



ECOLOGY PROJECT  
INTERNATIONAL

# COSTA RICA

## SEA TURTLE ECOLOGY

PROTECT SEA TURTLES | EXPLORE A BIRDING PARADISE | HIKE THROUGH A TROPICAL FOREST



### IN SEARCH OF LEATHERBACKS

Imagine studying tropical ecology at a research facility deep in the rainforest, full of colorful birds, unusual mammals, and threatened keystone species—like the leatherback sea turtle. On this program, you'll be at the center of leatherback conservation efforts while learning about Costa Rica's immense diversity.



### YOUR FIELD WORK

By joining EPI's program, you'll have a remarkable opportunity to explore Costa Rica's abundant biodiversity. At Pacuare Reserve, you'll be accompanied by research assistants as you conduct beach monitoring. Your collection of data on the quantity and size of nesting sea turtles will serve as a foundation for developing a research project.



### COSTA RICA ADVENTURES

While this fieldwork-centered course may require considerable effort, it also provides ample opportunities for fun! When you're not actively contributing to research, you can meet local students, embark on a guided walk beneath the rainforest canopy, or experience the thrill of whitewater rafting along the Pacuare River.

• INSPIRING STUDENTS WITH NATURE & EMPOWERING THEM WITH SCIENCE •





# COSTA RICA SEA TURTLE ECOLOGY SAMPLE ITINERARY

## DAY 1: ARRIVE IN COSTA RICA

- Get acquainted with your instructor team
- Prepare for your adventure at a cozy hotel outside of San Jose

## DAYS 2-5: MONITOR LEATHERBACK SEA TURTLES

- Learn about sea turtle biology, rainforest ecology, and conservation issues that impact Costa Rica
- Explore the amazing wildlife of lowland tropical ecosystems
- Collect data on nesting sea turtles during a nightly census
- Restore turtle nesting habitat on the beach

## DAYS 6-7: EXPLORE THE RAINFOREST

- If schedules permit, you'll meet local students to gain insight into their culture, and practice your Spanish language skills
- During your tropical forest hikes, you can spot some of Costa Rica's stunning bird species
- Explore fascinating nocturnal species on a night hike

## DAY 8: EMBARK ON AN ADVENTURE

- Raft through rainforest rapids or zip line through the rainforest canopy (depending on season & weather)

## DAY 9: DEPART FROM SAN JOSE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Length	Research & Service Hours	Coursework Hours	Focus
9 Days	14	30	sea turtle biology, rainforest ecology, conservation



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Humidity will be your constant companion in Costa Rica, and coupled with hot temperatures and rain, you're likely in for a sticky experience. Average temperatures range between 70°F and 81°F with humidity levels peaking around 90%.

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# PACKING LIST

### Luggage

- ☐ Daypack for day hikes & travel day
- ☐ Duffel bag or internal frame backpack (no roller bags)  
**Make sure you're comfortable carrying your bag several hundred yards. Avoid bags with wheels - there are no paved paths at Pacuare Reserve.**

### Clothing

- ☐ Pajamas
- ☐ 3 lightweight, long-sleeved shirts (sun & bug protection)
- ☐ 10 t-shirts (avoid tank tops to minimize sun exposure)
- ☐ 1 fleece pullover or sweater
- ☐ 3-4 pairs of hiking pants/work pants  
**Lightweight and comfortable for hiking up to 4 miles. Quick-dry nylon pants are recommended. Avoid leggings or Lyrca fabrics; mosquitos will bite through these fabrics**
- ☐ 3-4 pairs of shorts
- ☐ Bandana
- ☐ Underwear (enough for the full trip)
- ☐ 5-7 pairs of socks (lightweight & synthetic are best)  
**Some participants wear 1-2 pairs of socks per day; pack 2 pairs of long socks to wear with rubber boots.**
- ☐ Clean travel outfit for your final travel day
- ☐ Swimsuit, 1 pair leggings, & rashguard (if you're rafting)
- ☐ Baseball cap OR wide-brimmed sun hat

### Daily Necessities

- ☐ 2 water bottles (1-quart each with lids that close securely)
- ☐ 4 writing utensils - 2 pencils, 2 pens
- ☐ Watch with alarm OR alarm clock with batteries  
**Important since you won't have your cell phone!**
- ☐ Headlamp with extra batteries or charger
- ☐ Hand sanitizer & disinfectant wipes
- ☐ Cash

**We suggest \$50-\$100 USD to purchase souvenirs or extra snacks during travel days. Crisp bills in small denomination work best in Costa Rica.**

### Footwear

- ☐ Rubber boots (required for hiking in the forest)
- ☐ Crocs or tennis shoes for around camp & turtle census
- ☐ Closed-toed water shoes/sports sandals (if you're rafting)

### Turtle Census (will be used 3 nights in a row)

- ☐ 1 pair long socks to cover ALL skin (in case of sand flies)
- ☐ 1 lightweight, loose-fitting, dark-colored long-sleeved shirt
- ☐ 1 pair loose-fitting, black or dark lightweight hiking pants  
**Choose durable pants you don't mind getting dirty**
- ☐ Black or dark-colored raincoat or rain poncho  
**Gore-Tex or other laminates recommended; avoid reflective fabrics/materials**

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### Personal Care Items

- ☐ Passport
- ☐ Original notarized Minor International Travel Letter
- ☐ 3 large garbage bags for packing wet clothes or dirty shoes
- ☐ Toothbrush/tooth paste (travel sized recommended)
- ☐ Deodorant
- ☐ Face wipes/wet wipes
- ☐ Anti-bacterial hand gel (travel sized recommended)
- ☐ Lotion (travel sized recommended)
- ☐ Lip balm
- ☐ Shampoo and soap
- ☐ Feminine hygiene products
- ☐ Reef-safe, mineral-based sunscreen

**With zinc oxide or titanium dioxide as active ingredients  
SPF 30 minimum & water resistant**

- ☐ Personal medications (OTC & prescribed)

**Leave in original packaging with dosage instructions. Be sure to notify EPI of all medications you plan to bring.**

- ☐ 2 inhalers (required if you have a prescription)
- ☐ Prescription glasses or contact lenses + extra pairs
- ☐ Insect repellent
- ☐ Itch remedy: e.g. Cortaid, Sarna, After Bite, Corisone Cream
- ☐ Travel towel (quick-dry and body-sized)
- ☐ Sunglasses & sunglasses leash
- ☐ 1-2 cloth face masks (in case of personal illness)

### Optional Items

- ☐ Energy bars; extra snacks for travel days
- ☐ Electrolyte packs/powder for hydration
- ☐ 2 Ziploc bags to secure opened snacks
- ☐ Camera & extra batteries (charging options limited)
- ☐ Film or memory cards
- ☐ Journal
- ☐ Binoculars
- ☐ Deck of cards or other small game
- ☐ Ear plugs for light sleepers
- ☐ Small battery-operated or paper fan
- ☐ Sarong or lightweight shawl

### Helpful Packing Tips

- 100% cotton fabrics have little insulating value when wet and don't dry quickly. Synthetic, wool, or synthetic/wool blends are best.
- We recommend buying second-hand gear, borrowing supplies, and/or renting gear from a sporting goods store. We can all do our part to reduce and reuse!
- Remember you will not have your cell phone on course (except for travel days) so plan accordingly!
- Be sure to notify EPI of all medications you plan to bring.
- This packing list is meant to be a guideline, not a requirement! Our goal is to help you feel prepared and be comfortable on course.

