



## A Feast for the Senses

Costa Rica's Cloud Forest region is not large, but within its borders it shelters one of the most diverse and fascinating groups of plants and animals in all the world.

Unique topography and weather patterns have created a huge array of different microclimates and biological niches. These range from majestic towering forests draped with orchids, ferns and mosses, to low lying

swamps, to deep gorges and crystal clear streams. Often cloaked in clouds, the ridges and valleys are home to the jaguar, ocelot, Baird's Tapir, the bare-necked Umbrella bird, and the famous but rarely seen Resplendent Quetzal. To get the best views of the spectacular flora and fauna, we take to forest paths and skywalk bridges to get a "canopy level" view of birds, monkeys and other creatures going about their lives in the protected forest canopy.



### Coming soon! Adventure Guides

These are our students' own personal study guides, full of interesting information and interactive materials for use at home and during program preparation sessions that take place in the months before departure. These guides are mailed to all enrolled students in the spring, and are used along with the Naturalist to help students get ready for their Adventure. The Adventure Guide is also a valuable tool that students will use while completing the journal-keeping and writing assignments required for earning academic credit, both on the high school and college levels. For more information on the various academic credit options available for students participating in an Earth Explore Adventure, go online to [earthexplore.com](http://earthexplore.com) and visit the Academic Credit link.



### Did you Know?

Costa Rica is going green. The nation has set a goal to become the first nation on earth to become "carbon neutral" by reducing or offsetting its greenhouse gas emissions.

What does all of that mean? It breaks down to numbers. When a country can balance the greenhouse gases it puts into the atmosphere with the so called "carbon" it removes from the atmosphere, it has become carbon neutral. Costa Rica is doing this by planting trees

in areas that have been deforested, and taking steps to generate power from renewable sources. Already more than 80 percent of the nation's energy comes from water and wind power. But there are challenges ahead. Like many tropical

countries, Costa Rica is trying to contain illegal logging and over development fueled by growth in industries including tourism.

### Tortuguero and its Turtles



Tortuguero National Park, on Costa Rica's east coast, is known for thick jungle canals, and amazing forest creatures. But the park was originally established for a different reason. The coastal beaches shelter one of the world's most important nesting sites for a variety of large sea turtles, including the Green and Hawksbill, and these tremendous animals are still the regions top attraction. Actually the word tortuguero means "region of turtles," and the capture and consumption of turtles and their eggs for food led to the creation of the preserve. Now protected, the turtles use a 22 mile stretch of the park's beaches for nesting, and the newly hatched turtles enter the ocean for the first time here as well. Conditions permitting, we and our expert guides will attempt a nighttime viewing of nesting Green Sea Turtles. Surely one of the highlights of our trip.

## Websites to Visit

### Tortuguero National Park

<http://www.anywherecostarica.com/attractions/national-park/tortuguero>

Excellent brief introduction to Tortuguero and its native animals.

### Costa Rica's Sea Turtles and their Future

<http://www.costaricaturtles.org/>

Organization dedicated to protecting Costa Rica's turtles and their habitat for future generations

### Tropical Rain Forest

<http://www.mbgnet.net/sets/rforest/index.htm>

Quick and very accessible information about the worlds rain forests.



### All About Costa Rica's Plants, Animals and Ecology

<http://centralamerica.com/cr/moon/moland.htm>

Popular Moon guide series features easy to access information about Costa Rica and its natural history.

### Costa Rica and its Environment

<http://rainforests.mongabay.com/20costarica.htm>

Good source of current information on Costa Rica's environmental programs and issues, with links to news articles.

## HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES

### Read all About It!

Besides all of the adventures they will be having, students who participate in the Earth Explore program have the unique opportunity to take something especially valuable from the program...high school or college credit. Because of the number, quality and variety of educational experiences offered, all Earth Explore Adventures have been approved for academic credit.

Upon enrollment, all students are given the chance to earn high school level field credit. Students need only complete the required work, mail it in on time, and receive a satisfactory evaluation. All of the necessary forms and instructions are available on the Earth Explore website by following the "Academic Credit" link. To be eligible for college level credit, students must have completed the 7th grade at the time of travel, and do the work described for the course. A link to that course, offered by Eastern Washington University in conjunction with Earth Explore, is available at the "Academic Credit" link on the Earth Explore website.



## SET YOUR WATCH-KNOW YOUR COSTA RICA TIMEZONES

It may be far south of most parts of the United States, but Costa Rica has a single time zone that is quite easy to understand. During the winter, the time in Costa Rica is the same as the Central U.S. including Houston, Chicago and Minneapolis. In the summer, Costa Rica is on the same time zone as the U.S. Mountain Zone, including Denver, Salt Lake City, and Albuquerque. Why? Being a tropical country close to the equator, Costa Rica does not observe Daylight Savings Time. So it does not "spring forward" and keeps the same time conventions all year round.

## SPRING NEWSLETTER -PACKED WITH TRAVEL DETAILS

How to pack a suitcase, how to handle spending money, how to make phone calls. These are all important travel details, and they are among the items we cover in our spring edition of *the Naturalist* newsletter. Packed with information that you can use, the spring newsletter will be arriving in your mailbox in late March.



### MAKE THEM COUNT!

We're often asked how to get great pictures. The most important part of good picture taking is to fill the frame with your subject. Also, keep the sun or other light source directly on what you want to showcase. In the case of people, always keep the sun behind your back (if you are taking the picture) and at a slight angle if possible. That way your subjects won't have to squint. One other tip. Take plenty of batteries. That way you can use your flash indoors, or in areas where the light is dim, or shadows are harsh, to help "fill in" your subject. The flash was used in this picture to illuminate the faces. That can make the difference between a forgettable picture, and one you'd put on a wall or email to friends.

## Stay Organized to Maximize the Fun!

Part of the fun of an Earth Explore trip is learning to handle yourself and your gear responsibly. Before you leave, practice these organizational skills.

- Get up at a set time each morning.
- Pack your day bag for a weekend trip, and try to keep it organized the entire time.
- Load and unload your large duffel (or suitcase) with the items on the packing list until you can do it quickly and easily.
- Devise a plan to organize the spending money you'll need on your Earth Explore trip
- Write out a schedule for your day, dividing it into 30 minute blocks. Try to keep as closely to the schedule as possible.

## Costa Rica Expeditions Guides

Each Earth Explore group is accompanied by two full-time naturalist guides from Costa Rica Expeditions. These instructors coordinate all program logistics like checking in and out of hotels, working with program partners, and keeping the group always on schedule. In addition, our guides lead the group in scenic and educational walks, discussions and workshop activities. They are joined at various venues by science and history specialists and resource persons. All of these activities are coordinated with Earth Explore Leaders, and staff at the National Office in Santa Rosa.



## Travel Weather

Costa Rica lies in the tropics, where it is generally warm and moist. Although there are wet and dry seasons, we can expect showers year round. At higher elevations such as the Cloud Forests, temperatures can be cool, but rarely cold. However, a waterproof but breathable rain jacket or shell is standard equipment. In Tortuguero National Park, some areas receive 20 feet of rain in an average year. But of course, that's necessary to support the lush and verdant rain forests.

### Average June Weather

San Jose, Costa Rica

Hi	Low	Rainfall
79	63	9.5"



what to bring?

## Earth Explore Packing List

For boys and girls

### Clothing

- Light hiking boots-1 pair
- Running shoes/sneakers-1pair
- Fleece jacket-1
- Waterproof windbreaker with hood-1
- Pants-Denim or Zip Off-2 pair
- Sweatpants-1 pair
- Shorts-cotton-3-4 pair
- Hiking socks-3 pair
- Other socks-2 pair
- Underwear-5-7 pair
- T-shirts-4-6
- Short-sleeved shirt-3

- Pajama/sleepshirt-1-2
- Swimsuit-1
- Sandals/Tevas/flips-1

### Toiletries Kit

- Toothbrush with case-1
- Toothpaste-1
- Shampoo-1
- Soap with case-1
- Hygiene products
- Small towel-1

### Personal Gear

- (in daybag)
- Sunglasses-1
- Sunscreen-1 SPF 25
- Sunblock-1 SPF 45

- Lip balm-1
- Camera-1
- Extra camera batteries
- Film-4-5 rolls 24 exp. 200ASA
- Bandana or handkerchief-1
- Ziplock bags-10 (for organizing)
- Field Journal-1 (supplied by EE)
- Pencil-2
- Phone cards-2-30 minute
- Water bottle-1
- Credentials-1 (supplied by EE)
- Optional-small flashlight
- Optional-small binoculars

Travel cap-1 (supplied by EE)

## Common Sense Packing Tips

- Pack outfits that can be layered.
- Pack clothes that can be combined in many different ways.
- Pack lots of cottons and neutral colors like khaki.
- Instead of one heavy coat, bring polarfleece and sweatshirts that can be layered.

## How Much Luggage?



We ask students and Leaders to limit their luggage to *1 checked piece, and 1 carry-on in a day bag*. The limits are necessary due to luggage capacities on the can or motorcoach, and to insure no participant is overly burdened by excess gear during the program. Remember, since everyone must transport their own bags from hotel to motorcoach (and back), it is always best to pack lightly! We recommend that students and Leaders use a soft-sided duffel (preferably with wheels) for their larger piece, and a medium day-pack for their smaller piece.

## ABOUT EARTH EXPLORE

Earth Explore was founded in 1995. We are a specialized company dedicated to providing the very finest combination of adventure, fun, and outdoor education. Due to the content of our programs, students chosen to participate can earn academic credit, both at the high school and college levels. Our staff and our partner organizations make all of the educational and travel arrangements and work with the airlines, hotels and motorcoach companies directly. That way we can be assured of the highest quality experience for our students and our teachers.

Earth Explore and the not for profit Earth Explore Foundation limit participation on each of our Adventures each summer to ensure program content meets the highest standards. Our expert on site partners design the educational program content to our exacting standards. As such each Earth Explore program is unique and the experiences and educational activities cannot be duplicated.

## THE EARTH EXPLORE FOUNDATION

The Earth Explore Foundation's mission is to provide young people access to exciting educational experiences in the natural world. This mission guides the activities undertaken on Earth Explore's Adventure programs. Each student is encouraged to extend his or her own personal horizons, while gaining a better understanding of the natural world, its cultures and complex and interrelated systems.

## CAN A FRIEND PARTICIPATE?

As spring approaches, this is a question that we hear often in the National Office. The answer is yes, in most cases. There must be space in the local group, the friend must be the appropriate age, and he or she must be approved by the Leaders. The best way to find out for sure is to have the friend's parents call the National Office. We'll be happy to fill them in!



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