



Costa Rica
Orosi Valley
Paradise Experience
About your Program



"There comes a point in a person's life when you start asking yourself: what difference am I making in this world? I decided to put my time into something worthwhile."

- Gayle Harrod

Costa Rica Orosi Valley Paradise Experience

Introduction to Costa Rica

Costa Rica is bordered by Nicaragua to the north, Panama to the southeast, the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Caribbean Sea to the east. Once a poor and isolated colony, since its independence in 1821 Costa Rica has become one of the most stable, prosperous and progressive nations in Latin America. It constitutionally abolished its army in 1949, as the first and one of the few sovereign nations without a standing army.

Costa Rica is known for its progressive environmental policies, being the only country to meet all five criteria established to measure environmental sustainability. In spite of its small size, Costa Rica features greater biodiversity than Europe or North America. This is due to a number of factors, among them the country's location between North and South America, which enables plants and animals from both continents and the Caribbean islands to establish themselves there. Also, Costa Rica's tropical climate and geographical makeup includes a range of habitats, from lowland rainforest to cloud forests to tropical lakes and rivers.



During the 1970s and 1980s Costa Rica saw rapid deforestation, with land clearing among the highest in the Americas. Rainforest destruction has serious environmental consequences because more than half of all the species on the planet are found in the rainforest. The primary reasons for deforestation include the extraction of hardwood for fuel and clear-cutting land for agriculture and cattle ranching. In response to the rapid deforestation, many environmental groups began to target their efforts toward developing commercially viable and sustainable uses of the rainforest.



Ecotourism in Costa Rica began in the mid-1980s as a way to stop the deforestation and to generate needed foreign exchange for the economy. Encouraging local inhabitants to practice efficient stewardship over the remaining forests is in theory a win-win situation where the environment prospers because it is no longer being clear-cut, and the local inhabitants prosper by using the local environment to their economic advantage. However, the challenge lies in the implementation and operation of the program.

Ecotourism initiatives have helped minimize deforestation but cannot be seen as a solution for all the problems of the past

The rainforests are indeed beginning to be used in more sustainable ways. Also, the costs of maintaining a rainforest are usually borne by the local inhabitants who have used the land for hundreds of years. Currently, ecotourism presents problems of its own and cannot be seen as a solution for all the problems of the past. Costa Rica has struggled with efforts to establish rules and regulations to ensure minimal negative impact on the environment.

Spanish is the official language of Costa Rica, and the most commonly spoken, although English is widely used in tourist areas. Ticos (Costa Ricans) are known for being welcoming, kind and fun! Pura Vida!



Community

The Orosi Valley is known for its eternal spring like temperatures and peaceful setting

The Orosi Valley is located about an hour east of San Jose and offers some of the richest scenery to be found in Costa Rica. The region is also rich in history and contains a number of monuments to the past, including a colonial capital founded in 1563 and archeological excavations that date back to 1000 B.C. Known for its eternal spring like temperatures, the Orosi Valley is undiscovered paradise, offering a serene and peaceful setting with fantastic views.



El Yaz is an agricultural community and the citizens live a largely organic, agricultural way of life. Although the villagers love their natural paradise, they have struggled to make ends meet, as even low paying jobs are rare.

Projects and Expectations



You will be working on a variety of community development projects during your volunteer week in El Yaz. Past projects include implementing a recycling program and building receptacles, painting the various community buildings and refurbishing the local water infrastructure.

Our program here also partners with local elementary schools, where some of the completed projects include the creation of a butterfly garden, a medicinal garden, a compost worm box for leftover lunchroom scraps, toothbrushing and handwashing campaigns, as well as various maintenance projects such as painting the school building and playground equipment. As you can see, projects vary greatly and the community chooses your work projects before your arrival based on the progress of prior groups and the immediate needs of the community.

The projects on which you may work, guided by local experts, include but are not limited to:

- Maintenance to community facilities
- Maintenance and upgrades to local families homes
- Chicken coop construction for local families
- English teaching at local public schools
- Maintenance to school playgrounds and facilities
- Water tank installation
- Sustainable development education
- Construction
- Arts and crafts and activities with elderly people group

Water Tank Installation Project

Although there is still significant rain water in Costa Rica, rainfall has decreased because of climate change. Water is rationed for 3 days a week in this community while the local water tanks are cleaned; in addition to intermittent outages and shortages as water supply is shared between towns. These shortages are a recent development, and explains why most Costa Ricans are not in the habit of water conservation, which is something the government is trying to address. Most Costa Ricans don't have gutters on their homes, so a gutter system



and water tank installation are components that will be factored in for harnessing rain water. Locals, while not indigent, do not have the means to purchase the kind of tanks needed for safely storing water. Water is used in homes for more than just drinking and bathing water, they use it for toilets, cooking, garden, etc. Globe Aware is hoping to install tanks of approximately 130 gallon capacity with a filtration system in place. In addition to the environmental benefit, this will ultimately mean that locals will pay less on water bill as well. It is possible to be almost 100% rain water dependent. By using rain water for toilet flushing, laundry and garden use alone, it can reduce water requirements of a typical household by 70%.

Chicken Coop Installation Project



Eggs are an inexpensive, healthy, sustainable source of protein for a family. Chicken coops are relatively easy and inexpensive to maintain and care for. Globe Aware volunteers will provide the materials, install the chicken coops and provide the first chickens and feed for families. By installing a chicken coop for a local family you will not only be contributing to more healthy practices, but many more benefits to the community:

- Backyard chickens are healthier: Factory farmed chickens are kept in confined areas and are often fed an unnatural diet with hormones and antibiotics to increase growth quickly and cheaply. The added stress of unhappy surroundings affects the taste and nutrients of the eggs and how many each hen produces.
- Eggs are more nutritious: In contrast to factory farm eggs, those from backyard chickens have 25% more vitamin E, 33% more vitamin A and 75% more beta carotene, not to mention more omega-3 fatty acids than factory farmed eggs.
- Eggs are tastier: Grocery store eggs can take days and even weeks to get to your plate. As time goes by, air seeps into the porous eggshell and affects the nutrients, taste and consistency of the eggs. Fresh eggs should have firmer whites and super white orange yolks.
- Chickens are great for compost: Chicken poop is high in nitrogen which is great for the compost bin and used egg shells can also be used in compost.
- Chickens improve gardens: Chickens are natural foragers so free-range chickens (those not confined to a coop) will scratch the soil looking for bugs like grubs, earwigs, and the same bugs that eat your summer fruits and veggies. Plus, as they turn the soil, it will aerate, breakup vegetations, and accelerate the decomposing process.
- Chickens are great lessons for kids: Local kids and volunteers will learn about the connection to their food and better understand the farm-to-plate chain. Children will love collecting eggs daily and feeding chickens.
- Barter with the neighbors: Many people love farm fresh eggs but are not willing to make the commitment to owning a coop yet. Eggs can be traded with neighbors in exchange for something from their garden.
- Extra eggs can be sold as a source of income.

Community Facilities Improvement and Maintenance

In the Cartago province, the church is the social community center and spiritual focus for everyone in the community. For the locals, their church is more than a religious institution, it is a place of gathering and a cornerstone of their daily lives. Locals often ask for Globe Aware's help with projects related to church maintenance and repair, as well as projects in the Elderly persons home and local schools.



Please remember that concepts of scheduling and organization are not universal. It is best to keep an open mind and not be judgemental when visiting a foreign country. Remember that your way of doing things may not be the best way here - the locals usually have a very good reason for completing a tasks in a certain way, and their priorities are different than ours. Here is an example:

"But Mario, why are we building the fence so close to the river? Surely erosion will cause the fence to fall off the edge?"

“Don’t worry, the foundation is very thick - it won’t fall. Besides, we can’t move it over any more, because the boundary of the soccer field is so close.”

We understand your desire to know as much as possible about the project you will be working on. It is important to understand that projects are often not established until one or two weeks prior, as they are based on factors such as which projects were finished (or not) by the last group, what supplies are available, how many volunteers are in your group, weather conditions, the changing priorities of the community, and can even be modified throughout the week. It is best to approach the experience with an open attitude, knowing you’ll be working approximately 6.5 hours a day during the week days, usually concentrated earlier in the day. You will also have a couple of hours of unstructured free time every day. There are typically three to four planned but optional leisure and cultural activities throughout the week. Communicate with your coordinator. If you find the work level is too much, or not enough, he or she will do as much as possible to work with you.

Additional Packing Information

Our program location is very humid and often muddy. Pack light **very casual** and quick drying clothes. Your work clothes may be ruined with paint, cement, or mud. You may want hiking boots or comfortable and sturdy work shoes. Expect narrow, muddy and uneven trails and bring appropriate footwear. You might consider bringing rubber rain boots for the mud, though if you prefer to save the space in your luggage, you can also buy these for \$10 locally. We recommend bringing work gloves that may get dirty, a few snacks and Ziploc bags. Strong insect repellent is essential. Make sure to pack enough clothes to be comfortable, considering sweat, mud, paint, etc. Make sure to pack enough clothes to be comfortable, considering that you may get dirty doing volunteer work. Laundry facilities are available but washing is only scheduled once a week, if necessary, so please pack accordingly.

While the temperatures are usually in the 70s, global warming has made conditions less predictable (and more weather extremes) and we have had a stray week or two where temperatures are in the 60s with rain, during which volunteers felt sweatshirts were a good idea, as they were cold without them. We recommend bringing a sweater or jacket and pants just in case you get chilly.

Please note that the packing list is meant as a guideline. There is no single item that you can’t live without for one week. Pack what you think you will need to be comfortable, but do not get preoccupied about items that you didn’t bring, weren’t on the list, etc. Everyone has different opinions about essential items!

You will be provided with one towel for your week long stay, but be ready to hang them out to dry each day or bring extras if you feel it’s necessary.

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| • Work gloves | bring enough socks and plenty of underwear |
| • Sunscreen | • Day pack / Small backpack |
| • Sun hat | • Strong money belt |
| • 2 - 3 Pants for working | • Camera / memory cards / chargers |
| • Toilet paper / tissues or wipes (available locally but if you feel you need a particular kind) | • Money / credit cards for personal expenditures |
| • Comfortable walking shoes | • Travel charger |
| • Toiletries and any prescription medication needed | • Rain or rubber boots (these can be bought locally for \$10) |
| • T-shirts/Shorts | • Pants and Long sleeves for chilly evenings |
| • Umbrella or rain poncho | • You may enjoy bringing games or books for free time. |
| • Long socks, especially if you are not bringing boots - | |

Blankets, towels or a sleeping bag may help you be more comfortable, as the bedding or linens may not be what you are accustomed to. The vast majority of volunteers find the sheets and blankets completely satisfactory and feel that taking up extra luggage space isn’t worth the cost or effort, though this is a personal decision. Others have brought “travel blankets” or “sleep sacks” which are much easier to pack.

Gifts / Donations

At the end of your stay, you might feel inclined to give something to community hosts who have been particularly helpful or courteous. In the past, volunteers have given an empty journal decorated with a child's name, or written them a thank you note, sung them a song, etc. People also enjoy seeing simple tokens from home, such as postcards of your hometown, or photos of your family.

Please be aware that bringing donations can also be awkward. In some instances, receiving donations can effect the recipients' pride negatively. This is not always the case. Do try and consider when donating used clothes, particularly those used during the program, if you feel the local community members would actually want them. It is best to discuss donations with the coordinator for these reasons.

There are cases that donations are more readily accepted, however there are often still local cultural nuances that can make the act of giving complicated. In order to preserve pride, please discuss how your donations can be presented with the coordinator. **Please note you are not expected to bring anything.**

Should you decide you do want to bring donations, you may consider: toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, soap, linens, kitchen utensils, flashlights with batteries, children's books, clothing - shoes, flip flops for kids, underwear, t-shirts, socks- , school supplies like pencils, pens, and educational toys or toys that do not require batteries - UNO, Connect Four, board games, cards, Jenga, Rummikub, dominoes, jump ropes, balls - of any kind especially soccer. If possible used laptops are always a great donation. You may also want to leave behind the items you used during the week - clothes, towels, linens if you brought them.

We discourage giving any more money than you are already giving to the program and community via your program fee. Globe Aware funds are spent on program expenses, as opposed to giving cash donations -- this helps ensure that the money is being spent in meaningful ways. We understand the good intentions of our volunteers. Giving cash out to community members contradicts the goal of promoting sustainability, promotes expectations that foreigners are 'made of money' and can create an atmosphere that begging may solve a community's challenges.

We discourage cash donations and distributing money in all of our communities.

However, if you feel like giving a gratuity to your coordinator this will be very appreciated though not necessary.

Special Donations

Globe Aware has recently begun a trial project of distributing reading glasses and sunglasses via our volunteers. Reading glasses are extremely helpful and can help people see, read and work again.



Fitting readers is easy to do, no experience is needed. It is fast, efficient and effective. If you are interested in purchasing reading glasses to distribute as donations during your stay in Costa Rica, please visit www.restoringvision.org and purchase a bag. The glasses will be shipped directly to you for you to bring to the program in your bag. **It is important for you to let us know if you plan on bringing reading glasses BEFORE YOU PURCHASE THEM - there may not be a current need in the community.**



Other very useful donations for families in the Orosi Valley are Damp Chasers Storage Dehumidifiers or the Golden Rod Dehumidifier. These devices have very low power consumption and combat humidity which is a big problem in Costa Rica, damaging household goods and creating health issues. These devices can easily be found online (Amazon) and are easy to put in a suitcase.

Accommodations



Volunteers will be staying in a rented house in the midst of 9 acres of lush vegetation. Fruits such as bananas, limes, crab apples and grapefruit grow all around the property. There are also two peacocks, Fred and Matilda, who call the location home. The house is built in traditional Costa Rican style and furnished with fans and comfortable beds, Western-style bathrooms and showers, and hot water. There are spectacular views, many tropical birds, a covered gazebo area, basketball court and hammocks.

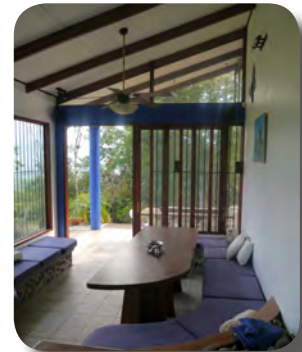


When In Rome... Residential plumbing in Costa Rica is different than in the U.S. If flushed, toilet paper often clogs the system and the toilets back up and flood. In Costa Rica there are always trash cans next to the toilet for easy disposal of your toilet paper. Don't take our word for it, Google it or look in a guidebook. Please respect the plumbing and throw away your used toilet paper rather than flushing it. This is the single hardest factor for most North Americans to adapt to, but give it a try out of respect for the infrastructure. While it is tempting to assume there will be a stench, you'll find that there usually isn't.



Also, Costa Ricans usually keep the bathroom door closed, even when it is not in use, to keep out intruders like spiders and the like. Always knock before you enter!

In the event of an earthquake, there is nothing heartier than a Costa Rican home. They are built almost exclusively with metal and concrete, not wood and sheetrock, and their foundations go deeper than you could ever imagine into the ground.



Electricity

There is limited electricity: enough to recharge digital batteries, but not enough to do heavy-duty hair drying. Voltage is the same as in North America, 110V. Electrical outlets take the same plug as in North America, so a prong adaptor is not necessary.

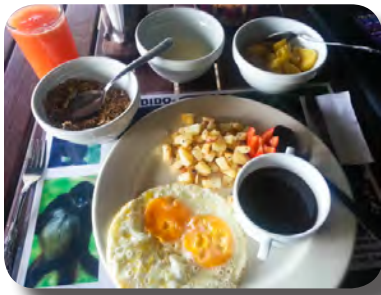


Laundry



You may pay a local lady \$6 per load to do laundry in the middle of the week. Although there are laundry facilities at the site, these are not to be used by volunteers as we have had issues with the washer and dryer being used improperly and having to pay costly repairs.

Food



Breakfast is provided in a common kitchen area and volunteers will be expected to prepare breakfast to their likes each morning, choosing from eggs, cereal, pancakes and fresh brewed coffee and fruit juices. Lunch and dinner will be prepared for the volunteers each day and most meals will be taken in community members' homes.

Food is delicious and will include a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as juice, beans, rice and eggs, and plenty of regional dishes. Keep in mind that in some community homes items such as milk, cheese and large quantities of meat may be seen as luxury items and may not always be readily offered. Vegetarians and volunteers with food allergies or dietary restrictions can easily be accommodated.

Meals are included when taken as part of the pre-planned itinerary at the accommodations and project site. If volunteers decide to eat in town or want to stop at a restaurant in San Jose, they are responsible for buying the meal. Additionally if the volunteer wants to take a trip somewhere specifically for a meal, they are also responsible for additional transportation costs.

Water

The location where we work in Costa Rica is one of the few Globe Aware locations where bottled water is not necessary. In fact, the water cleanliness quality in El Ya, where you will be working, is considered some of the cleanest in the world. We have been working here since 2003 and have never had a single health problem in this regard. You don't have to take our word for it, feel free to consult various travel guides such as the below:

<http://www.roughguides.com/destinations/central-america-and-the-caribbean/costa-rica/health/>

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/costa-rica/health>

<http://www.frommers.com/destinations/costa-rica/733129>

Weather

Costa Rica is warm and humid year-round. There are two seasons, wet and dry. The dry season is more accurately described as the less-rainy season. During the rainy season, you are likely to get one shower a day that will last for 1 or 2 hours and then it clears up. As a measure for how locals view their micro-climate, on a rainy day, you might hear them refer to the day as being a winter day, and the next day if it is dry, they will call it a summer day. It is a good idea to carry your umbrella/rain poncho with you as sometimes the rain comes without much warning.

Usually temperatures will be in the high 70s or low 80s during the day and nights can range from mid 50s to low 70s, though the humidity may make it seem hotter or colder. Of course weather conditions the world over can have unexpected extremes, but this can give you a general guide. The lower temps have traditionally been in November and December and the drier hotter months are traditionally in April and May. **Regardless of time of year, it is recommended you have rain gear and a sweater and long pants for when it gets chilly at night.**

While the temperatures are usually in the 70s, global warming has made conditions less predictable (and more weather extremes) and we have had a stray week or two where temperatures are in the 60s with rain, during which volunteers felt sweatshirts were a good idea, as they were cold without them. To be more specific, from November to February when temperatures can dip into the 50s at night, volunteers have been appreciative to have a few items of cloths to keep them warmer, and some kind of rain jacket as well. It is always a good idea to check the weather online the week before you go so you know what to expect.

Money

There are a couple of banks in Orosi if you need to make an ATM withdrawal. You should not need much extra money while at the program site, just enough for incidentals such as souvenirs, alcohol or snacks from the local stores. You may also want money to purchase local craft souvenirs in El Yaz. Please also keep in mind that it is much easier to use small bills, as it is often difficult to get change for a small purchase paid with a larger note. It is a good idea to call your bank and credit card companies before you depart and notify them of the country you will be traveling to and the dates of your travel so that they will allow charges and/or withdrawals internationally.



Also, take into consideration that one day during the week is usually set aside for an excursion. Various tours are available around the valley and tour operators will accept dollars, but they always prefer cash over credit or debit cards, so please bring extra cash for your excursion day as well (up to \$100 depending on number of volunteers participating and season).

Phone and Internet

Please do not plan to spend a lot of time on the phone or internet during your short volunteer week. We will have a busy and short week to be immersed in the culture. Should you anticipate needing to make calls from Orosi, your cell phone will work, but remember to check with your provider before you go to purchase an international calling/data plan and make sure you know what is included or not included in it so you don't get any surprises when you come back. Roaming charges, especially for data use, can be outrageous. You may consider renting a SIM card (for unlocked cell phones only) or a cell phone to use internationally - this should be done from the USA before you leave. Depending on how much you plan to use your phone or data plan, this can save you a lot of money. Buying a SIM card in Costa Rica is also an option but again, this is for unlocked phones only. Wi-fi is available at your accommodations, but it is much slower than you may be accustomed to.

Health

You should be up to date on routine vaccinations while traveling to any destination. No special vaccines are required to travel to Costa Rica. For additional information on travel health in Costa Rica, please refer to the CDC's website at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/costa-rica>

Cultural Note - Greeting a Tico/Tica

Traditional greeting in Costa Rica is a kiss on the cheek. Some locals feel its rude not to kiss or to shake hands, especially hand shaking with a woman - they feel its impersonal and signifies wanting to keep your distance. It is one kiss on the right cheek. Women greet each other and men this way, but men only greet women with a kiss on the cheek. Try it and you will make fast friends!

Transportation

The program offers one van that holds a standard Globe Aware group size. It can handle **most** transportation needs. It is intended to be used for the set program itinerary getting volunteers to and from the drop off point,

work projects and 3 to 5 planned but optional standard leisure visits. However, if the group wants to split up during free time going in opposite directions for activities, then additional transportation costs need to be paid for by the volunteers. As an indicator or example, going to the waterfall gardens (which is 2.5 hours driving each way and the driver waiting while at the gardens and lunch, etc), would cost roughly \$150 for a group size of up to 4 for a local driver; a standard taxi is more expensive. It is best to discuss all options with the coordinator who can help organize and minimize cost to the best of his ability. Ujarras ruins, Cartago ruins and Basilica, Weekend Farmers Market, and a visit to Orosi town and Colonial church are cultural/leisure visits that are always included. The standard is the whole group chooses at the same time to go to up to a couple of the following leisure activities, as time and schedules allow (Work projects are the priority), and the transportation is included to and from: Tapanti rainforest, ziplining, rafting, rock climbing, sugar processing, horseback riding, lake boat ride, orchid gardens, Nano waterfalls, Charrara pool and Park, Estate Adventure Day, etc. Note that these activities come at an extra participation cost charged by the purveyor (not Globe Aware) as they are independent from our organization. Excursions that are significantly further, such as waterfall gardens, volcanoes, beaches, are at additional transportation expense.

Leisure Activities

Volunteers will have the opportunity to visit one of the last remaining colonial towns, Orosi, and its famous church. Your coordinator will arrange several cultural activities within the week, and there will be one day set aside for optional excursions. Planned and included leisure activities may include:

- Excursion to Cachi Dam Lake
- Sugar cane processing
- Visit to a chollote farm
- Visit the Ujarras ruins
- Visit Botanical gardens



Optional excursions, independent of your Globe Aware program, but run by companies whose safety we have vetted, include the following activities.

Please let us know which ones you are interested in so that your coordinator may arrange for you, or you can discuss with your coordinator on arrival. Please be aware that these activities have an additional cost depending on number of people participating and season. The prices below are an approximation as they are independent vendors.



The most popular excursion by far is the known as hot springs excursion. It is independent from Globe Aware but we do refer to it since it has become the all-time volunteer favorite in all reviews. This excursion includes snacks, water, and access to the beautiful hot springs with incredible views of the valley. It is a long excursion lasting from around 2:00 pm to 8:00 pm. As of April 2019 the cost is \$40 per person.

Zip lining, also very popular, is 19 miles away (about a 40 min drive somewhat close to San Jose). There is also a closer option as of April of 2019 at Escalada Cachi that has a long zip-line and charges \$35 per person. Your coordinator will go over your options for zip-lining in person, as the options may change throughout the year.



Another popular excursion is a visit to the Irazu volcano. However, a word of warning. Most people want to summit to see the crater. Irazu is the closest to our program site and it is about a 20 mile, one hour drive, away. It is around \$20 per person to enter the park. Unfortunately, after years of operating in the area, we need to make sure volunteers understand that there is a very slim chance that you can see the crater because clouds tend to congregate on it the vast majority of the time.

Rock climbing is very close and \$25 per person for a day of climbing and \$6 per person for pool use by the river. They do have a minimum of 4 people and includes professional staff at your ropes, all equipment including helmets, etc. Make sure you read this great article on rock climbing in Costa Rica: <http://travel.ticotimes.net/2016/01/dont-know-practice-rock-climbing-costa-rica/>



Rafting is available on the Pacuare River, about an hour and a half away. The Globe Aware van drives half way, then volunteers are picked up in Turrialba and transferred over to the rafting company transportation which continues on for another 45 minutes. It is a 12 mile river run that takes about 4 hours depending on water level, with rapids between level III and V. It includes lunch, showers and towels. It is \$85 per person. Participants leave the house at 7 am and are back around 4 to 5 pm. This is not always available.

Other available options may include:

- National Tapanti Rainforest Park
\$10 adults, \$1 child up to 12 yrs old
- Guayabo Ruins
\$20 per person (\$40 extra for guided tour per group)
- Rapelling
\$15 per person (minimum 5 people)

- There is an Organic coffee tour for \$15 close to the accommodations or a Coffee Tour in Oroquieta for \$20 with coffee tasting and fruits.

Your Fellow Volunteers

You will receive a Fellow Volunteer Report attached to our “Ready, Set, Go!” email about 3 weeks before the program starts. It will include information on your fellow travelers, as well as their email so that you can start to get acquainted with them before you leave.

Your Main Coordinator: Federico



Federico is a Costa Rica native with many years of experience in the hospitality industry. He has been actively involved with the International Meditation Association for more than 10 years, and has traveled extensively volunteering with them. Federico is experienced with computer systems and support, as well as water infrastructure, vehicle mechanics, and cooking. Vietnamese, Thai, Italian, Mexican and Chinese are among his favorite cuisines. He has been an important part of Globe Aware since 2005.

Arrival and Meet-Up / Entry Requirements



U.S. and Canadian citizens may visit Costa Rica for up to 90 days. You must have a valid passport, which will need to **have at least 2 blank pages**. Citizens from other countries do not need a tourist visa if they have permanent residency or a valid tourist or business visa from the following countries: United States, Canada and any country in the European Union. If you meet neither of these requirements, please contact the closest Costa Rican embassy or consulate to verify whether you need a visa.

If you are traveling with a minor without BOTH parents traveling, it is a good idea to get a notarized letter from the non-traveling parent authorizing travel to and from Costa Rica, including dates of travel and authorized companions. While this is not 100% enforced, sometimes your airline or Costa Rica immigration may ask for it, and if you do not have it, you may find your travel plans stopped in their tracks, as you may not be able to leave your country of origin or be refused entry into Costa Rica.

Once you land in San Jose, you must proceed to immigration, as this is your first point of entry into the country. There you will present your documentation (passport). Depending on the number of planes landing at the same time and the time of year, this can take anywhere from 10-20 minutes to over an hour. Mid-day arrivals usually wait longer.

You will then proceed to baggage claim where you will pick up your luggage. If any of your luggage is damaged or missing you should report it to the airline immediately and provide the address where you will be staying, or wait for the next flight as it is likely to come in that flight. If lost or missing baggage will cause a delay in meet up, you should notify us immediately (See Emergency Section for information on how to reach Globe Aware 24 hours a day).

For delayed baggage to be delivered to the program site, use this address and phone number:

Villa Alas Azules

700 mts al sur de la plaza de futbol de El Yaz

Santiago, Cartago, Santiago 30202

Phone number: +506 8318 5553 Federico Herrera

Once you have picked up your luggage (or reported if delayed), walk to customs. The red/stop-green/go system will tell you if you are going to be inspected or questioned. Do NOT bring any drugs, firearms or illegal substances into Costa Rica. If you go to jail in Costa Rica, your rights are minimal. The Costa Rican legal system is very different from the U.S. You can and will go to jail, and you will very likely not be able to post bond. You can be held for months with only a formal complaint while the prosecutor investigates and builds a case against you. You are not innocent until proven guilty under Costa Rica Law.

After customs, you will proceed down another corridor where you will exit the airport.

There is a bus stop outside the airport for the Alajuela-San Jose and Alajuela-Heredia route in both directions. Buses from other routes also stop there. If you are not fluent in Spanish, we recommend to not attempt to figure out the bus system. It is better to arrange a private transfer service or a regular licensed taxi.



Licensed taxis are available at the airport and will generally accept both colones and U.S. dollars, but not other currencies. Licensed taxis are red with yellow triangles on the doors, and additionally there is an airport taxi service which is licensed and employs orange taxis. A licensed taxi costs about \$10 from the airport to the meet up hotel. All licensed taxis should have working door handles, seatbelts and meters (called "marías"). Passengers are encouraged to use seatbelts. You can also hire your own private transportation directly at the airport exit. A private van is usually the same as a regular taxi. If you stay in downtown San Jose and then go to the meet up hotel, it is further, and costs between \$30 and \$40. If you have an international data plan, or gave access to WiFi and a restaurant or hotel, you

can take Uber (though it is not considered legal, it exists and operates fine as the government has not found a way to regulate. We include this information as we are frequently asked about it but do not condone or condemn your choice. Uber from downtown San Jose to the meet up hotel is about \$10.

Unless specifically arranged otherwise, you are responsible for making your own arrangements from the airport to the meet up point. The Courtyard Marriott San Jose Airport located 1/4 mile from the airport. near the airport. If you are arriving the day before the program starts, this is also a great place to stay, however please note that you are in no way obligated to do so. If you are staying at the meet up hotel, they provide a free airport shuttle you will see waiting at the airport. Many volunteers choose to stay here if they arrive in Costa Rica prior to the Saturday their program begins, and we have chosen this as our meet-up point because of its central location, safe neighborhood and pleasant environment. Hotel rates range between \$87-\$130 per night depending on the number of people and size of the room. Some rates include breakfast for the next day. To make reservations you can contact the hotel at <http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/sjoap-courtyard-san-jose-airport-alajuela/> They have a complimentary hotel shuttle to and from Juan Santamaria International Airport if you arrive between 4 am and midnight. If you are not staying in the hotel, a taxi from the airport should be \$5-\$8.

The address for the meet up point is: Courtyard Marriott San Jose Airport Alajuela
Radial Francisco J. Orlich, Plaza los Mangos
Alajuela 20109 Costa Rica

A less expensive alternative which is also convenient to the meet up point is the Hotel Catedral Casa Cornejo. If you are arriving the day before the program starts, this is also a great place to stay, however please note again that you are in no way obligated to do so. Many volunteers choose to stay here if they arrive in Costa Rica prior to the Saturday their program begins. Hotel start at \$50 and include breakfast for the next day. To make reservations you can contact the hotel at www.hotelcatedralcasacornejo.com A taxi from the airport should be \$5 - \$10. If you choose to stay here, you are also responsible for getting yourself to the meet up location. Please anticipate heavy traffic on Saturday and make sure you give yourself plenty of time to get there, a taxi from Hotel Casa Cornejo to the Courtyard should be no more than \$10.

Volunteers will be picked up in Alajuela at the Courtyard Marriott at 2:30 p.m. on the Saturday the program starts. Please be sure to have lunch before this time as dinner will not be until 6 or 7 p.m. that night.

Safety and Security

Costa Rica is a very safe country and incidents of violent crime are very rare. Please be vigilant at all times when in San Jose as pickpockets are common, especially in crowded areas. Secure your personal belongings and do not carry your passport or credit cards in easily accessible places.

You should always be wary of where you leave your belongings, as unattended items may disappear (day packs, cameras, etc). Our accommodations are very safe, but as a precaution in any of our locations, we recommend purchasing a baggage lock and putting all your valuables inside your largest bag and locking it when you leave for your daily activities.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program is a free service provided by the U.S. government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to a foreign country. STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency, keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements, and help your friends and family get in touch with you in case of an emergency. The link to STEP is <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>

Global Entry

Global Entry is a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) program that allows expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travelers upon arrival in the United States. Due to sequestration and during busy travel seasons, long lines have been reported at customs and immigration when coming back into the United States. Global Entry approved travelers are able to use the automated kiosks at immigration to reduce wait times considerably. For more information, visit <http://www.globalentry.gov/>

In Case of Emergency

United States Embassy

Location: In front of Centro Comercial del Oeste Pavas, Costa Rica

Street Address: Calle 98 Via 104, Pavas, Costa Rica

Main Line: +506 2519 2000

From the U.S. dial 011 506 2519 2000

Globe Aware's 24 hour phone line Please note our email is not attended all day every day so if you have an emergency please use this phone number : (214) 824 4562

State Department Travel Information: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/costa-rica.html>

Further Readings While no further reading is required, we think it is always nice to have a travel guide book with you to read about the area. Lonely Planet, Eyewitness, Frommer's, Budget Travel, Rough Guides are some of the titles we have recommended in the past. Many people also enjoy reading books like The Costa Ricans by Richard Biesanz et al, which provides a historic perspective on Costa Rica's political and social change. La Loca de Gandoca by Ana Cristina Rossi is a conservation-related novel by a prize winning tica novelist.