

## Costa Rica: Nature's Kaleidoscope™

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Experience life in five unique ecosystems in one of the most unique regions on earth!



### Highlights

- Live in a remote biological research station
- Hike up to the crater of a volcano
- Build trails in pristine cloud forest
- Whitewater raft down a roaring river
- Experience massive biodiversity
- Zip line through the forest
- Volunteer at an impoverished village primary school
- Live in an untouched beachfront community

## **Costa Rica: Nature's Kaleidoscope™**

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Experience nature in all its beauty on this GLA Flagship Program in Costa Rica. You'll discover five distinct ecosystems: marine, mangroves, dry forest, cloud forest, and rain forest. We're based in the Guanacaste Conservation Area - one of the most unique places on earth, with so much biodiversity that UNESCO, a UN body, named it a World Heritage Site.

The conservation area, located directly on top of the Continental Divide, is where the Atlantic and Pacific ecosystems collide to create a natural kaleidoscope unmatched anywhere else in Costa Rica. The area is home to 140 species of mammals, 300 species of birds, 100 species of amphibians and reptiles, and over 10,000 species of insects.

Start by living in a research station nestled on the side of an inactive volcano, deep in a pristine cloud forest; here you will build trails and learn first-hand from biologists doing projects in this national park. Then descend to the beachside GLA Home-Base for a week of community service with coastal communities. Along the way, experience the vast range of natural wonders in a variety of ecosystems through exciting outdoor adventure activities.

### **Community Service**

The first project is up in a cloud forest above the community of La Cruz. In the mornings, we will build trails through the wild cloud forest to prevent degradation by hikers and other visitors. A couple of afternoons we'll go out with biologists to collect species as part of a larger research project going on in the national park.

After the first ten days, we'll start working in an impoverished community where most people are farmers or fisherman. We will volunteer at a local school teaching English, sports or arts & crafts. In addition, we will assist in projects to improve the school's infrastructure, such as building a playground or an outdoor basketball court. In addition, we'll provide after-school activities for the children at a nearby beach.

### **Learning**

You will experience five distinct ecosystems and be able to compare and contrast each one. While living up in the forest, we'll examine issues related to water, public health, and ecological conservation. Working firsthand in a watershed area is the perfect setting to discuss the global water crisis and its affect on impoverished communities. Along the way, you'll also learn about taxonomy and learn to identify flora and fauna of the region.

The last ten days of the program, we'll live in a rural coastal community and see first hand the challenges they face with regard to access to natural resources. You'll also learn about Costa Rican culture, including dance, music, and social issues.

### **Excursions**

You'll engage in just about every outdoor activity imaginable! The huge range of ecosystems concentrated in a relatively small geographic area provides a vast array of exciting outdoor adventures. We'll explore the forests by hiking, whitewater rafting, zip lining and horseback riding. You'll also hike up an active volcano, camp on an untouched beach, bathe underneath a waterfall, as well as ride horses through a jungle paradise.

### **Quick Facts**

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- Duration: 20 days
- Tuition: \$3990
- Community service hours: 40
- Max. group size: 20 students
- Location: La Cruz, Costa Rica
- Airport: Liberia, Costa Rica (LIR)

### **2011 Dates**

- 25-June to 14-July
- 7-July to 26-July
- 19-July to 7-August



**Lodging**

On the first night, upon arrival to Costa Rica, the group will stay in a simple hotel near the entrance to the national park. For the next six nights the GLA Home Base will be a biological research station located deep in the park, accessible only by 4x4 vehicles. The GLA Home Base is located approximately 2,100 feet above sea level, tucked on the side of the inactive Orosi volcano. We'll live in a simple bunkhouse, with four bunk beds per room and shared bathrooms. Although the base is remote, students will have wi-fi internet access. For safety purposes, there will always be a 4x4 vehicle on standby in case of an emergency.

For the rest of the program, we descend to the GLA Home Base located in a completely different ecosystem. We'll live in a tropical coastal community, just a stone's throw away from the beach. The GLA Home Base is a small lodge surrounded by farmland on one side and a private beach on the other. Each room in the GLA Home Base has two bunk beds, a private bathroom and wireless internet connectivity. There is an eating area that looks out over the ocean where we'll have meals and meetings. To cool off, students can take a dip in the large swimming pool or in the ocean.

**Tuition**

Tuition includes all in-country expenses including lodging, meals, transportation, all activities and entrance fees, community service materials, all excursions, wi-fi internet access, backup medical insurance, and experienced program leaders.

Tuition does not include the following: international airfare, souvenirs, snacks, laundry, phone calls, or medical expenses.



## Program Schedule

*Disclaimer: Actual order of activities may vary from this schedule.*

**Day 1:** Students arrive at Liberia airport on the first day of the program and are taken to a hotel that will serve as our staging area at the base of the mountain until all students arrive. Students who arrive in the afternoon will engage in ice-breakers and have a chance to explore the nearby town. Students who arrive in the evening will join the full group for dinner and an official welcome and orientation.

**Day 2:** On our way to the cloud forest, we'll stop at a local clinic and meet with the doctor to learn about health issues affecting children and how this is connected to the quality of the drinking water. We'll also stop and collect a water sample from the river where the water comes from. We transfer to rugged 4x4 vehicles for the rough ride into the Guanacaste Conservation Area and up to the biological research station (2,000 feet above sea level) on the side of the Orsi Volcano. This station will be the GLA Home Base for GLA staff and students for the next five days. After a hearty lunch, we'll learn about the conservation area and do some teambuilding activities.



**Day 3:** After a morning of building trails through the forest, our staff naturalist will lead us on a hike to the main watershed from where all of the region's drinking water comes from. We'll learn more about watersheds and also take a sample of the water here for later analysis.

**Day 4:** Another rugged morning of community service in the forest and then a brief class on taxonomy to refresh ourselves on the classification of species. Our staff naturalist will lead us on a hike through the cloud forest to collect species which we will then mount and identify back in the lab. We'll hike from cloud forest over a mountain and descend into a new, distinct ecosystem – rain forest.

**Day 5:** After a morning of community service, we'll hike for a couple of hours to a site where ancient rock carvings, drawings depicting pre-historic life engraved in stone, were discovered. These petroglyphs are over 1,500 years old and remained scattered over a large area, many of which still haven't been researched. In the evening we'll begin learning about biodiversity.

**Day 6:** We'll spend the morning doing community service in the forest and return to the GLA Home Base for lunch. In the afternoon, we will meet with the biologists working in the area to learn more about the importance of their research on aquatic insects. We'll also go out with them and you will collect species that they'll bring back to the lab for identification. Upon return to the lab we'll analyze the species as well as the water samples we previously collected.



**Day 7:** After community service, we'll discuss how biodiversity, research and funding for conservation are all connected. That night, we'll go out with another biologist who is studying butterflies and moths and we'll set up traps to collect more species which we'll identify back in the lab.

**Day 8:** Today we leave the cloud forest and move to the GLA Home Base on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. We'll meet with children from the local community who drink the water derived from the cloud forest and engage them in fun activities on the beach such as beach volleyball, Frisbee and soccer.

**Day 9:** We'll wake up early to drive two hours to a town on the edge of the Tenorio River. After a safety orientation, we'll put on lifejackets and helmets and get into our rafts for the ride of a lifetime. We'll travel down eight miles of intense Class III river rapids surrounded by rain forests filled with monkeys, butterflies, and reptiles. Along the way, we'll stop for lunch on the banks of the river. In the evening we'll drive back up to the GLA Home Base for a good night's sleep!

**Day 10:** Students who are just joining us for the cloud forest portion of the program will depart today and the rest of the group will continue their adventures through nature's kaleidoscope.

Today, we'll explore the ecosystems found around the coast: dry forest, mangroves and marine life.

**Day 11:** Students joining us for the coastal community service of the program will arrive today and will engage in icebreakers on the beach with the group and the staff. During the day, students will have time to relax in the pool or on the beach.

**Day 12:** After a hearty breakfast, we'll have a morning of orientation and review the Code of Conduct while at the beach house. We'll head out to the community service site and meet with the community members and learn more about the socio-economic situation of this community.

**Day 13:** We'll dive deep into the community service project at the school. After school, we'll take the children a down to the beach to engage in recreational activities with them such as beach volleyball and soccer. After dinner back at the GLA Home Base, we'll start to learn Latin dance moves.

**Day 14:** After a morning of community service, we'll drive up to the border with Nicaragua and learn more about the situation of Nicaraguan immigrants who come to Costa Rica and discuss questions of immigration, identity and culture.

**Day 15:** We'll start the day with a morning of community service at the school. After lunch we'll have a tasty class on exotic fruits of Costa Rica. Students will have a chance to use the internet to check in with friends and family.

**Day 16:** Today we will challenge ourselves by hiking up to the top of the Rincon de la Vieja volcano. At the top, we'll look into the crater of the volcano and enjoy breathtaking views of the Costa Rican countryside. After we hike down, we'll relax our tired muscles in a natural hot springs known for their healing properties.



**Day 17:** We'll take advantage of the weekend to see a totally different side of Costa Rica. We'll visit one of the most touristy areas and see the massive development happening. We'll discuss the issues related to tourism and sustainability and the impact on the local economy. You'll have a chance to shop, enjoy the beach, stop at an internet café and check out the local handicrafts. In the evening, we'll continue to practice our Latin dance moves.

**Day 18:** After a fun and relaxing weekend, we return to our community service project. Since it's the last day, we'll hand-make piñatas with the local children. That evening, we'll have our farewell party with the local families, we'll break open our piñatas as we say goodbye to the community.

**Day 19:** Our last full day in Costa Rica will be packed full of adventure. We'll start by zip lining through the treetops of a forest, then we'll ride inner tubes down a roaring river, followed by a horseback ride around the base of a volcano and end it with fun in a gorgeous waterfall and hot springs. At night, we'll have our farewell banquet and party.

**Day 20:** We'll enjoy our last breakfast together as a full group. Most students will depart around mid-day for the airport.

## About Global Leadership Adventures

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Global Leadership Adventures, established in 2004, is the premier international community service-learning program for high school students. Students come back transformed.

GLA is unique because of its focus on leadership development and first-hand learning about global issues. Students learn first hand from social pioneers around the world who are creating positive social change in their communities.

Students are taught to use their heart, as well as their head, to become agents of positive change across borders.

GLA has been featured in:

**The New York Times**

**The Boston Globe**

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