



Greetings Student Naturalists and Parents!

In the coming weeks our students will be preparing to embark on one of the most exciting experiences of their lives. This spring edition of the Naturalist is designed to provide some important information to help speed them on their way. Along with the group Preparation Sessions and your Adventure Guide, this newsletter will provide the things you as a family need to know to pack, organize spending money and other travel details, and arrange calls home. In addition, inside you'll find tips on taking pictures, traveling on a motorcoach, staying organized, and keeping with the schedule. As important as these details are though, we never let them get in the way of the real goal of every Earth Explore Adventure: to have fun with friends, do and see new things, and learn a lot along the way.

Yes, it's true! The final packet is coming.

And, inside the packet are three very important items for every EE participant. First is your Earth Explore Travel Cap. This custom-made beauty is specially embroidered, and identifies you as an official part of the group. The cap will also help protect you from the sun during activities out-of-doors, whether that's hiking in the Monteverde Cloud Forest, rafting, or cruising the jungle canals of Tortuguero National Park. The packet will also contain your photo credentials attached to a neck lanyard, and a custom EE field journal; essential gear for taking part in official program activities and keeping notes along the way.



Detailed Itineraries

Detailed group itineraries will be mailed to each family in late May. These list group flights, all daily activities, hotel phone numbers for each night of the program, and other important information for parents. You should make a copy

High School/College Credit Deadline

All assignments must be postmarked by the date on the course description. Be sure to securely bind your course materials together with a title page, copy of your Travel Journal and your final report. After evaluation, a transcript will be mailed to your home address. Find complete credit information online at earthexplore.com/academiccredit.html.

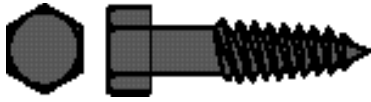
Keep the Rules in Mind

Yes, it's going to be a wonderful adventure. But to keep everyone safe, working together and having a great time, there have to be rules. Now is a good time to review the Student Rules and Guidelines available online, and talk it over with your parents. Our rules are just common sense, but we do insist that everyone, from our students to our Leaders to our Travel Managers, treat others with respect and courtesy. Your Leader(s) will be going over other traveling guidelines with you during your Preparation Sessions before departure.

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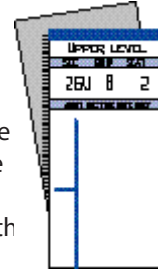
the Nuts and Bolts...

Spending Money

As an Earth Explore Student Naturalist, you'll be responsible for managing your own spending money during the trip. Students will need money only for souvenirs and other personal items. We recommend about 5-10 dollars a day, but this is up to each family. What works best? We recommend taking along a pre-set limit debit card. Using it requires only a PIN number. Parents should review with their students how to use the card and manage their money.

Airline Tickets go to Leaders

About two weeks before departure, we will mail a packet containing all student and Leader airline tickets (or E-ticket confirmations) directly to your Leaders. It's their job to handle airport check-in and seat assignment, and to keep the tickets safe during travel. Before boarding, they will give you a boarding pass, but they handle the tickets at all times to keep them secure and organized during the program.



Free-time activities

At several points during your trip you'll have some scheduled free-time, during which you can shop for souvenirs, sightsee, or explore specific interests. However, even when the free-time occurs within the hotel, at least one of your Leaders will be present at all times. During free-time, students and Leaders can form into smaller groups to explore, while maintaining safety and proper supervision at all times. Check your detailed program itinerary for information about when free-time has been scheduled on your program.



Keeping a Journal

As a part of their adventure, each participant will receive an official Earth Explore Travel Journal. This notebook is designed to hold your thoughts, impressions, field notes and sketches. Your pre-departure Preparation Sessions will include activities to help prepare you for journal keeping. At selected times during your travels, your Leaders and Travel Manager will suggest a topic, and give everyone a chance to "stop, drop and write." Your Travel Journal will contain important memories that you'll treasure, and daily entries are required for those taking part in the academic credit option.

The Group Journal

Earth Explore suggests that all Leaders organize a "Group Journal" to be compiled during the program. Students take turns preparing a journal entry, chronicling the activities, funny incidents and adventures of that day in words, sketches and pictures. At the end of the program, the journal can be photocopied by parents for each member of the group who would like a copy. In addition to each student's personal journal, the group journal will be a cherished keepsake for Student Naturalists and Leaders.



Meals

Earth Explore schedules three meals a day for each participant. Breakfasts and dinners are normally sit-down style, while lunches may be boxed and taken along on field activities. In restaurants, students will be offered a limited choice menu, or a buffet-style meal depending upon the location. We always strive for quality and choice in meal selections. Special dietary requirements can usually be met, and our Travel Managers and restaurant partners will help to arrange this on-site if needed.

Rooming Assignments

At each lodging venue, your leadership team will prepare rooming lists. These are simply forms listing who will be rooming with whom. Boys always room with boys, and girls with girls. At some locations students will be assigned two to a room, at other locations three to a room. We ask our Leaders to rotate rooming assignments so members of the group get to know one another. If you have specific preferences or questions, don't hesitate to talk to your Leader.

Picture-taking Tips



- Put your name on your camera
- Always try out a new camera at home first
- Carry your camera and film/memory

- cards in your carry-on bag.
- Take 2 sets of extra batteries for digital cameras
- For film cameras, take 5 rolls of 24 exposure film. ASA 200 works well
- For disposable cameras, we recommend 3-4 X 25 exposures
- Fill the frame with your subject, whether it is people or objects
- Keep the sun behind your back for best exposures
- Always use your flash indoors, at night (close up), or if subject is backlit

The Activity Bag and Team Building

Periodically during the trip, your Travel Manager or Leaders will break out the activity bag...which contains a variety of balls, frisbees and other fun equipment for use during free time. We ask that all students be respectful and include everyone during unstructured free time. Your TM and Leaders will also get the group involved in fun team building games at various times during the program. These are active and stress fun, working together, and cooperation. Let's hear it for your Leaders!



Souvenirs and Equipment

On the Costa Rica Adventure you'll have plenty of opportunities to pick up some souvenirs of your time in the tropics. One of the best items to get (if you don't have some) is a small pair of binoculars. You'll get a chance to use them right away, when we head toward Monteverde and Tortuga. By the way, that's another good reason to pack light...so that you'll have room in your luggage to bring things back for yourself, and your family and friends.

Don't worry about bringing along special equipment, like fancy camelback packs or hiking poles. You won't need them. But do make sure to fill your day bag with essential Earth Explore items like your cap, credentials, t-shirt, and field journal. And of course, don't forget the sun block.

Just in Case

Every Earth Explore group is equipped with a complete first-aid kit to deal with minor emergencies. In addition, the Travel Managers who accompany groups are issued a cell phone and carry complete information about local medical facilities. Earth Explore Leaders also carry program Travel Manuals containing comprehensive information about how to respond in case of an emergency.

what to bring?

Earth Explore Packing List

For boys and girls

Clothing

Light hiking boots or
Sturdy athletic shoes-1 pair
Sandals/flips (for dorms)-1 pair
Fleece jacket-1
Sweatshirt-1-2
Waterproof windbreaker with hood-1
Pants-Denim-1 pair
Sweatpants-1 pair
Shorts-cotton-2-4 pair
Hiking socks-cotton or synthetic-5 pair
Underwear-5-8 pair
Long-sleeved shirt-2
Short-sleeved shirt-4
Pajama/sleepshirt-1-2

Toiletries Kit

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

Personal Gear (in daybag)

Travel Cap-1 (supplied by EE)
Sunglasses-1
Sunblock-1 SPF 45
Insect repellent-1
Lip balm-1

Camera-1
Extra camera batteries
Extra memory card
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

Miscellaneous

Travel alarm clock

Common Sense Packing Tips

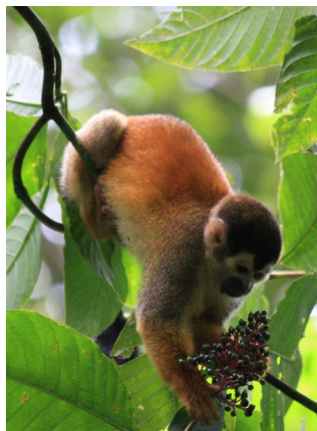
- Pack outfits that can be layered.
- Pack clothes that can be combined in many different ways.
- Pack lots of cottons and neutral colors like khaki.
- Bring at least one long sleeve shirt that can be layered for cooler days.

Staying on Schedule and

Earth Explore trips are about more than learning. They help students gain important skills, like being organized and getting up without their parents telling them to! A good way to prepare for the trip is to practice for about a week at home. Set your alarm clock to 7AM, get up and shower, pack a day bag with the items listed below, and have it ready to go by 7:45AM. How did it go? If you can do well at home, it's a good bet that you'll do just fine on the Earth Explore program. By the way, it is normal for students to be a little unorganized... but that's what preparation is for. We have faith in you. You can do it!

You and your Ipod (or other device)

Gameboys, MP3s and other personal electronic devices can be taken on the program, but can only be used when they do not interfere with organized group activities. That means during free-time in hotels and elsewhere, and during unstructured motorcoach time, the use of these devices may be permitted. We allow our Leaders to determine when the rules of the program are being violated.



Costa Rica's Climate- Be prepared for anything!

You might think that since Costa Rica is close to the equator it is always warm. Well, it usually is. However when our trip takes us to higher elevations, like the Santa Elena Cloud Forest, it can be cool and misty. And everywhere in Costa Rica, rain can fall just about anytime.

That's why it's important to pack for a variety of conditions and to include clothing that can be layered and combined in different ways. You'll definitely want to pack a light waterproof jacket, and even a poncho for showery weather in the jungle. Remember, many places in Costa Rica get over 100 inches of rainfall a year! That's why it's so lush, and has some of the planet's greatest biodiversity.

Keep these two items in your daybag

In Costa Rica you don't go indoors when the weather changes...you make the best of it. That's why a waterproof windbreaker or similar item is essential. And believe it or not, you'll need sunblock. Even when it's cloudy, you can burn. We recommend SPF 45 sunblock for everyone. Keep it handy!

How Much Luggage?



We ask students and Leaders to limit their luggage to 1 checked piece, and 1 carry-on in a day bag. Why? Most airlines now charge for all checked bags. The limits are also necessary due to luggage capacities on the motorcoaches and vans, and to insure no participant is burdened by excess gear during the program. Remember, since all students and Leaders 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 mid-sized day-pack for their smaller piece.

for Parents

This section is devoted to a short discussion of issues of special importance to parents. For more detailed information, don't hesitate to contact your Leader or the National Office directly.

Waivers

On some Earth Explore activities, the partner organization with whom we work may require a waiver be signed by parents before students are allowed to participate in the activity. As we receive them, the National Office will forward all necessary waivers to Leaders for distribution to, and completion by, parents at the next group meeting that is scheduled locally.

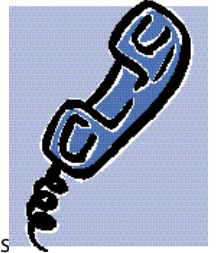
Deviations

If your son or daughter will need to leave the group at any time, for any reason, or take separate flights, you will need to complete a travel deviation request. These are normally required by May 1st. A Deviation Form is available from the National Office. Please call us with this information as soon as the details are available, and we will advise about additional costs, if any, and scheduling.



Phone Calls

Earth Explore gives a high priority to insuring adequate opportunities for student phone calls home. During the program we will arrange for each group to have two or three dedicated phone calling sessions. These generally take place at the arrival airport, and on one of the last two days of the program. In addition, students are free to call at any time that does not conflict with organized group activities. This includes the use of cell phones. We do recommend that students carry phone cards. These allow parents to keep track of phone expenses, are simple to use, and allow students to avoid hotel surcharges. Our experience has shown that one hour of calling time (2-30 minute cards) is sufficient for most students.



University Accommodations

In many locations, Earth Explore groups are hosted by Universities, in on-campus dorm accommodations. These are generally double accommodation, with two rooms sharing a common bathroom. This can be a great experience for our students, one in which they get the "feel" of college, complete with convenient buffet-style cafeteria meals right around the corner. (In hotel accommodations, three students generally share a room.) Remind your student that as representatives of their group and Earth Explore, they are receiving a special opportunity, and should be on their best behavior. Partner universities currently used on Earth Explore programs include the University of Alaska, Anchorage, the University of Hawaii, Hilo, and California State University, Monterey Bay.

Health Forms

Student Health Forms are sent to all registered students in the spring. These forms need to be completed and returned to your Leader by May 15th. One copy of these forms is carried with the group at all times, and another remains on file at the National Office throughout the travel season.

Medicines

Prescription forms for medicines the student takes along should be attached to the student's Health Form. All prescription medicines should be clearly labeled and packed in their original containers. Over-the-counter medicines like aspirin can be packed with prescription medicines in the student's travel bag. Students must be able to handle all required medicines with minimal assistance from the Leaders. Please discuss any exceptions or special assistance your son or daughter may require, in detail, with your Leader.

Now Hear This!

Earth Explore maintains on-call staffing during the summer travel season. A staff member is always available. In addition, all of our Travel Managers are equipped with cell-phones and are required to check in and provide reports to the National Office. Call us with any questions!

Student Behavior

As you know, we ask that all students follow common sense rules of behavior while traveling to insure the safety and enjoyment of everyone. Your Leader(s) will review these rules as well as discipline issues as detailed in the Educator/Leader Handbook during the last two meetings before departure. As parents, please discuss with your son/daughter the Student Rules and Guidelines that are available online. We are extremely proud of the maturity of our participants, and know that with the assistance of their parents and their Leaders, they will have a fun, successful and enriching experience.

Hotel/Dorm Supervision

During hotel and dorm stays, the entire group will be accommodated in a block of rooms on the same floor. In addition, all Leaders are required to follow these guidelines for hotel supervision, as outlined in the Leader Handbook.

- One Leader will always be present, on the same floor, when students are in the hotel
- The Leaders will set a clear (in room) curfew time, usually 10PM
- The Leaders will conduct room checks in pairs before lights out
- The Leaders will monitor hallways for one-half hour after room checks are complete.