and there are a lot of verbs and phrases (or 'tiquismos') that are totally unique to Costa Rica. The list below is far from complete, but gives you a few tiquismos to play with. Please note that Ticos do not generally use 'tu' and generally refer to everyone as 'usted' or 'ustedes', although 'vos' is sometimes used instead of 'tu', as in Argentina. If in doubt, just use the 'usted' form for everyone, including kids and pets!

#### Expressions:

¿Al chile?	Really? Are you kidding?
Bien pordicha	I'm well thank you      Literally 'I'm well, luckily'
Buena nota	That's awesome / Great news      Literally 'good note'
Como amaneció?	Good morning, how are you?      Literally 'how did the sun rise?'
Diay	Used loosely like 'hey' or 'you know'
Mae / Mop	Mate / Dude / Guy
Con mucho gusto	You're welcome      Literally 'with much pleasure'
Ojo!	Watch out!
Puravida	All good / I'm fine thanks      Literally 'pure life'
Quedicha	That's great! / What luck!
Tuanis	Cool / Good to meet you
Upe!	Hello, anyone there?

#### Verbs:

Acostar	To lay down or sleep	'Dormir' is used too
Agüearse	To bother / To annoy / To bore	'Molestar' is used too
Bretear	To work	'Trabajar' is used too
Jalar(se)	To pull / To leave	It's best not to use 'Tirar'
Majar	To stamp or stand on	It's best not to use 'Pisar'
Ocupar	To need	'Necesitar' is used too
Tomar	To take / To drink / To eat	It's best not to use 'Coger'

Nouns:

Birra  
 Carajillos / Güilas  
 Chapulín  
 Chile  
 Chozas / Chante  
 Chunches  
 Cien (100) metros  
 Goma  
 Macho/a  
 Plata  
 Pulpería / Pulpe  
 Roco/a  
 Un Rojo/ Una Teja  
 Soda  
 Torta  
 Tapis  
 Zarpe

Beer  
 Kids  
 Bad kid or thief  
 Joke  
 House or pad  
 Thing  
 A city block  
 Hangover  
 Fair-skinned or blonde person  
 Money  
 Local grocery store  
 Old person  
 1000/100 colones  
 Small typical restaurant  
 Problem or predicament  
 Alcoholic drink (not beer)  
 The last drink

‘Cerveza’ is used too  
 ‘Niños’ is used too  
 ‘Broma’ or ‘chiste’ are used too  
 ‘Casa’ is used too  
 ‘Cosa’ is used too  
 ‘Cuadra’ is used too  
 ‘Dinero’ is used too



## 4. Costa Rica

### 4.1 Geography

Costa Rica is situated in Central America, between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. It is bordered in the North on Nicaragua and in the South on Panama.

Costa Rica consists of 51,100 km<sup>2</sup>. San José is the capital and also the geographic centre of Costa Rica.

### 4.2 Project Location

The Osa Peninsula is located in southwestern Costa Rica, in the Puntarenas Province, on the Pacific Ocean. The main feature of the peninsula is the Corcovado National Park, which covers one third of its land mass, an area of 425 km<sup>2</sup>, a protects a number of endemic species. Famously referred to by *National Geographic* as ‘the most biologically intense place on Earth’, the park is home to all four Costa Rican monkey species, jaguars, pumas and ocelots, Baird's tapir, crocodiles, spectacled caimans, bull sharks, two-toed and three-toed sloths, agoutis, giant anteaters, great curassows, black hawks, spectacled owls, the harpy eagle, hummingbirds, golden orb spiders, otters, raccoons, collared and white-lipped peccary, northern tamandua, silky anteaters, poison dart frogs, several species of snake (including the venomous fer-de-lance and bushmaster), and over 8000 insect species, including at least 220 species of butterflies. Four species of sea turtle (Olive Ridley, Pacific Green, Hawksbill, and Leatherback) also nest on the beaches of the park. The protected region features at least 13 different vegetation types, including montane forest, cloud forest, prairie forest, alluvial plains forest, swamp forest, palm swamp, freshwater herbaceous swamp and mangrove, harboring over 2000 plant species, including over 500 different types of tree.

The Rincon de San Josecito beach site is located in Rincón, where the road terminates just a few kilometers from Agujitas, and three hours from San Pedrillo Ranger station on the north part of Corcovado National Park. Rincon itself has a very small local population, but is home to a number of remote lodges and hotels. The wildlife around Rincón is stunning, with an extensive undeveloped coastline fringed by primary and secondary forests, full of exotic birds, mammals, amphibians and all four of Costa Rica's monkey species.

You are able to visit a larger village with more amenities on your free days.



### 4.3 Climate

The climate of Costa Rica is tropical and is divided into two seasons, the wet and the dry.

The dry season, Verano (summer):

This season, from late December until April, is a combination of high temperatures and dry air. It will not be rain season, but that doesn't mean it will never rain in this period.

The temperatures will be around 26 – 38 degrees C

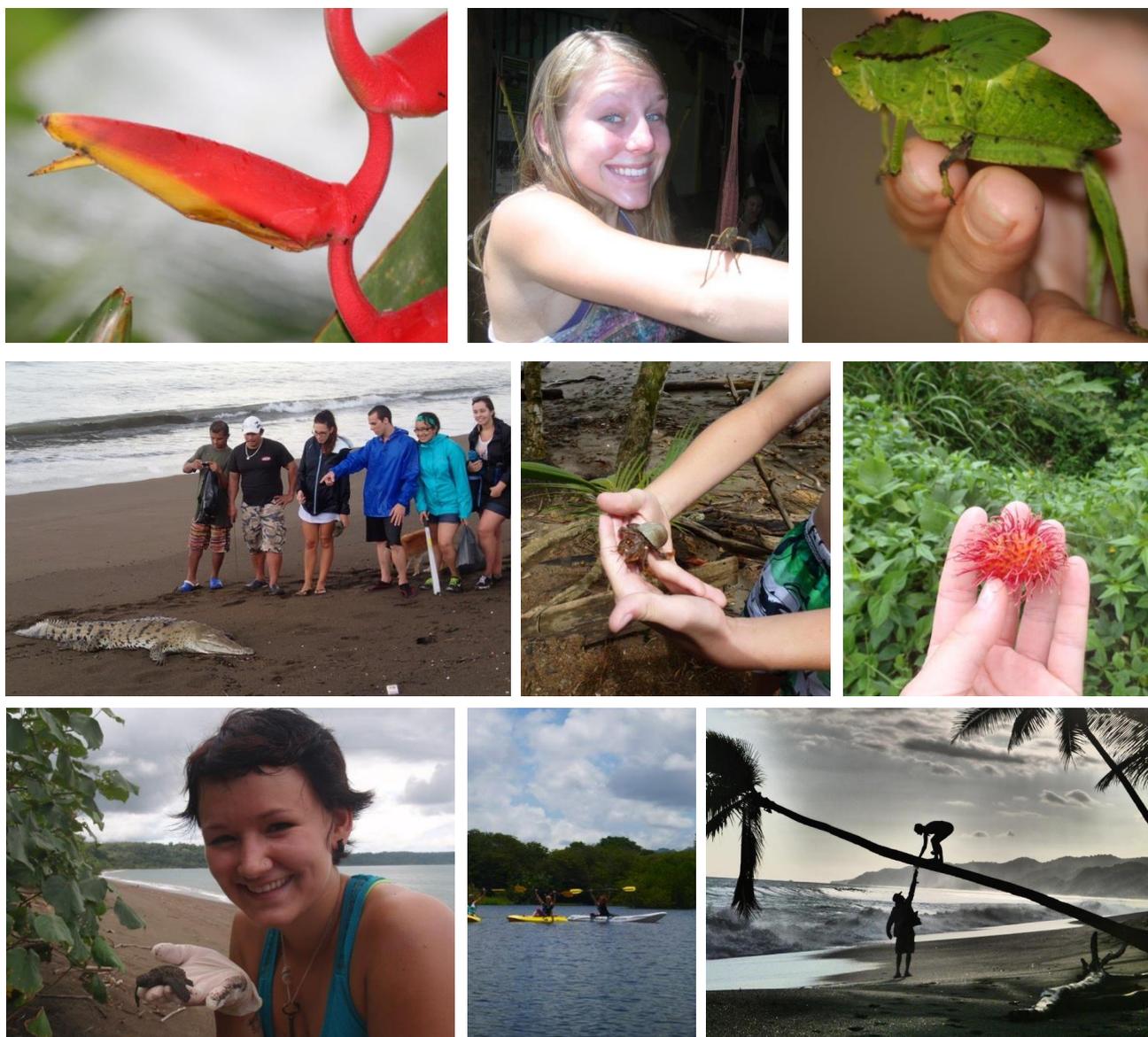
The rain season, Invierno (winter):

This season, from May until November, will be rainy. It can rain up to 20 days per month. It usually will not rain the whole day. Rain falls mostly in the mornings and late evenings. It is also hot and humid and the sun will also be shining.

The temperatures will be around 26 – 35 degrees C.

The project location is warm and humid. Daily temperatures average 26 degrees C (79 F) and annual average rainfall is over 5,000 mm (200+ inches). Warm days are tempered by trade winds and cool nights.

Usually when it rains in the Pacific, it is the opposite at the project site.



## 5. Travel information

### 5.1 Flight arrangements

Volunteers have to make their own flight arrangements. We advise you not to reserve your flight before we have confirmed your participation at the project, unless you will plan your participation at the project as a part of a bigger journey.

If you are unable to arrange your flight yourself for any reason, Global Spirit will be able to help. If you would like us to help you, please note this on the booking sheet of the sea turtle project.

### 5.2 Passport and visa

In order to visit Costa Rica you will need a valid passport, which must be officially valid, on arrival, for at least six months.

To work as a volunteer at the project, the project staff advises a tourist visa. Most North American and European nationals automatically receive a 90 day visa upon entering the country and are not required to obtain one in advance. Nationals from several South American countries, however, are required to obtain a tourist visa from the Costa Rican embassy in their country prior to arrival.

Upon entering the country it is likely that immigration officials may ask you to present an exit ticket out of the country, and often your airline will not let you board the flight to Costa Rica without one. Many volunteers who come to the program are on vacation and, as such, are able to produce a return ticket; but many are backpackers entering via land borders and may have no firm plans. We have had varied experiences at land borders, however, officially you must present a print out of a ticket of onward travel within 90 days and a print out of a bank or card statement that shows you have access to at least \$500.

If you plan to stay in Costa Rica for more than 90 days we recommend that you simply take a short trip to nearby Panama at the end of this period. You need only leave Costa Rica for 1 day (sometimes even just a few hours is sufficient), after which you will be able to come back over the border and obtain another 90-day visa. It is possible to continue doing this indefinitely and all international staff at the program have to go on a 'visa run' like this every 90 days.

Individuals who overstay their visas are required to pay an increased exit tax, are subject to restrictions regarding re-entering, and run the risk of being deported if immigration officials choose to detain them at a checkpoint, so don't do it.

**Passport and visa requirements are liable to change at short notice. All volunteers are advised to check their entry requirements with their own embassy or consulate!**

Please note that visas are the responsibility of the volunteer, and that Global Spirit will not be held responsible for clients being denied entry, should they not be in the possession of the relevant visas and requirements.

### 5.3 Insurances

Every volunteer is required to have a travel insurance policy (which covers extra medical costs, accidents and repatriation costs), and cancellation insurance is highly recommended. Without this travel insurance you will not be permitted to work at this project.

Although emergency procedures and evacuation plans are in place, Global Spirit and the project cannot be responsible for any costs incurred for medical treatment or emergency evacuation of volunteers.

if you live in The Netherlands, Belgium or Germany, Global Spirit can help you arrange travel and cancellation insurance. If you would like assistance, please indicate this on the booking sheet. If you live in another country or already have insurances please send a copy of the policy to Global Spirit.

## 5.4 Arrival and departure information Costa Rica

All volunteers must make their own arrangements to reach Rincón de San Josecito, which you can reach from San Jose by bus and boat.

For training purposes new volunteers are only received on Tuesdays.

Further details on travel information to the project will be provided after your booking.



## 6. Medical advice and safety

### 6.1 Advise

As Global Spirit is not a professional medical service, we advise you to go to a local clinic or medical authority in your own country for the appropriate medical advice.

This document is provided for information purposes only.

Advise is do not visit your local clinic or medical authority later than six weeks before departure.

As a participant in this project, you are responsible for yourself. Global Spirit is not held responsible/liable for any unexpected casualties. Our advice is to behave responsibly and always listen to the project staff.

For the turtle watch you must have good night vision. You will walk/work on the beach/sand a lot which can be tired. Minor injuries or scrapes due to falls or tripping can occur during night time work. Please also be aware that there is a good chance of getting sand thrown on you, with the possibility of getting it in your eyes, by a turtle's flippers.

There are many mosquitoes, but if you wear repellent before 05:30 pm you can escape with a minimal amount of bites. (Costa Rica is pretty much on a 12 hour schedule: it is dark by 18.00 pm and light around 05:30 am. We recommend to bring your own mosquito net).

There have been many cases of dengue fever in Costa Rica, not in the village of the project, but they stress the use of insect repellent.

There has not been a case of malaria in the village for over 20 years.

It's possible that there are sand fleas on the beach.

### 6.2 Required vaccinations

There are no vaccinations required at this project

### 6.3 Recommended vaccinations

You are recommended to be vaccinated against:

- DTP
- Typhoid
- Hepatitis A

These vaccinations are not required, but are still very important to have. If you don't take them, it's on your own responsibility. Global Spirit is not held responsible/liable for any unexpected casualties.

For additional vaccines and/or information we advise you to contact or visit your local clinic

## 6.4 Medical service

There are limited medical services available. If a volunteer needs to go to the doctor, medical attention is available at Puerto Jimenez or Golfito. The project location is several hours from a major hospital.

The project also has an 'emergency plan'; in event of emergency, the project will make the corresponding arrangements for the transportation to the closest healthcare facility.

If you are on prescription medication, please make sure to bring enough to cover your entire stay.

The project site one of the most remote places in Costa Rica. The tropical habitat can be extremely tough to work in, and advanced medical treatments are often not locally available. While the program makes every effort to guarantee the safety of volunteers – and has never had to deal with a serious emergency since it began in 2006 – there are inherent risks associated with working in a remote region, and so care should be taken at all times.

Unlike many other volunteer programs around the world, we have tried to avoid a long list of restrictive rules and regulations and instead place trust in the common sense of the individuals participating in the program. While we aim to empower volunteers with the capacity to make independent decisions in this way, it is important to be aware of the below safety considerations:

### **Remark:**

- There is an extensive first aid kit at the field station; however, we recommend that you also bring your own. Be prepared to treat general cuts and bruises, but also allergic reactions and sunburn. Consider bringing hydrocortisone cream and antihistamines.
- Always wear sun protection, since the sun is very strong in Costa Rica, and always drink plenty of water. Sun stroke is the most common problem that volunteers encounter.
- Please notify the personnel at the camp if you suffer from any medical conditions or allergies, if you require any specific medical attention during your stay, or if you are physically incapacitated in any way that may restrict what work you can do.
- We recommend that you wear appropriate footwear around camp and at the beach. The beach accumulates marine garbage, including driftwood, jelly fish and even sea snakes.
- Please take care when swimming or wading in rivers and lagoons. Crocodiles and caimans are known to live in the area, although they generally stay away from humans. While it is generally safe to swim in the sea at Drake beach, please bear in mind that it is the Pacific Ocean and that the waves and currents can be dangerous. It is not safe to swim in the sea at Río Oro beach.
- Do not touch any plants or animals in the jungle that you are not familiar with, and always wear a headlamp when walking around at night so that you don't step on anything unfriendly.
- Take care when using tools such as hammers, saws and machetes. Treat construction sites with respect, and always wear appropriate footwear and protective clothing when necessary.

## 7. Personal equipment

Some items are provided at the project, such as:

- Pillows
- Sheets

### 7.1 Essential items

#### **Footwear:**

Sandals or flip-flops are ideal for wearing around the camp but a sturdy pair of boots is recommended for going on treks and excursions, and a selection of gum boots is available at the program for volunteers to borrow. We recommend wearing gum boots during night patrols, since these protect you from the elements and from bumping into driftwood on the beach. However, some volunteers find them a bit heavy and prefer to wear sandals or water-shoes, but they do so at their own risk. Whatever you decide to wear be prepared for them to get completely wet through, and as such we don't recommend wearing your favorite 'waterproof' Gortex® walking boots on night patrols – they'll take forever to dry out!

#### **Headlamp:**

A headlamp is an essential piece of equipment as you will need to wear one at all times when walking around at night. You **must** bring one with you and don't forget the batteries. If you are planning to purchase a headlamp prior to your arrival please consider buying one with a red light setting, as you will be able to use this when patrolling on the beach.

#### **Poncho:**

A waterproof jacket or poncho is a must in Costa Rica during the rainy season, and a good quality Gortex® jacket will be great for keeping warm and comfortable during rainy night patrols. There are a limited number of ponchos available for volunteers to borrow during night patrols. Whatever waterproof gear you bring, please note that only dark colors are suitable for use on night patrols, since bright colors reflect light and can disturb nesting turtles.

#### **Clothing:**

You will generally live in shorts and t-shirts in the day as it is so hot, and it is wise to assume that whatever you wear will become pretty dirty and ragged by the end of your stay. Please bring some dark clothing (such as black, blue or grey) to wear during night patrols. Long-sleeved shirts and long pants are great to keep off the insects and to provide a bit of warmth during the cooler nights, but you will really only need one warm sweater or hoodie, and only for some nights in October when it is cooler.

#### **Watch and/or alarm clock:**

Please bring a watch and/or alarm clock so that you get up for night patrols etc.

#### **Insect repellent:**

You will need it, and you should bring plenty since it is expensive to buy in the village. We recommend Mosi guard® since it is less toxic, but DEET is always reliable.

**Mosquito net:** there aren't so many mosquitos around Rio Oro, but if you think that is going to be a problem for you, we recommend you to buy a pocket mosquito net.

#### **Medicine:**

If you are taking any specific medication, including those for asthma or allergies, please ensure that you bring enough for the duration of your stay. There is an extensive medical kit available at the program, but you should bring your own personal kit to use too with for example plasters, disinfectant, painkillers, etc.

## 7.2 Other recommended items

- Valid passport (and visa)
- A photocopy of your passport
- A Sun hat or cap
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen (it's recommended to use for at least SPF 20)
- A padlock
- Towel(s) and toiletries
- A small backpack for excursions
- Water Bottle
- Camera
- Eye mask and ear plugs to sleep during the day
- Mp3 player
- Movies (there is a projector at the accommodation)
- Ziplock-type plastic bags or folding dry bags to protect your gear
- Sachets of silica gel to combat the humidity
- Flashlight with batteries (bring a few extra)
- Vitamin B (it will be anti-mosquito)
- Something against dehydration like ORS (we advise you to drink a lot of water)
- Books or magazines
- Other personal items
- Binoculars
- A lighter
- A notebook and address book
- Vitamin B (it will be anti-mosquito)
- Something against dehydration like ORS (we advise you to drink a lot of water)
- Books or magazines
- Other personal items

**Note:** you will find it **much** easier to travel in Costa Rica with a backpack instead of a suitcase!



## 8. General information

### 8.1 Food and drinks

The meals are included and a rotation system is in place so that all volunteers get a chance to participate in camp chores also such as helping the cookers, maintenance the camp, maintenance the hydroponics.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served at 08:00, 12:00 and 18:00, respectively and will mainly consist of typical Costa Rican food (basically Rice and Beans) and international food

Breakfast: Gallo pinto (rice and beans) with egg or cheese, pancakes or toast with fruit and yogurt.

Lunch: Rice and beans with salad and vegetables, or meat, or pasta with veggies

Dinner: Rice and beans with vegetables, pasta, soups, salads...



### 8.2 Supermarkets, markets and shops

While the project site is a remote area and does not have much to offer in terms of amenities, while still small, Agujitas is the largest and most developed town in the area and has supermarkets, bars, restaurants, souvenir shops, a post office, an airport and a number of other amenities.

### 8.3 Laundry services

The project has a laundry site, where people can clean their clothes by hand. The project provides the soap.

### 8.4 Telephone and Internet access

You can buy a Costa Rica international calling card to call home. It is best to buy a card in San Jose before arriving at the project location, as the phone card supply often runs low.

If you come from Europe, most mobile phones can't be used because Costa Rica has another network than in Europe, but for sure we advise you to contact your phone company or phone service in your own country before departure.

There is no 'grid' electricity nor cell phone reception at the site, however, the lodge is equipped with solar panels and generators that provide lighting and power at night, and limited Wi-Fi internet is generally available for essential communications.

## 8.5 Electricity

In Costa Rica they use a voltage of 110 Volt for electricity. They use American plugs.

## 8.6 Excursion arrangements

We know that volunteers come not only to work but also to discover the incredible nature of the Osa Peninsula, and the program offers unforgettable tours and activities at two different sites:

- The lodge where you will stay during your participation, offers horse riding, kayaking and several farm activities, such as cheese making, and volunteers are free to trek around the trails surrounding the site.
- Additionally, the program provides free transportation to and from the project's very own non-profit hostel Drake Bay Backpackers, which was created especially to support the program.

This hostel is located in the village of El Progreso, Drake Bay, and offers all of the most popular tours. All volunteers may choose to spend some time at Drake Bay Backpackers if they are interested (at their own expense), and it is highly recommended that you plan to depart the program from Drake Bay so that you can take advantage of the hostel, relax and enjoy some tours during your last few days.



The surroundings of the project location are ideal for making different trips.

### Activities which you can do in your leisure time, at your own expense:

- Boat tours in the mangrove
- Hiking in the rainforest to see monkeys, birds and frogs, etc.
- Fishing tour or go crabbing
- Drinking a cold beer in the bar
- Swimming in the river
- Bicycling, surf and skim boarding
- Horse-back riding
- Visit tropical gardens
- Visit the National Parks- Corcobado and Caño Island
- Whale watching

At no expense you can:

- Play soccer and volley ball in the afternoons with the villagers or other volunteers
- Play guitar, the project has one (Fender) to lend plus tambourines, bongos, etc.
- Relax on the beach
- Read a book in your hammock
- Work at the farm



## 8.7 Currency

The monetary unit of Costa Rica is the Colón. In- and export of the Colón is restricted. Cash can be exchanged in most banks. However you will get the best exchange rate if you directly withdraw colones from your bank account with a cash-machine card.

At the time of writing the exchange rate was \$1 = 530 colones, and so no matter where you are from it is generally convenient to ‘think’ in dollars and assume that \$1 = 500 colones.

There is currently no ATM in Drake Bay, so it’s important to bring some spending money in cash if you plan to spend some time at the hostel. All major tours booked through Drake Bay Backpackers can be paid by credit card.

You are likely to want to buy the occasional treat or snack, or some beers from time to time, and it is best to pay for community-based tours in cash too. So, we recommend a cash budget of about \$10-15 per day, more if you intend to go on lots of community-based tours.

