



# **COSTA RICA: MIDDLE SCHOOL SERVICE ADVENTURE**

**10-DAY PROGRAM**

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Zipline through the beautiful landscapes of Costa Rica
- Spot birds, reptiles, and other animals in the country's Central Valley
- Experience a mini food tour and taste the flavors of Costa Rica!
- Go on a chocolate tour guided by a local chocolate expert
- Enjoy a day at one of Costa Rica's picturesque beaches

## **ACTIVITY LEVEL**

- Medium

## **2025 PROGRAM DATES**

- July 12 – July 21

## **GET IN TOUCH!**

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@GLAteens



*Embark on an unforgettable summer experience full of service and adventure working with Costa Rican children in local schools and exploring the country's incredible wildlife.*

## **OVERVIEW**

On this adventure, students will focus on a number of causes, working on both Community Development and Youth and Education projects. Get ready to volunteer in schools with inspiring local children on this well-rounded program. No trip to Costa Rica would be complete without adventure! Students will participate in exciting activities like ziplining, hiking, a day at the beach and cultural activities like an exciting chocolate (or cacao!) tour.

Make a difference in the lives of Costa Rican youth. Empower local children through your volunteer work with schools. Help with school refurbishment and beautification projects and participate in cross-cultural exchange with students from the nearby towns.





## **ITINERARY**

*Actual schedule of activities will vary by program session. The information detailed here is typical for what you can expect to experience; however, service work and activities vary depending upon the needs of our local community partners, various celebrations and customs, as well as the weather and specific needs of the student group.*

### **DAY 1: WELCOME TO COSTA RICA!**

Fly into San José, the capital of Costa Rica, where your GLA Director and Mentors will be waiting to meet you at the airport! We'll drive to Home Base, located in the province of Alajuela, only a short distance away. Our hosts will be eager to greet everyone at our new home away from home! Enjoy a traditional Costa Rican lunch and, if time permits, take a guided walk around town to see local sites such as churches, parks, restaurants and beautiful scenery!

In the afternoon, once all students have arrived, we'll have an orientation with fun activities to help you get to know your fellow GLA students and program staff members. We'll also discuss your upcoming service projects as well as the amazing adventures that await you in the days to come! We'll have our first Mentor group activity in the evening where students are split into small groups to discuss topics such as culture, leadership, goals for our time abroad, and more. Each group is led by a program staff member, and students are encouraged to share, participate, and reflect on their experiences.

### **DAY 2: FIRST DAY OF SERVICE**

We will start the day by finishing GLA orientation to get the full group accustomed to the GLA way of life along with learning some important safety information. After lunch, your community service begins! There are five service days throughout the program, which take place in the mornings and last around four hours. We will have a short introduction to your service project and get settled into a local school. Later, we'll have Mentor Groups, and possibly another after-dinner group activity if time permits.

### **DAY 3: SERVICE & SPANISH CRASH COURSE**

Today we'll continue our service in the morning, then head back to Home Base for lunch. After lunch, get ready for a crash course in Tico Spanish! You'll learn common words and phrases that you can use to converse with members of the local community during learning or cultural activities.

### **DAY 4: ADVENTURE & BEACH DAY**

On to our first adventure day! We'll head a couple of hours west to the Pacific coast for a visit to Manuel Antonio National Park and a day at the beach. After all, you can't visit Costa Rica without seeing the beautiful beaches for which the country is famous! Students will have the opportunity to walk through the rainforest, swim and play in the waves, relax and bask in the sun, and shop for souvenirs in the local beach town with a staff chaperone.

### **DAY 5: SERVICE, CULTURE TALK, & MINI FOOD TOUR**

Reinvigorated by the previous day's adventures, we'll return to our service sites in the morning, continuing where we left off on Day Three. After service, we'll hear from GLA's own Jose on the history and culture of Costa Rica. Jose will share the importance of corn to the people of Costa Rica, and how it's still a thriving part of Tico culture today.





## **DAY 5: SERVICE, CULTURE TALK, & MINI FOOD TOUR - CONTINUED**

Then set out on a taste testing journey! Explore local markets for exotic and tropical fruits, visit a “tortilleria” and see these yummy treats being made by hand, and taste some of the most popular food of Costa Rica. In the evening, we’ll continue with our Mentor Groups and an after-dinner activity or free time.

## **DAY 6: HOT SPRINGS & CHOCOLATE TOUR**

We’ll start off with a visit to a hot spring center where you’ll be able to enjoy various pools with different temperatures. This activity is two hours from Home Base, so it’s a great chance for students to experience a different region of Costa Rica. You’ll even be able to see the famous Arenal Volcano! In the afternoon we’ll dive into our adventure activity: a hike through the Costa Rican rainforest! The hike will be guided, and students will have the opportunity to experience and learn about the rich biodiversity of Costa Rica, spotting local flora and fauna along the way.

To finish the day, we’ll visit a local chocolate maker for a tour where you’ll learn the origins of cacao and the process of making chocolate. Later, we’ll have Mentor Groups and dive deep into topics such as children’s access to education.

## **DAY 7: SERVICE & DANCE LESSONS**

Today we return to our service sites for our fourth day of community work. Back at Home Base, we’ll enjoy lunch, leadership activities and dance the night away with local instructors who will teach us famous dances such as salsa, cumbia, bachata and merengue.

## **DAY 8: ADVENTURE DAY**

In the morning we’ll head out for a day of exciting activities. First up: ziplining! You’ll soar through the rainforest on ten different cables and fifteen zipline platforms. You may even spot some wildlife as you zoom through the canopy. Next, we’ll embark upon our second rainforest hike of the program, then close out the day with a butterfly garden visit. Finally, foray even higher into the sky on an aerial tram ride above the rainforest.

## **DAY 9: SERVICE, WATERFALL HIKE & SOUVENIRS**

On our final day of service, wrap up the projects you’ve been working on over the past week, and say farewell to the friends you’ve made at your service sites. Spend the afternoon enjoying one last classic Costa Rican experience - a waterfall hike. Later, we’ll have the chance to buy gifts and souvenirs from local artisans; it’s also a great opportunity to practice the Spanish you’ve learned so far!

Back at Home Base, we’ll have our final Mentor groups where students can reflect on their experience in Costa Rica so far and what lessons they want to bring home and share with their communities. In the evening, we’ll have a farewell dinner to celebrate and reflect on your accomplishments with all the wonderful friends you’ve made in Costa Rica.

## **DAY 10: DEPARTURE**

It’s time to say goodbye—or hopefully, hasta luego!—to Home Base and your program staff. Your GLA staff will assist with check-in and remain with your group until you’ve crossed successfully through airport security.

## **PROGRAM SPECIFICS**

- **Tuition:** \$4,299
- **Service Hours:** 15
- **Ages:** 11 - 14
- **Student-to-Staff Ratio:** 6-to-1
- **Accommodations:** Exclusive Hotel Block
- **Arrival and Departure Airport**
  - SJO Arrival (anytime), SJO Departure (anytime)

## **GLA HOME BASE**

GLA's Home Base for this program is a hotel block located in the Central Valley of Costa Rica, with mountain views overlooking the city. It is locally owned and operated with comfortable modest amenities and plenty of green spaces for activities.

## **GLA HOME BASE OVERVIEW**

- Pool
  - GLA Homebase 1: Alajuela - Yes
- Air conditioning
  - GLA Homebase 1: Alajuela - Yes
- Remote
  - GLA Homebase 1: Alajuela - No

## **FOOD**

Costa Rica is known for its simple diet of rice, beans and a side of meat. The food at Home Base will reflect the traditional dietary staples of the people in Costa Rica. It will be simple, but fresh and healthy and include delicious, locally-grown fruits.

## **NOTICE ON PROGRAM UPDATES**

While this program is being planned for this season, some activities or details may change between now and the program start date. Please note that references from past participants and previously published information may not accurately reflect every aspect of this program. Refer to the sample itinerary above or to the GLA website for the most up-to-date version of program activities, and please note that further updates may be made between now and the program start date.

## **CLIMATE**

Although summer is the middle of the rainy season, Costa Rica typically experiences a mini-dry season in July. Rainfall decreases significantly for three or four weeks, especially in the northern Pacific. This makes for hot, sunny days and cooling evening rains.

## **LEADERSHIP**

Global Leadership Adventures started as an educational institute, so we continue to think and act like educators—not tour operators—as we deliver life-changing programs. We intentionally weave a leadership curriculum into the daily experience on our programs. Through group discussion, meaningful service, workshops, speakers and excursions, staff guide students to reflect on program events through the lens of leadership, and celebrate outstanding examples of leaders they encounter in the local community. Lending this context to the experience creates opportunities for students to dig deep into their vision, purpose and knowledge of themselves and the world.

## **ABOUT GLOBAL LEADERSHIP ADVENTURES**

Global Leadership Adventures was founded in 2003 by Fred Swaniker, a native of Ghana, TED Fellow and educational entrepreneur whose work has been praised by Barack Obama. Born as a global extension of the revolutionary African Leadership Academy, Global Leadership Adventures now operates programs centered around leadership, sustainable community service projects, and meaningful travel across Africa, Asia, Europe or the Americas. Through life-changing adventures, we strive to inspire the next generation to realize their potential to transform the world and their role in it.

## **GLA HAS BEEN FEATURED IN:**

*The New York Times*

 **USA TODAY**

 **NBC NEWS**

*The Boston Globe*

*seventeen*







## OUR EXPECTATIONS

**BE PRESENT** | Our mission at GLA is “to inspire the next generation to realize their potential to transform the world and their role in it.” To that end, we expect GLA students to maintain high standards of personal behavior and to be open-minded. The culture may be different, sometimes shockingly so. GLA will challenge students as they are expected to work hard and be present physically and mentally for all activities. We also ask students to take a step back from regular use of technology - particularly their smartphones - so as to maximize their engagement with the program and their fellow participants. Students may get hot, dirty and bug-bitten along the way, but their contribution can transform the community. The goal is for each student to return home having had a life-changing experience.

**NO TOLERANCE** | GLA has a no-tolerance policy towards drugs, alcohol, tobacco and disruptive behavior. Those who violate or are suspected of violating this policy will be immediately dismissed from the program at the sole discretion of GLA staff.

**COMMUNITY-LED EXPERIENCES** | GLA makes every effort to offer thoughtfully crafted programs for teens and young adults. Detailed planning and exhaustive communications with partners are indispensable parts of our program development process. However, occasionally service and activities are adjusted from session to session, due to weather, changing needs of our local community partners and/or various cultural celebrations and customs. We expect participants to be open-minded and flexible, willing to embrace the experience when plans change. GLA makes every effort to communicate adjustments to students and families with advance notice. We expect you to be open-minded and flexible.

**MENTORSHIP** | GLA is not a therapy program. Our staff are highly skilled, professional, caring and fun, but they are not licensed therapists. GLA programs can be physically and emotionally demanding, and applicants should be in good physical and mental health.



## ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

At Global Leadership Adventures, we welcome age-eligible teens who are excited about the opportunity to travel to apply for our programs. To ensure a safe and meaningful experience for everyone in the group, we follow essential eligibility criteria. While our intent is not to be exclusionary, it's important to note that GLA programs are not therapeutic programs and are not able to support struggling teens seeking behavior or mental health outcomes.

Applications are carefully considered and screened to align with these criteria. It is not uncommon for GLA to require supporting documentation or information in the application screening process to confirm eligibility or suitability for program participation. Failure to disclose full medical history may also result in the application not being accepted, additional fees, and/or removal from the program. Please discuss with our team for any further clarification or concerns and visit <https://www.experiencegla.com/policies/essential-eligibility-criteria/> to view the full essential eligibility criteria list.



## WE'RE HERE TO HELP

**CONTACT US** | Want to learn more about Global Leadership Adventures and our available programs? Our Admissions Team has expertise and insights into our slate of program offerings, and we're happy to answer any questions you might have. We have collectively visited or staffed many of our GLA programs around the world, and we have advice to share on everything from getting your travel documents together to what a typical day on a program is like. Call us at 1-858-771-0645 any time during office hours for assistance.

**ENROLL NOW** | We encourage you to enroll on your 1st choice program as early as you can! In fact, our most popular programs fill up early every year, and many students end up putting off the quick and easy application process only to end up on the waiting list. The best way to ensure that you save your spot is to place your deposit and apply early. You can easily enroll online at [www.experiencegla.com/enroll](http://www.experiencegla.com/enroll).

