

# Timeline and Checklist

In preparing for your upcoming Earthwatch expedition, please ensure that you:

## Immediately

- Read this expedition briefing and all enclosed materials thoroughly.
- Book an appointment with a doctor; you'll need him or her to sign the Health section of your Earthwatch Participation Form.
- Make sure you understand and agree to Earthwatch policies and participant responsibilities (see *Appendix*).

## At least 90 days prior to your expedition start date

Complete and return your volunteer forms. **Below are the specific forms required for this expedition:**

- Earthwatch Participation Form for Adults
- Travel Form

European volunteers can download forms on: [earthwatch.org/europe/volunteerforms](http://earthwatch.org/europe/volunteerforms)

US/North American volunteers can download forms at: [earthwatch.org/volunteerforms](http://earthwatch.org/volunteerforms)

Australian volunteers can download forms on: [earthwatch.org/australia/expeditions/volunteer\\_forms/](http://earthwatch.org/australia/expeditions/volunteer_forms/)

Japanese volunteers can download forms on: [www.earthwatch.jp/getinvolved/condition/formdownload-i.html](http://www.earthwatch.jp/getinvolved/condition/formdownload-i.html)

- Pay any outstanding balance on the minimum contribution for your expedition.
- Book travel arrangements (see the *Rendezvous* section for details).
- If you plan to purchase additional travel insurance, note that some policies require purchase when your expedition is booked (see the *Insurance* section for more information).
- If traveling internationally, make sure your passport is current and obtain a visa for your destination country (if necessary) (see the *Passports and Visas* section for more details).
- Make sure you have all the necessary vaccinations for your project site (see the *Health Information* section).
- Purchase a guide book for your destination country.
- Bring your level of fitness up to the standards required (see the *Project Conditions* section).

## At least 60 days prior to your expedition start date

- Review the packing list to make sure you have all the clothing and any special equipment needed.
- Obtain any necessary prescription medications.

## Up to 30 days before you leave for the expedition

- Read any required reading or websites recommended by the Earthwatch scientist(s) for your expedition.
- Make sure you have enough personal funds for your expedition (see the *Travel Planning* section).
- Leave the Earthwatch emergency contact number with a friend or relative (see the *Emergencies in the Field* section).
- Leave a copy of your passport, visas, and airline tickets with a friend or relative.
- Confirm your travel arrangements.

\*If you have signed up for an expedition within 90 days of the start date, you must return your fully completed volunteer forms as soon as possible.

# Costa Rican Sea Turtles

## Table of Contents

<b>GENERAL INFORMATION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>THE RESEARCH</b> .....	<b>4</b>
PROJECT STAFF .....	6
<b>DAILY LIFE IN THE FIELD</b> .....	<b>8</b>
VOLUNTEER TRAINING AND ASSIGNMENTS .....	8
TEAM ITINERARY AND DAILY SCHEDULE .....	9
ACCOMMODATION.....	12
FOOD.....	13
<b>PROJECT CONDITIONS</b> .....	<b>14</b>
POTENTIAL HAZARDS.....	15
HEALTH INFORMATION .....	16
MEDICAL CONDITIONS OF SPECIAL CONCERN .....	17
EMERGENCIES IN THE FIELD .....	17
COMMUNICATIONS .....	18
<b>TRAVEL PLANNING</b> .....	<b>19</b>
RENDEZVOUS.....	19
PASSPORTS AND VISAS.....	20
INSURANCE .....	22
ADDITIONAL TRAVEL INFORMATION.....	23
RECOMMENDED READING .....	24
HELPFUL RESOURCES .....	25
<b>APPENDIX</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>EXPEDITION PACKING CHECKLIST</b> .....	<b>27</b>

# General Information

<b>Project title</b>	<b>Costa Rican Sea Turtles</b>
<b>Earthwatch scientists</b>	<b>Dr. Frank V. Paladino</b> , Jack W. Schrey Distinguished Professor, Department of Biology, Indiana-Purdue University <b>Dr. Bibi Santidrian Tomillo</b> , Research Associate, Drexel University; Science Director, The Leatherback Trust
<b>Research site</b>	Playa Grande, Playa Ventanas, Playa Carbon, and Tamarindo Estuary, adjacent to the Goldring Marine Biology Field Station, Santa Cruz, Costa Rica
<b>Rendezvous Location &amp; Time</b>	Tamarindo Airport, Guanacaste, Costa Rica Arrival: 12:45 p.m. on Day 1 Departure from airport: 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. on Day 9 Please see the <i>Rendezvous</i> section for more information.
<b>Expedition Dates</b>	<b>Team 1:</b> October 22, 2011 – October 30, 2011 <b>Team 2:</b> November 2, 2011 – November 10, 2011 <b>Team 3:</b> November 13, 2011 – November 21, 2011 <b>Team 4:</b> November 23, 2011 – December 1, 2011 <b>Team 5:</b> December 4, 2011 – December 12, 2011 <b>Team 6:</b> December 14, 2011 – December 22, 2011 <b>Team 7:</b> January 7, 2012 – January 15, 2012 <b>Team 8:</b> January 18, 2012 – January 26, 2012 <b>Team 9:</b> January 29, 2012 – February 6, 2012 <b>Team 10:</b> February 9, 2012 – February 17, 2012
<b>Expedition length:</b>	9 days
<b>Team Size Max:</b>	9 participants
	<b>Minimum age of participation:</b> 18 years of age*

## Emergency Contacts

### Emergency contact number at Earthwatch headquarters in the US:

**+1 978 461-0081**

**(800) 776-0188** (Please note that the 800-number works as a toll free call *only* for calls placed within the US.)

After business hours, leave your message with our live answering service. State that you have an emergency communication and leave a clear message with the name of the field program, your name, location from which you are calling, and if possible, a phone number where you can be reached. An Earthwatch staff person will be contacted and will respond to your call within one hour.

### Emergency medical and evacuation assistance provider

To contact International SOS in the event of an emergency, dial:

- For assistance **within the US**: ISOS Philadelphia, +1 215 942 8459
- For assistance **outside the US**: ISOS London, +44 (0) 208 762 8008
- For assistance **within Australia**: ISOS Australasia, + 61 (0) 2 9372 2468

State that you are on an Earthwatch expedition. The following information must be provided:

1. The Insured Person's name
2. The Assured is **EARTHWATCH**, the Certificate No: **GP 0010214** and SOS reference **#14ACPA000075**
3. The telephone number and facsimile number where the Insured Person can be reached
4. The Insured Person's address abroad
5. The nature of the emergency



Dear Earthwatcher,

**Welcome to Earthwatch!** We greatly appreciate your decision to contribute to hands-on environmental science and conservation. As an Earthwatch volunteer, you have the opportunity to create positive change. Each year we connect thousands of people just like you with research projects to undertake the fieldwork necessary to understand and help an array of species, habitats, and cultures on approximately 65 research projects in more than 35 countries. These projects focus on: **climate change, cultural heritage, ecosystem services and oceans.**

**We are committed to caring for the safety of all those involved in our activities anywhere in the world.**

Although risk is an inherent part of the environments in which we work, through careful risk management and diligent planning we believe that all participants can have educational and inspirational Earthwatch experiences. We've been providing volunteer field experiences **for 40 years**, so you're in good hands.

**It is essential that you carefully read your Expedition Briefing and complete the volunteer forms so that you are fully prepared. Your Expedition Briefing includes important information** such as instructions for reaching the project site, what risks are present on the research project and how to avoid them, what to pack, what immunizations you need, how to physically prepare for your expedition, and more. It also explains the research being conducted on the project, why it's important, and what role you'll play as an Earthwatch volunteer.

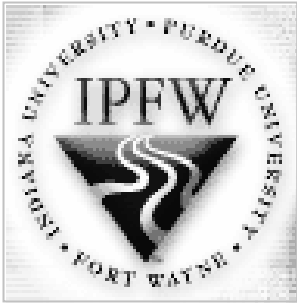
**Well-prepared volunteers are better able to enjoy the unique and exciting experiences that an Earthwatch expedition offers** and will be more helpful to the scientists' important work. Open-mindedness, the ability to work on a team, and a desire to learn are all keys to a successful and enjoyable Earthwatch experience. We hope this expedition will inspire you to get more involved in conservation and sustainable development priorities—not just out in the field but also when you return home. We encourage you to share your experiences with others, to transfer your skills and enthusiasm to environmental conservation efforts in your workplace, community and home.

If you have questions as you prepare for your expedition, contact your Earthwatch office. Thank you for your support, and enjoy your expedition!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Anne T. Ogilvie".

Anne T. Ogilvie  
International Director of Field Management



Dear Earthwatch Volunteers,

Welcome to the *Costa Rican Sea Turtles* expedition! This is the project's 23rd year in the Parque Nacional Marino Las Baulas, and it promises to be another exciting adventure, combining environment, investigation, animals, researchers and volunteers.

Costa Rica holds an estimated 5% of the world's biodiversity and is a long-standing democracy. The water is warm, and there is plenty to see and do. Most importantly, the leatherbacks are remarkable. Watching one of these huge animals haul itself onto the beach and lay its eggs is a fantastic experience. The scientists and staff are highly trained, motivated and experienced in field biology, and look forward to working with you.

The primary goal of the expedition is to gain a better understanding of the nesting and population biology of this endangered turtle on the beaches of Parque Nacional Marino Las Baulas. These beaches are crucial for the Pacific population of this species, and your assistance will allow a more complete documentation of where the turtles nest, how often they return each season, and how many of the eggs laid actually hatch. In addition, we protect nests from destruction due to human, animal and tidal action. You will interact with the ecotourist traffic on the beach and with national park guards who are extremely passionate about turtle biology and conservation.

There will be a number of scientific studies happening at different times of the season. Throughout the project there will be nighttime tagging and censusing of the nesting turtles as well as nest relocation and development of a hatchery, and hatching success studies during the day. Other major daytime activities include nest measurements, excavations, taking nest temperatures and hatchery maintenance. We are sure that there will be plenty to do and that you'll have an excellent time.

See you in Playa Grande!

*Frank V. Paladino*

Frank V. Paladino, PhD  
James R. Spotila, PhD  
Bibi Santidrian Tomillo, PhD  
Julianne Koval  
Kim Gieras

# The Research

## Costa Rican Sea Turtles

### **Project Overview**

The goal of this project is to help save leatherback sea turtles from extinction at the most important remaining nesting beaches in the world. For the past 22 years the *Costa Rican Sea Turtles* research team has been conducting studies on the behavior, physiology, genetics, population biology and migrations of endangered leatherback turtles on Playa Grande, Playa Ventanas and Playa Langosta on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. We hope to understand the dramatic declines of leatherbacks in the Pacific Ocean and the population dynamics of marine turtles in general.

This project aims to maintain a long-term population database for the reproduction and genetics of endangered leatherback turtles nesting on the beaches in this national park complex. It is necessary to extend this database in order to understand long-term impacts from development along the beaches, human intrusion and global warming. We are just starting to see long-term impacts on reproduction and hatching success of nesting leatherbacks. This project has provided the longest population dataset existing in the Pacific on a long-lived marine pelagic turtle.

Secondly, the project seeks to understand adult and hatchling behavior in the water and to uncover their migratory routes, and impacts of human activities and pollution on these animals, both on land and in the water. Understanding migration routes and the effects of fisheries and development on leatherback behavior has been critical to the development of international treaties and conservation management strategies for endangered leatherbacks in the Pacific. We are just beginning to get a picture of turtle movements and behavior and need additional data on near-shore inter-nesting to understand the impact of sport and artisanal fisheries on these nesting turtles as well as long liner impacts in the open ocean on migrating turtles.

The project also runs an education program to expose local community members and schoolchildren to the benefits of turtles and the natural resources of the national park to promote ecotourism and conservation. Since 2007, the Great Turtle Race has taken place each year. This event was designed to use the migrations of turtles in El Niño and La Niña years as an instruction tool for schoolchildren and the public, and also provides long-term detailed movements for these animals in changing oceanic conditions. More information on this project can be found at [www.greatturtleace.com](http://www.greatturtleace.com).

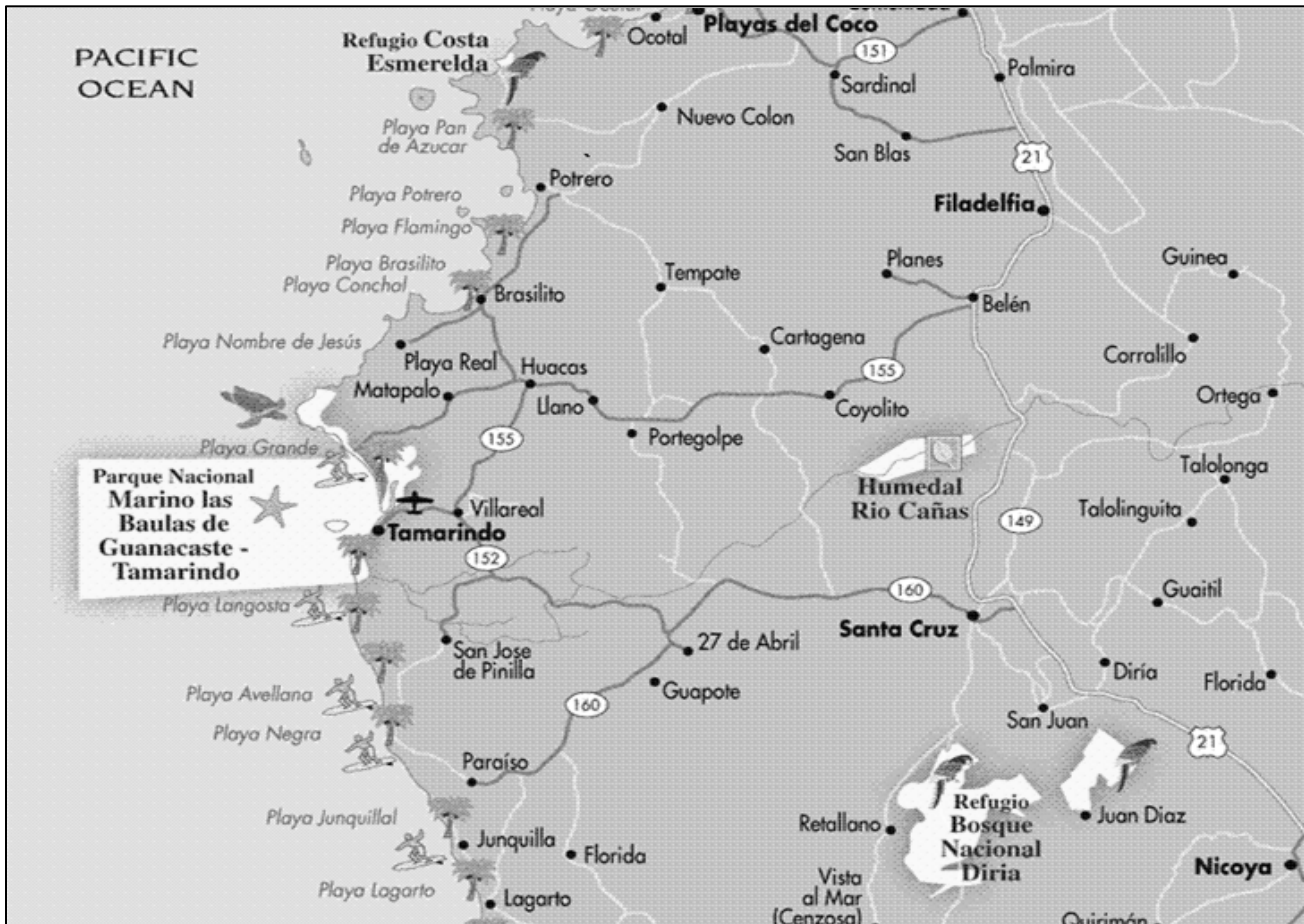
### **Contributions to Conservation Efforts, Public Policy and Issues of Sustainability**

This research has been instrumental in the establishment of the National Park Las Baulas De Guanacaste and the Goldring Marine Biology Field Station. Additionally, it was critical to the establishment of a management plan for the entire area that impacts all land development and water use. This national park is now being used as a model for beach protection and preservation in Costa Rica as well as throughout Central America. The management and protection of leatherbacks worldwide has relied on our long-term database for information on issues related to El Niño and long-line fishing impacts on large marine pelagic species, especially marine turtles.

The project helped to sponsor the International Commission for the Conservation of Sea Turtles, which is now based in Costa Rica. This international commission has established a number of international agreements between Central American countries and the USA for the management and protection of sea turtles.

By creation of the guide cooperatives, which employ over 100 local families, as well as the creation of an artisan cooperative that makes and sells local articles created from renewable local resources, we have helped create a sustainable local economy that is in harmony with the management and protection of this national park and this endangered species.

## Research Area



Source: [www.govisitCostaRica.com](http://www.govisitCostaRica.com)

Guanacaste Province on the northwest coast is sometimes called the “Wild West of Costa Rica.” The area is covered with dry tropical forest, savanna, and pasture-like areas that are well-grazed by cattle. Adjacent areas are cut and burned annually to regenerate grassland and to prevent woody vegetation. There are still areas of natural dry forest within the province, where Cortes trees dot the grasslands like large umbrellas. The coastline has numerous rocky outcroppings between beautiful white sand beaches. At low tide, tidal pools become exposed, in which many marine organisms are visible. Leatherback and olive ridley turtles nest on the beaches where your team will work. Also quite close are beaches where large nesting groups, or *arribadas*, of ridley turtles can be found. Ridley *arribadas* are impressive, with thousands of turtles emerging in one evening on small stretches of beach.

Adjacent to Playa Grande and Playa Langosta are mangrove estuaries, which the team will tour with a local guide. American crocodiles, howler monkeys, green iguanas, ctenosaurs, countless wading birds and tegue live in this area, along with a variety of lizards, snakes and amphibians. There are seven different species of mangrove within the estuary. This is critical nursery habitat for many species in the Pacific. There are over 60 species of birds that are common in the area adjacent to the estuary, and numerous migrants pass through seasonally.

For information on the climate, conditions and potential hazards of the area, see the *Project Conditions* section.

Costa Rica is a well established democracy with a constitution. The local area is governed by the Municipality of Santa Cruz, which is about 45 kilometers/28 miles away and not near the beach or shore. This leads to some difficulty in dealing with development and destruction of critical lands around the National Park. The local people,

who often refer to themselves as “Ticos,” can no longer afford to live near beaches because of the land speculation and investment by foreigners. However, local community members are generally very friendly and pleased with the international ecotourism business that has recently improved their economy.

Playa Grande is accessible by car and has several hotels and tourist *cabinas*. The area has a well-developed tourism industry centered on surfing, scuba diving, sport fishing (it’s the best spot in the world for large billfish), and ecotourism. Tamarindo, the project’s rendezvous site, has a number of local arts and crafts shops, and Santa Cruz has all the shops and supplies one could want. The cattle industry is the dominant commercial influence, and there are annual rodeos and other cattle-related events that are a part of the local culture and color. There are also opportunities to tour the rolling grasslands in the surrounding areas on horseback. The fishing is excellent, and the fishing fleets are found just north in Culebra. The restaurants are all very good. Specialties include seafood, local beef dishes, fresh fruit, and rice and beans.

## PROJECT STAFF

### Earthwatch scientists

**Dr. Frank V. Paladino** is the Jack W. Schrey Professor of Biology at Indiana-Purdue University in Fort Wayne (IPFW), Indiana. He has been at IPFW for more than 26 years and conducts research in the field of comparative vertebrate physiological ecology. He has over 60 scientific papers in reviewed professional journals on animals ranging from songbirds to elephants to fish to sea turtles. He has been conducting research on sea turtles in Costa Rica since 1988. Dr. Paladino has a PhD in zoophysiology from Washington State University (1979) and a master’s degree in ecology from Buffalo State University College (1976). Dr. Paladino spends as much time as possible sharing his knowledge with the field team and volunteers in Costa Rica; however, he must spend a portion of each nesting season devoted to professorial duties on the IPFW campus.

**Dr. Bibi Santidrian Tomillo** is the science director with The Leatherback Trust. She is from Madrid, Spain and has a master’s degree from the University of Wales Swansea, where she studied speed of travel of migrating green turtles from Ascension Island to Brazil. She started as a field assistant with the project and has now been involved for 10 years. She earned her PhD at Drexel University. For her thesis, she looked at the population dynamics of leatherback turtles. Her areas of expertise include population biology, marine biology and conservation. Her current research focuses on the effect of climatic events on hatching success of leatherback turtles and other reptile species. She currently supervises the research done from the station and connects research and management by working closely with the national park authorities.

### Field Team Leaders

**Ms. Julianne Koval** is a master’s student working under the direction of Dr. Paladino at IPFW. She is working to gain more information on the population of female olive ridley sea turtles that also nests within Parque Nacional Marino Las Baulas. Julianne looks forward to incorporating this work into the Earthwatch experience. This will be Julianne’s third year involved with the project and her first year as field team leader.

**Ms. Kim Gieras** is a Master’s student at IPFW also working with Dr. Paladino. Kim will be studying hatchlings for her thesis and looking at historical trends by analyzing hatchery data from previous seasons combined with data she has collected in the field. This will be Kim’s third year with the project. Her love of all reptiles is rivaled by few.

### Visiting Scientist

**Dr. James R. Spotila** is the Betz Chair Professor of Environmental Science at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He has over 100 reviewed scientific publications in professional journals in the area of physiological ecology of vertebrate animals. He has been conducting research on sea turtles in Costa Rica since 1978. He has a PhD in vertebrate biology from the University of Arkansas (1970) and has been a professor for more than 30 years at both Buffalo State University and Drexel University.

**Staffing Schedule (Subject to Change)**

<b>Staff Member Present</b>	<b>Team 1</b>	<b>Team 2</b>	<b>Team 3</b>	<b>Team 4</b>	<b>Team 5</b>	<b>Team 6</b>	<b>Team 7</b>	<b>Team 8</b>	<b>Team 9</b>	<b>Team 10</b>
Julianne Koval	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kim Gieras	X	X			TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Dr. Frank Paladino	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Dr. Bibi Santidrian Tomillo	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

# Daily Life in the Field

## VOLUNTEER TRAINING AND ASSIGNMENTS

### Training

Volunteers will be trained to conduct each assignment, and there will also be seminars and talks presented periodically by the staff about the research and what is currently happening in the park. The timing of these talks will depend on the tides and the hours spent on the beach. All activities will be posted on a notice board each day by 12:00 noon. On the first day, you will learn how to properly work with the turtles and how to conduct yourself on the beach while assisting individual scientists. Safety rules will be explained and volunteers will work under the supervision of at least one of the staff while on the beach. Informal presentations about the main project and other research projects will be given on several evenings prior to the activities. Reprints of relevant research papers will be available for review and discussion at the field site. The need for conservation and the activities surrounding the establishment of the new National Park will be discussed. If possible, the National Park Director will also deliver a presentation.

The Earthwatch scientists will give the team a more detailed onsite project briefing when you arrive.

### Assignments

Most of the volunteer assignments will be conducted primarily at night. Nighttime activities will be assigned and rotated as needs change, but may include the following:

- Walking the beaches to tag the leatherbacks; record nest position, curved carapace length and width; count the number of eggs and SAGs (shelled albumen gobs) laid; and put thermocouples in several nests. These activities will be conducted by groups of two or three volunteers and one project staff member, and should require about six hours of work per night depending on what time high tide occurs. The number of turtles per night is difficult to predict and changes during the season, but is typically 5-20. Though not common, it is possible not to see any turtles nesting at all.
- Collecting eggs from newly laid nests in danger of tidal inundation or human interference for relocation to the hatchery. Volunteers will help bury the eggs in the hatchery and will assist in collecting, weighing, measuring and releasing hatchlings from hatchery nests when they emerge. Please note that hatchery activities vary depending on the season.
- Attaching satellite, sonic, radio transmitters and/or data loggers to monitor local behavior and migration. Volunteers may assist in restraining turtles, carrying equipment, and releasing turtles after attachment of the transmitters.
- Carrying equipment and assisting in excavations of hatched nests to determine hatching success and fecundity of the turtles (i.e. how many fertilized eggs were in a clutch).

Possible daytime research activities may include the following:

- Walking the beaches at dawn to verify the number of nesting turtles from the night before. The walk is approximately 10 kilometers/6 miles and 2-3 hours long.
- Taking nest temperatures and identifying accurate location of nests.
- Studying hatching success by excavating hatched nests from the previous night to identify how many eggs successfully hatched, as well as collecting remaining eggshells.

- Cleaning equipment, preparing tags and packing for the next night's activities, and possibly getting involved with other research projects depending on the expedition.
- Assisting with the local education program, which includes visits by schoolchildren to the beach and hatchery. There will be extensive work done with the local school in Matapalo and a number of others in the area on some expeditions.

## Taking Photographs of Sea Turtles

One of the most exciting parts of going on an expedition with Earthwatch Institute is the ability to relive the experience through your photos. For projects involving sea turtles, special care is necessary to minimize the disturbance to the turtles during their nesting. Bright lights both disturb and disorient sea turtles, which can be deadly for them. Nesting females may return to the ocean without nesting, and young hatchlings may become confused about the direction they are supposed to travel. These worries have caused many governments to impose very strict rules for light management. We thought it best to provide you with information specific to your expedition.

- *Photography on nesting beaches at night.* **Flash photography is NOT allowed on nesting beaches at night.** Therefore, **cameras are NOT allowed on nesting beaches at night**, even cameras with high-speed film and no flash.
- *How can volunteers get photos to use?* The project staff will give you a CD/DVD of images to take home (or it will be mailed later in the season). There are also some local places to purchase printed materials.
- *Photos for semi-professional or professional display:* Photographing or videoing on the beach at night for such uses requires a permit from the Ministry. Detailed information must be supplied well in advance of the expedition. These are very difficult to obtain, expensive, and designed for large film crews.
- *Flashlights/Headlamps:* The project will supply you with a filter for your light appropriate for beach work if you need one. In attempts to preserve the serenity of the nesting habitat, flashlights will only be used when necessary to illuminate tasks while working with the turtle, and cannot be used to aid in walking along the beach.

**The above information applies to taking photos on the beaches at night only. You are free to take photos during the day and of other project-related activities.**

## TEAM ITINERARY AND DAILY SCHEDULE

Be aware that schedules can and do fluctuate as weather and work conditions can affect the daily schedule. Should this situation arise, your cooperation and understanding are appreciated.

### Day 1: Arrival and Orientation

After meeting the team, volunteers will be taken to the Goldring Marine Biology Field Station. There will be some time to unpack, get to know each other and relax before the first evening dinner. At this time an orientation will be given and the volunteers, staff and project will be introduced. The house rules regarding safety, eating arrangements, daytime activities, work on the beach at night, and recreational time will be discussed. Reprints of popular and scientific papers will be available to read and discuss. On the first night, you can do as much or as little as you choose, considering you might be tired from the day's traveling. You will get a chance to familiarize yourself with the beach and then, hopefully, taken in the majestic leatherback nesting on a moonlit beach. This is an impressive sight and will get you fired up to work!

## Days 2 – 8: Field Work

Work and activities will be posted at the station. The estimated timing of daily activities is described below.

Each day will include at least a few hours of recreational or free time. During recreational time, you may choose to relax on the beach, sit by the pool, visit the small town of Playa Grande to do some souvenir shopping, get a massage or enjoy lunch at a small local restaurant, snorkel, or rent a surfboard at your own expense (surfboard rental cost depends on the type of board, but usually costs around US \$20 per day). Volunteers can sign up to participate in activities around Playa Grande to further experience Costa Rica.

There will be a half-day trip to Tamarindo for shopping and recreational time. Research staff will organize trips to the mangrove estuary and a horseback riding tour. These trips are optional and at the expense of the volunteer; expect to pay \$15 for the mangrove estuary and \$35 for horseback riding. The group will also travel to a spectacular black sand beach with tide pools for an afternoon of snorkeling.

Time	Activity
Nighttime	Volunteers will be on the beach prior to the high tide and remain for about two hours past high tide, or about 5-6 hours per night. Team members will walk the beach, going from turtle to turtle and collecting data. Nests will be relocated into the hatchery early in the season (October to mid-December) and hatchlings will be released later in the season (mid-December to February). The team will usually be off the beach by about 4:30-5:00 a.m. or earlier, depending on the tide.
5:30 a.m. – 10 a.m.	Volunteers on morning beach surveys will leave around 5:30 a.m. You will walk up to 10 kilometers/6 miles counting nests, fixing markers, taking nest temperature measurements, and other field work. A beachside restaurant will be available for a refreshing drink, and you may take a swim in the ocean after working or relax in a hammock by the pool.
11:00 a.m.	Breakfast. We like to eat breakfast all together each day to talk about the previous nights' turtles and to plan for the day. You may want to walk the quarter-mile to Kike's or go in the project van.
12:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Each day you will usually have some recreational time after breakfast and before 3 p.m. to read, write postcards, swim in the pool, go fishing or go snorkeling. On request, arrangements can be made for guided tours on horseback or boat of the local woodlands and mangrove estuary, snorkeling and swimming at a secluded black sand beach, and a trip into Tamarindo for shopping and relaxing by the beach. Resting by the pool is another option.
3 p.m. – 5 p.m.	Those visiting nests to measure temperatures leave at 3 p.m. and work for a few hours on the beach. Other groups will fix markers and perform any hatchery maintenance work. A beachside restaurant and a swim in the ocean will be available afterwards. Maintenance work on the hatchery and excavation of hatchery nests will be done during the afternoon. If nests are found the previous night, nest marking, relocation and excavations will occur. These duties typically take 1-2 hours.  Volunteers remaining at the houses during the day can help clean up the tagging packs and other equipment in preparation for the next night's work. Other work relating to student projects will occur on an as-needed basis and will be posted along with other daily activities. Visits to local schools for the education program will take place during the day while school is in session, and will be announced when available.
6:00 p.m.	Each night, team members will eat dinner together at Kike's. On several nights dinner will be followed by a slide show or other informal presentation on the research being conducted. Depending on the night work schedule, these presentations might be held before dinner.
Day 8, Evening	On Day 8, we will wrap-up dinner and take a trip to a beautiful vista to enjoy a breathtaking Costa Rican sunset.

## Day 9: Departure

Time	Activity
7:00 a.m.	Everyone will depart on Day 9.

### Earthwatch Recreational Time Policy

Earthwatch will generally accompany participants from the rendezvous to the end of the expedition except for recreation time.

- For days when no research activities are scheduled, referred to as recreational days, Earthwatch scientists will offer either a planned team activity or a range of recreational activities that have been vetted and comply with Earthwatch standards. Participants will also have the option of remaining at camp or project accommodations to rest.
- Participants who are determined to pursue options other than those recommended by the project staff will be required to sign a release before doing so. If there is a period of time during a regular research day when no research activities are scheduled, adult participants may have the opportunity to leave the project site on their own; they will be asked to sign out of the project giving their intended destination. Not appearing for the next scheduled activity will trigger the Emergency Response Plan (ERP) regarding missing people. Earthwatch will assess the general risks of adult participants leaving the project site on their own at night after work hours but cannot guarantee participant safety or an awareness of all issues.
- In some cases, due to local conditions, it may be advisable to restrict adult participants to the project camp or accommodation after dark. This will be clearly communicated in the on-site safety briefing. However, if the local conditions are such that adult participants can go out at night under their own recognizance there will be a sign-out process through which participants should state their proposed destination and estimated return time. Participants will be given 24-hour contact information for project staff should assistance be needed. The sign-out is informational only and will not be used to enforce a curfew on adult participants. Adult participants should understand that unless contacted for help, project staff will not start a search for a missing participant unless he/she fails to appear the following morning or for the next scheduled research activity.

### Additional Policies Relevant to the *Costa Rican Sea Turtles Expedition*

It is the policy of the National Park Las Baulas de Guanacaste that volunteers who have consumed **ANY** amount of alcohol during the day\* cannot be permitted on the beach to participate in that evening's turtle survey, for their safety and the safety of the turtles. Please respect this policy.

If you plan to join the evening survey, be sure not to consume any alcoholic beverages during the day—not even a single beer or glass of wine at lunch. If you do consume alcohol during the day, you will be ineligible to resume surveys until the next morning.

*\*Minors (under age 18) are prohibited from consuming any alcohol at all during the entire expedition as per local law and Earthwatch policy.*

# ACCOMMODATIONS

Your team will stay at the Goldring Marine Biology Field Station (pictured below), located in Playa Grande on the beachfront just north of the hatchery. The station is located less than 15 minutes' drive from the Tamarindo Airport, and planes frequently fly overhead.

## Sleeping (shared rooms, etc.)

At the station, there are six bedrooms. Bedrooms will be separated by gender, and the number of volunteers per room will depend on the size of the team. Most rooms sleep four or fewer people, but there may be up to six in a room. Beds are bunk style. While the station has one room that can accommodate a couple, privacy in the house is limited and couples who require to room together may want to consider joining another expedition that can guarantee couples' accommodations.

## Bathroom and facilities

The facility has four bathrooms. Each bathroom has a toilet, hot water and a spacious shower. Sinks and mirrors are located outside the toilet areas. All four bathrooms are unisex and shared by all.

Laundry may be rinsed in the outside wash basin by hand, but due to the humidity things often do not dry quickly. A laundry service can also be provided for a fee (typically about US\$3-5 for a small bag of clothes). Please be sure to conserve water, particularly from January until the end of the season. Bed linens and pillows are provided, but you will need to bring your own bath and beach towels.



## Electricity

The station has air conditioning, and electricity is suitable for charging digital cameras or other electronic equipment. Voltage is 120, 60 hertz, generally with flat two-pin plugs, and some three-pronged plugs.

## Internet/communications

The station has wireless Internet available and one hard-wired computer for volunteers to share. You may bring your own laptop to connect via wireless, but you must be responsible for any expensive equipment that you travel with, making sure it is not ostentatiously on display to passersby and is put away when not in use.

## Facilities/amenities

The duplex facilities have two kitchens, two dining areas and two lounge areas/classrooms.

## Services/restaurants within walking distance

A local restaurant, Kike's, where most meals are eaten, is located about a quarter-mile from the accommodations.

# FOOD



Breakfasts and dinners will be eaten at a local restaurant. Typically there will not be sit-down lunches, although basic food will be provided at the station for those who wish to make something to eat. Volunteers on past expeditions have found that two meals per day are sufficient. Vegetarian meals are available, but they are not as varied. Vegan meals can be harder to arrange when not available at the restaurant. If you prefer several small meals or snacking, you may wish to bring your own snacks and energy bars to supplement the menu.

Below are examples of the foods you might expect in the field. Please bear in mind that variety depends on availability. This list is intended to provide a general idea of food types, but it is very important that volunteers be flexible.

Breakfast: Fruit, pancakes, eggs, vegetables, sandwiches, salads, rice and beans, tortillas

Lunch: As stated above, volunteers may wish to bring their own snacks and energy bars to snack on in between breakfast and dinner. Basic food items such as fruit, cookies, crackers and cereal will be available at the station; however, there will be no sit-down lunches.

Dinner: Vegetables, rice, beans, salad, meat, poultry, fish dishes, pizza

Snacks/Other: You may prepare your own sandwiches, cookies, crackers, cereal, biscuits, etc. (a small grocery store near the station sells food and bottles of water inexpensively).

Beverages: Fruit juices, coffee, soft drinks and water. The tap water is fine to drink, and we encourage drinking tap water over bottled water to aid in our conservation mission. Please bring a water bottle that you can refill and carry with you in the field.

## Special Dietary Requirements

Please alert Earthwatch to any special dietary requirements (e.g. diabetes, lactose intolerance, nut or other serious food allergies) as soon as possible, and note them in the space provided on your volunteer forms. Accommodating special diets is not guaranteed and can be very difficult due to availability of food, location of field sites, and other local conditions. Local dishes tend to include meat and fish. While some vegetables are available, vegetarian meals are not varied.

**Special note to vegans and strict vegetarians:** Please be aware that it is often difficult to accommodate strict vegetarians and vegans. It may be possible to get meatless meals, but vegans may have a problem avoiding animal products altogether. If this poses a problem, then participation on this Earthwatch expedition should be seriously reconsidered.

# Project Conditions

Please show this section to the doctor when he/she is completing the Health section of your Earthwatch Participation Form. Be sure to discuss inoculation requirements with your doctor well in advance of your departure date. See the Health Information section for inoculation information.

## To the doctor:

This patient has volunteered to join a field research team that has specific physical demands of which you and he/she should be aware. **We need your accurate evaluation of this patient's ability to meet the conditions detailed below in order to care for his/her health and safety and assess that he/she can participate fully and effectively.**

### General Conditions

Temperatures are usually in the mid-80s to upper-90s°F/30–35°C during the day but cool off significantly in the evening, usually into the 60s°F/about 20°C. Volunteers on early expeditions in October and November may experience some rain and high humidity and a light packable rain parka is recommended. A light long-sleeved sweatshirt for cooler nights is also recommended. The dry season extends from December to the end of March and it tends to be warm, windy and dry. The rainy season runs from July to mid-November, with dry, hot and windy conditions the rest of the year. The beach is surrounded by rolling hills and grassland. Below are the average conditions of the research site.

**The weather is expected to vary within the limits below.**

Annual		
<b>Humidity</b>	20% to	80%
<b>Temperature range</b>	60°F/15°C to	95°F/35°C
<b>Altitude</b>	0 ft/m to	100 ft/30 m
<b>Rainfall</b>	1-5 in/25-125 mm	per week

### Physical Demands

This project does not place any extreme physical or psychological demands on volunteers; however, **the ability to walk and carry equipment on the beach is essential.**

Volunteers must be able to:

- Walk in soft sand each night for 4-6 hours. Previous volunteers have reported that walking on soft sand was much more strenuous than they had originally anticipated.
- Change your sleeping pattern and work through the night until dawn.
- Carry a 5-7 kilogram/10-15 pound backpack used to hold the tagging team's field equipment while walking on sand.
- See reasonably well in low light.

Below are the expected demands of the project, but please keep in mind that conditions may change and the project could potentially be more or less strenuous than the chart indicates.

Activity	Workload/Intensity
Sitting	1-2 hours per day
Bending	1-2 hours per day during nest excavation (digging in the sand)
Walking	Up to 10 km/6 mi on soft sand for 4-6 hours per day
Carrying	5-7 kg/10-15 lb in a backpack for 4-6 hours per day

# POTENTIAL HAZARDS

If you feel ill once you return from your trip, make sure you inform your doctor that you have recently returned from a tropical region.

Hazard Type	Associated Risks and Precautions
Walking/Hiking/ Climbing	Walking in soft sand on the beach can be strenuous, especially at night in the dark. You must be in appropriate physical condition and have good vision. Comfortable <b>closed-toe</b> footwear (such as sneakers or hiking boots) and socks are essential to reduce the risk of blisters, twisted ankles and other injuries.
Animals/Plants	Venomous snakes are rare in this area, but they may be present in the mangroves and dry forest early in the season (until November). The snakes present in Guanacaste are coral snakes, the Fer de Lance or <i>Terciopelo</i> , and the Central American rattlesnake or <i>Cascabel</i> . In 20 years, only two venomous snakes, the coral snake in the mangrove buffer zone and the <i>Terciopelo</i> in the local woods, have been spotted by the Earthwatch scientists. Rosy boas are more commonly seen than the other snakes, but they are non-venomous.  Bees and bugs are plentiful, though insects are not as bad on the Pacific side of the island due to the wind and dryness. Mosquitoes in the accommodations are quite common. Those not from North or South America may find their bites particularly discomfoting and are advised to bring anti-itch ointments and/or oral medication. Those with insect allergies should bring the proper emergency kits and inform staff of the problem and location of the kit. Bring along a repellent that works for you.
Climate/Weather	Dehydration, heat exhaustion, sunburn and other heat-related illnesses can occur, but are mitigated by drinking sufficient water and wearing high SPF sunscreen and appropriate clothing. Working in the daytime requires sunscreen of at least SPF 30. Dehydration from sweating can be a problem and although water bottles are available from the restaurant, please bring your own bottles that you can easily carry and refill them with special electrolyte-replacing packets.
Project Tasks/ Equipment	Digging up nests with your hands while kneeling in the sand can be difficult. The digging is physically tiring and could cause muscle sprains or strains.
Personal Security	The station is guarded well and locked at night. A fence surrounds the entire complex. Valuables should be stored securely in your own locked suitcase. A locked safe is available to store money and passports, but regular access is limited.
Swimming	Swimming is not a part of the research activities, but can be undertaken during recreational time. Dangerous rip tides and high waves are found off the local beach. You are advised not to swim in water deeper than your waist, and you may not swim alone. There may also be sharks near shore; when this is reported to be the case, volunteers will not be permitted to swim recreationally. Always alert project staff when, where and with whom you plan to go swimming.
Disease	Diseases found in tropical regions include malaria, dengue fever, filariasis, leishmaniasis, onchocerciasis, trypanosomiasis, schistosomiasis, hepatitis, and typhoid. Please see the Health Information section for inoculation recommendations. Most diseases are prevented with basic safety cautions. Please see the CDC ( <a href="http://www.cdc.gov">www.cdc.gov</a> ) or WHO ( <a href="http://www.who.int">www.who.int</a> ) websites for more information.
Sleep Deprivation	Work is done for six hours each night and a few hours each day, so regular sleep patterns will be interrupted. Sharing quarters with many other people and sleeping during daylight hours may also impair sleeping. Ear plugs and eye coverings may help. Luckily, your hard work will tire you out, which will greatly help falling asleep in these conditions.

# HEALTH INFORMATION

See [www.internationalsos.com](http://www.internationalsos.com) for information on the current health conditions in Costa Rica. At the homepage, enter Earthwatch’s member identification number: 14ACPA000075. Under “Select Resource” choose “English Country Guide,” and then select Costa Rica from the list.

## Routine Immunizations

All volunteers should make sure to have the following up-to-date immunizations: DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus), polio, MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) and varicella (if you have not already had chicken pox). Please be sure your tetanus shot is current.

## Project Inoculations

**Medical decisions are the responsibility of each volunteer and the following are recommendations only.** While Earthwatch can provide details regarding suggested inoculations, we are not a medical organization and decisions about which inoculations to receive should be made between you and your doctor. Health conditions around the world are constantly changing, so keep informed and consult your physician, a local travel health clinic, the US Center for Disease Control ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)), the World Health Organization ([www.who.int](http://www.who.int)), and International SOS (see above) for the latest health information for travelers. Please consult your physician for guidance on inoculations if you intend to travel to other parts of the country.

Inoculation chart is available on ISOS member site (English Country Guide, medical summary).

	Required for Entry	Recommended for Health Reasons
Typhoid		X
Yellow fever	X - if traveling from countries or region where it is endemic, a Certificate of Vaccination is required.	
Hepatitis A		X
Hepatitis B		X

## Advice Regarding Diseases

- *Malaria*: While malaria is rare in the research area, it is present especially during the rainy season and you are advised to consult your physician about whether you should take anti-malarial medication. The strain found in Costa Rica is not chloroquine resistant.
- *Tuberculosis*: The WHO estimates that one-third of the world’s population is infected with the bacterium (*M.tuberculosis*) that causes tuberculosis (TB). Incidence of tuberculosis is higher in developing countries, particularly in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. In general, approximately 10% of persons infected with *M. tuberculosis* are at risk for developing active TB during their lifetimes. TB is considered highly treatable with medications that are of relatively low toxicity and cost. Volunteers returning from developing countries are encouraged to have a (PPD)-tuberculin skin-test to screen for potential infection.
- *Dengue fever*: Dengue fever is endemic in more than 100 countries in Africa, the Americas, the Eastern Mediterranean, Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific, and can occur throughout the year. Globally there has been a 30-fold increase in the number of reported cases of dengue. Dengue fever is a flu-like virus spread primarily by day-biting mosquitoes. It is characterized by fever, headache, rash, vomiting and severe muscle pains. There is no vaccine, and mosquito bites should be avoided whenever possible. Insect repellent and long sleeves and pants are highly recommended. There is no treatment for standard dengue fever other than acetaminophen (avoid aspirin), fluids and rest. It is usually resolved after about two weeks. However, hemorrhagic dengue fever, characterized by bleeding and shock, can occasionally occur and requires medical care.

- Traveler's diarrhea: Traveler's diarrhea affects 20-50% of all international travelers. Always wash your hands with soap and water or a hand sanitizer before eating, and drink only filtered or bottled water and avoid ice. You should also carry an over-the-counter anti-diarrheal medication in your personal first aid kit. Ensure all food is well cooked before consumption and do not eat fruit or vegetables unless they have been peeled or cooked. Speak to your doctor about other options for treating traveler's diarrhea and see the ISOS or CDC websites for advice on avoiding this condition.

## MEDICAL CONDITIONS OF SPECIAL CONCERN

Condition	Concerns and Precautions
Mobility Problems	Walking on sand for extended periods of time is difficult and is not advised for people with poor physical fitness, heart conditions, prosthetic limbs or limited mobility.
Diabetes	Diabetics without previous experience of how physical exertion in a hot climate may affect their insulin levels are advised to speak with a doctor/physician.
Poor Vision or Fear of Darkness	You must be able to see well enough to make your own way along the beaches at night, and not be frightened walking outdoors in the dark at nighttime. Filtered flashlights will be provided to volunteers who need them.
Insect allergy	You must bring appropriate medication and note any allergies on your Earthwatch Participation Form.
Fear of Snakes or Insects	Phobias of snakes or insects may pose a problem. Insects are fairly common. Encounters with snakes are unlikely but possible.
Impaired hearing	Nighttime communication will likely be difficult for those with poor hearing. You may wish to choose an expedition that does not require nighttime voice communication.
Sleep apnea or conditions that require use of C-PAP machine	Volunteers must be able to do without C-PAP machines for the length of the project, as this project may not have a reliable source of electricity throughout the night.

### Additional Health Information Resources

- Travel health website: [www.mdtravelhealth.com](http://www.mdtravelhealth.com)
- The Travel Doctor: [www.tmvc.com.au](http://www.tmvc.com.au)
- Australian Department of Health and Aging: [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)
- Hospital for Tropical Diseases: [www.thehtd.org](http://www.thehtd.org)
- Travellers Healthline Advisory Service Tel: 020 7950 7799
- MASTA Travelers' Healthline (UK) Tel: 0906 8 224100 (within UK)

## EMERGENCIES IN THE FIELD

### Proximity to Medical Care

Physician, nurse, or EMT on staff	Project staff are not medical professionals
Staff certified in safety training	<b>CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation):</b> Frank Paladino and Julianne Koval <b>First Aid:</b> Frank Paladino and Julianne Koval <b>Wilderness First Responder:</b> Julianne Koval <b>Water Safety:</b> Julianne Koval
Nearest hospital and/or clinic	<b>Clinica Playa Grande</b> 50m from Kike's Place, featuring an on-call physician and pharmacy delivery service. The clinic is capable of handling general emergencies and rapidly transporting severe cases to Hospital de Santa Cruz, if needed.  <b>Hospital de Santa Cruz</b> Full service 24-hour hospital in Santa Cruz Distance from research site: 40km/25mi, 45 minutes to 1 hour by car.
Evacuation	If emergency medical evacuation is necessary, the project van is always available and the local airport in Tamarindo can be used to arrange flights out by small plane (within 12-24 hours).

# COMMUNICATIONS

## Emergency Communications in the Field

In case of emergency, the Earthwatch scientists can be reached at the number provided in the print version of this briefing. Contact your Earthwatch office.

**The emergency contact number at Earthwatch in the US is +1 978 461-0081 (see *Emergency Contacts for calling instructions*).**

## Personal Communications

You will be able to make one brief call to family/friends upon arrival. Volunteers will be responsible for the costs of all personal communications.

- There is wireless Internet available at the station, and one computer for use by all in the volunteer accommodation. For more email communication, the team will be taken to Tamarindo (40 minutes away by van) on occasion (usually once per expedition) and can visit an Internet café to check email.
- There are ample telephones and fax machines in Playa Grande and nearby Tamarindo available for regular non-emergency communications. Phone cards for the local payphone (right outside the station in front of the adjacent hotel) can be purchased in the San Jose airport. If you do not have a toll-free calling card, you will be charged a fee of US\$1.50 for a collect call.
- Most international cell phones work in Costa Rica and the reception in the area is fair to good.

Family and friends of Earthwatch volunteers should be aware that personal communication with outsiders is not always possible while participating in an expedition. Earthwatch encourages volunteers to minimize outgoing calls; likewise, family and friends should restrict calls to urgent messages only. Measures have been taken to ensure that appropriate communication tools are available in cases of emergency.

All volunteers are asked to remember that Earthwatch expeditions offer a rare chance to escape from hearing ringing phones and others' phone conversations, and to regulate their cell-phone use with respect for fellow volunteers and staff accordingly.

## Contact Information

If necessary, volunteers can be reached via the contact information below.

Address	Goldring Marine Biology Field Station Playa Grande, Santa Cruz Guanacaste, Costa Rica	A First Class letter would take a minimum of 10 days to arrive from the United States, and slightly longer from Europe; therefore, communication via mail is not recommended.
Phone/Fax	The Earthwatch scientists can be reached at the number and email address provided in the print version of this briefing. Contact your Earthwatch office.	

# Travel Planning

**Note:** Earthwatch Institute's international emergency medical and evacuation assistance provider, International SOS, has a wealth of useful information available at their website, including visa, passport, currency, medical, etc. information for the country in which this project takes place. See [www.internationalsos.com](http://www.internationalsos.com) and enter Earthwatch's member identification number: 14ACPA000075. Under "Select Resource" choose "English Country Guide," and then select this project's country from the list.

- You are encouraged to register your travel itinerary with your embassy. For information on embassies around the world see [www.embassyworld.com](http://www.embassyworld.com)
  - Citizens of Australia may register online at: [www.orao.dfat.gov.au](http://www.orao.dfat.gov.au).
  - British citizens may register online at: [www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/staying-safe](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/staying-safe).
  - Citizens of the United States may register online at: [travelregistration.state.gov](http://travelregistration.state.gov).
  - Citizens of other countries are encouraged to check with their appropriate embassy or consulate regarding registration.

## RENDEZVOUS

The rendezvous information for this project has been removed from this web version of the Expedition Briefing. Please do not make any travel arrangements to join an expedition on this project without receiving full and up-to-date rendezvous information from Earthwatch. Full rendezvous details including places and times are available from Earthwatch upon request prior to registration for an expedition. Please use the "Contact Us" button on the top right hand corner of our website to get in touch with us and we will be very happy to help you. This information is provided in the printed version of this Expedition Briefing.

# PASSPORTS AND VISAS

## Passport Information

Most volunteers traveling from outside the host country will require a passport valid for at least six months beyond the dates of travel.

## Visa Information

Citizens of the US, EU, Australia, Canada and Japan **do not** need a tourist visa for entry. Citizens of other countries should check with their travel agent or a visa agency for specific visa and entry requirements. Travelers are advised to check visa regulations well in advance of traveling.

**Note: If you are traveling from outside the US to Canada, Mexico, Latin America, South America, The Bahamas, or the Caribbean and have a stopover in the US, you are required to register through the ESTA program.**

## Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA)

Online registration is now mandatory for all visitors traveling to the United States without a visa. The Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) is used to screen short-term visitors who are citizens of the 36 countries eligible for the US Visa Waiver Program (for a list of participating countries, see [travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without\\_1990.html#countries](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html#countries)).

Visitors are required to complete ESTA **at least three days before traveling to the US**. Once approved, the authorization will be valid for up to two years if the individual's passport does not expire in the meantime. Applications can be submitted through the ESTA website [esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta](http://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta). **Note:** As of September 2010 ESTA will cost approximately US\$14.00.

Citizens of countries covered by the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) traveling to the US for tourism or business for 90 days or less do not need to obtain a visa provided they have a valid passport. (For exceptions see the VWP Quick Reference Guide on [travel.state.gov/pdf/VWP-QuickReferenceGuide.pdf](http://travel.state.gov/pdf/VWP-QuickReferenceGuide.pdf))

## Essential Information for Volunteers Requiring Visas

<b>Type of Visa</b>	Volunteers requiring a visa must get a <b>TOURIST VISA</b> .
<b>Where to Get a Visa</b>	Contact the nearest <b>Costa Rican embassy or consulate</b> to find out how to apply for your visa. Please note that this process can take weeks or more. We strongly recommend using a <b>visa agency</b> , which can both expedite and simplify the process. See below for a list of visa agencies.
<b>Required Information</b>	You will need to send your <b>passport</b> (valid for at least six months beyond your stay), a <b>Visa Application and Immigration Form</b> , <b>2-4 passport-size photos plus payment</b> to the embassy or visa agency (if applicable). Please be sure that your passport is valid for at least six months beyond your stay.
<b>Contact Information</b>	This information is provided in the print version of this briefing.
<b>Cost of a Visa</b>	Generally between US\$40-100, but varies from country to country and can potentially cost <b>up to US\$180</b> . A visa agency will charge an additional fee.

**Reminder:** The purpose of your visit is for vacation, holiday or travel. Foreign immigration officials do not always understand the concept of a “working vacation” or even “volunteering.” Words such as “working,” “volunteering,” “research” or “scientific expedition” can raise questions concerning the country’s foreign labor laws and/or prompt questions about official scientific research permits and credentials, etc., to which volunteers on their own will not be equipped to respond. All required research permits for the project are in place and have been approved by the proper authorities.

## Visa Agencies

### In the United States

Travisa\*  
290 5th Avenue, 4th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
Tel: (212) 613-2223  
Fax: (212) 613-2287  
Hours: 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM EST  
Web: [www.travisa.com](http://www.travisa.com)  
(\*See the website for additional offices)

### In Europe

CIBT, Inc. UK  
25 Wilton Road  
Lower Ground Floor  
Victoria SW1V 1LW  
Tel: 0844 736 0211  
Fax: +44 (0) 207 828 5411  
Calling from Europe outside UK:  
+44 (0)207 802 1000  
Email: [info@uk.cibt.com](mailto:info@uk.cibt.com)  
Web: [www.uk.cibt.com](http://www.uk.cibt.com) (has alternate address for urgent requests)

### In Australia

Ask your travel agency if they can send your visa application on your behalf.

## Additional Passport and Visa Resources

- For Japanese citizens: [www.rainbowt.jp/travel/visa\\_top.html](http://www.rainbowt.jp/travel/visa_top.html)
- For Australian citizens: [www.passports.gov.au](http://www.passports.gov.au) and [www.dfat.gov.au/visas/index.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/visas/index.html)
- For US citizens: [www.passportvisasexpress.com](http://www.passportvisasexpress.com)
- Travel Document Systems: [www.traveldocs.com/index.htm](http://www.traveldocs.com/index.htm)

## Volunteers Under 18 Years of Age

### Entry to Foreign Countries

It may be possible for 16- and 17-year-olds to participate on standard Earthwatch teams *if* accompanied by a parent or guardian. However, in an effort to prevent international child abduction many governments have initiated procedures at entry/exit points to protect minors. Thus, if a minor will be traveling with only one guardian or if for any reason they will be traveling alone (such as for a Teen Team), it may be necessary to have a notarized letter from all legal guardians stipulating that they may travel unaccompanied or in the presence of a single guardian. This letter must give an explanation for why only one parent or someone other than a parent is signing the letter. For example, if one parent is deceased, only one parent has legal guardianship, or someone other than the parents are legal guardians, the letter should state that.

### Airline Documentation Requirements

Airlines may also have documentation requirements for unaccompanied minors. Parents of minors are responsible for checking with each airline that their child will be flying to ensure that sufficient documentation is provided. This could include a copy of a birth certificate or a notarized letter stating that the minor has his or her parent’s permission to travel alone or with only one parent.

**Important Note:** Requirements by specific countries and airlines vary and change frequently. You **MUST** keep informed of the requirements on your own to avoid problems at immigration. If a letter is not available, the volunteer under 18 can be refused entry into the country or on a flight. There is nothing Earthwatch Institute can do to help in this circumstance.

# INSURANCE

MedEvac assistance, advice, and insurance are included in the contribution you pay to Earthwatch. It covers your travel medical risks, including medical expenses and emergency medical evacuation, while you are travelling and it provides trip cancellation insurance (see [www.earthwatch.org/downloads/Insurance/post15Jan\\_TravelFAQs.pdf](http://www.earthwatch.org/downloads/Insurance/post15Jan_TravelFAQs.pdf) for more details), baggage and personal money insurance. It doesn't provide personal liability insurance. This coverage is valid in the country of your Earthwatch expedition (for US volunteers, as long as the expedition is over 100 miles from your place of residence) and during travel to and from your expedition. Please see [the FAQ](#) for information about when coverage starts and ends.

If you have additional vacation time before and/or after your Earthwatch Expedition that forms part of your overall time away from your place of residence, this additional vacation time is not covered under this policy. If you are in any doubt as to whether your travel plans before and/or after your Earthwatch expedition constitute additional vacation time please contact Michelle Ralph at Sutton Winson at [michelle.ralph@swib.co.uk](mailto:michelle.ralph@swib.co.uk).

**This insurance policy is secondary to your existing health insurance policy (e.g. the NHS in the UK).**

## ***If you signed up through Earthwatch UK/Europe, or Earthwatch Japan:***

Details of this insurance policy are included in your expedition briefing pack and can be found at [www.earthwatch.org/europe/expeditions/insuranceinfo](http://www.earthwatch.org/europe/expeditions/insuranceinfo). Please refer all queries regarding this policy to Michelle Ralph at Sutton Winson in the UK. You can email her at [michelle.ralph@swib.co.uk](mailto:michelle.ralph@swib.co.uk) or call her at +44 (0)1444-251164 (fax: +44 (0) 1444-251250).

Information about additional insurance available to UK residents for coverage before or after your Earthwatch project can be found at [www.earthwatch.org/europe/insuranceinfo](http://www.earthwatch.org/europe/insuranceinfo). Should you have any questions about whether you require coverage for your travel plans please contact Michelle Ralph at Sutton Winson (contact info above). Earthwatch is not authorized by the FSA to give advice on any additional travel insurance you require.

## ***If you signed up through Earthwatch US:***

Details of the US insurance policy can be found at [www.earthwatch.org/expedition/insurance](http://www.earthwatch.org/expedition/insurance). Please refer any queries regarding this policy to Michelle Ralph at Sutton Winson in the UK, [michelle.ralph@swib.co.uk](mailto:michelle.ralph@swib.co.uk). Or, from the US, dial +011 (44) 1444-251164 (fax: +011 (44) 1444-251250). Please note the time difference between the US and the UK, and call during UK business hours, which are from 08:45 to 17:00 GMT (from November to April) and GMT +1 (from April to November). You may also leave a message and request that she call you back.

Information about additional insurance can be found on [www.earthwatch.org/expedition/gear\\_flights\\_more](http://www.earthwatch.org/expedition/gear_flights_more).

## **Emergency Medical and Evacuation Assistance (For All Volunteers)**

Emergency medical and evacuation assistance is available for all Earthwatch participants from International SOS (ISOS), a 24-hour, independently-operated international emergency medical and evacuation service. Please see the contact information and card on the *General Information* page. Participants should carry the card with them on the expedition.

# ADDITIONAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

## ***Packing and Luggage***

- *General packing considerations:* Do not bring more luggage than you can carry and handle on your own. If traveling by air and checking your luggage, you are advised to pack an extra set of field clothing and personal essentials in your carry-on bag in case your luggage is lost and/or takes several days to catch up with you. Many airlines have strict baggage policies. Please check with your airline(s) on baggage weight limits, liquid restrictions, fees for checked baggage, etc.
- *Checking luggage:* Please note that if you will be taking an international flight that has one or more connections within the country of your destination, it will be necessary to collect any checked bags at the airport where you first arrive in the destination country. After proceeding through Customs, you will have to recheck your luggage before flying on to your final destination.

## ***Money Matters***

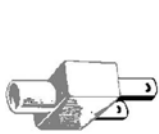
- *Personal funds:* Businesses are not as eager to accept traveler's checks in US dollars. At most local shops in Tamarindo, credit cards are accepted and some cash machines/ATMs are available in the bank in Tamarindo and at the Frijoles Locos surf shop in Playa Grande, though it is not easy to withdraw funds from these with credit cards issued outside Costa Rica. The team will take a trip to Tamarindo on one day, during which you will be able to exchange money at a bank. A few hundred US dollars is more than enough for recreational activities such as the estuary tour, horseback riding, renting surfboards, and purchasing souvenirs and extra snacks and drinks. It is good to have at least some cash for day trips and for small stores that are not set up for credit cards.
- *Local currency:* Colones are the local currency, but US dollars are usually accepted. See [www.xe.com/ucc](http://www.xe.com/ucc) for currency information and exchange rates. Be sure to also bring a credit card for unforeseen or emergency expenses.
- *Airport Fees and/or Departure Taxes:* If departing from Tamarindo Airport, there is a \$3 departure tax. Leaving from the San Juan airport there is an international departure tax of 12,600 colones (US\$26) which can be paid in cash (either US dollars or Costa Rican colones) or with a VISA credit card.

## ***Your Destination***

- *Language:* Spanish is the official language, but English is widely spoken.
- *Cultural Considerations:* **Please remember that you represent the project at all times.** Very short shorts or low-cut, tight shirts may draw unwanted attention that will detract from the scientific goals of the project. Typical western style bathing suits are fine to wear on the beach and by the pool.

The field station is patrolled by armed guards and surrounded by gates. This is quite common in Costa Rica and we feel quite safe on site, BUT you should leave any unnecessary valuables at home.

- *Electricity:* Voltage is 120, 60 hertz, generally with flat two-pin plugs, and some three-pronged plugs. For additional information, see [kropla.com/electric2.htm](http://kropla.com/electric2.htm).



*Plug Type A*



*Plug Type B*

- *Time zone:* i.e. GMT/UTC -6; Daylight Savings Time is not observed. For time worldwide with GMT/UTC, see: [www.worldtimeserver.com](http://www.worldtimeserver.com).
- *Telephone Dialing codes:* When calling Costa Rica from another country, dial the country's international dialing code, followed by (506) and the number. When calling within Costa Rica, omit the (506) and dial the local number. When calling another country from Costa Rica, dial (00), followed by the other country's country code (e.g. 1 for the US and 44 for the UK) and the number. Please note that all landline phone numbers in Costa Rica are preceded by a 2 and all Costa Rican cell phone numbers are preceded by an 8 (following the country code (506) if necessary. For additional information see [kropla.com/dialcode.htm](http://kropla.com/dialcode.htm).  
**PLEASE NOTE:** You should check with your cell phone provider to obtain any carrier-specific dialing codes you may need; many providers have dialing procedures that may differ in whole or in part from these directions.

### Country Information

- UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office: [www.fco.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo](http://www.fco.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo)
- Country information from around the world: [www.countryreports.org](http://www.countryreports.org)
- National Geographic Map Machine: [plasma.nationalgeographic.com/mapmachine](http://plasma.nationalgeographic.com/mapmachine)
- US State Department: [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)
- Online unit conversions: [www.onlineconversion.com](http://www.onlineconversion.com)
- Worldwide weather: [www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com) or [www.tutiempo.net/en](http://www.tutiempo.net/en)
- ATM locator: [visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/jsp/SearchPage.jsp](http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/jsp/SearchPage.jsp) or [www.mastercard.com/atmlocator/index.jsp](http://www.mastercard.com/atmlocator/index.jsp)

## RECOMMENDED READING

Below are additional recommended materials for those interested in further preparing for the expedition. Some may be purchased online through popular vendors. See the *Helpful Resources* section for suggested vendor websites.

### Books

Safina, C. 2006. *Voyage of the Turtle*. Henry Holt.  
Spotila, J.R. 2004. *Sea Turtles*. Johns Hopkins Press.

### Articles

Spotila, J.R. *et al.* 2000. Pacific Leatherback turtles face extinction. *Nature*, June 1.

### Journals

*Chelonian Conservation and Biology*

### Field Guide

Blake, B. 2005. *The New Key to Costa Rica*. 17<sup>th</sup> Edition. (available online at [www.keytocostarica.com](http://www.keytocostarica.com))

### Film

*Red Dawn Rising*

### Project Field Report

Each Earthwatch Institute-supported project submits a report on the past year's research and results to Earthwatch, generally on an annual basis. The most recent field report for this project is available online through [www.earthwatch.org/exped/paladino.html](http://www.earthwatch.org/exped/paladino.html). Note that reports are not available for all projects.

### Project-related Websites

<http://www.leatherback.org>: Describes the location and work being done, with regular updates on the progress of the various projects, as well as results from previous years.

## Travel Booksellers

We encourage you to buy a guide book to your chosen destination as well as any other books that may be of interest. One excellent resource is the [Travel Bookshop \(www.thetravelbookshop.com\)](http://www.thetravelbookshop.com).

Think of [Longitude Books \(www.longitudebooks.com\)](http://www.longitudebooks.com) as a bookstore organized geographically! Here you'll find travel guides, maps, field guides, accounts of exploration, travel narratives, books on culture, art and archaeology, in addition to academic books on anything from the tropical rainforest to the polar ice cap.

[Stanfords \(www.stanfords.co.uk\)](http://www.stanfords.co.uk) is also the best map and travel literature supplier in the UK and has a global reputation.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

Additional resources can be found on our Volunteer Resources pages:

For volunteers who sign up through our US office: [earthwatch.org/expedition/volunteerresources](http://earthwatch.org/expedition/volunteerresources)

For volunteers who sign up through our UK office: [earthwatch.org/europe/expeditions/volunteerresources](http://earthwatch.org/europe/expeditions/volunteerresources)

## Gear Shops

US volunteers may choose to visit the Earthwatch gear shop, **New Headings** ([earthwatch.newheadings.com](http://earthwatch.newheadings.com)), a fun, easy-to-use, one-stop shop that answers the “what to pack” question for your upcoming Earthwatch expedition. New Headings offer a broad range of outdoor equipment and travel gear, including a selection of Earthwatch embroidered apparel.

Our recommended clothing and kit provider in the UK is **Nomad Travel** ([www.nomadtravel.co.uk/earthwatch](http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/earthwatch)). A full list of clothing and kit is available to order online, and they also have [stores in the UK](#), many of which have [travel clinics](#) where you can get health advice and vaccinations. Earthwatch volunteers benefit from a 10% discount on all clothing and health services so be sure to contact us for a special code before you buy anything from them online or visit their stores and clinics.

## Travel Agencies and Advice

- Earthwatch has an official partnership with **Fly for Good** ([www.flyforgood.com](http://www.flyforgood.com)) and strongly recommends volunteers use their services to book airfare for expeditions and take advantage of Fly for Good's humanitarian discount rates on several international airlines and routes.

Before you can access Fly for Good's discounted rates, you must set up a profile. Go to [Sign in](#) and enter your information. When asked to enter an Approval code, enter **EW360**. List [Earthwatch Institute](#) as your affiliated nonprofit. At this point your account will be approved and you will be sent an e-mail confirmation.

Earthwatch volunteers have 24-7 access to Fly for Good staff by calling **+1 (952) 220-8465** or **+1 (877) 499-5592**, in the event that flight issues cannot be resolved with your airline.

- **WEXAS** ([www.wexas.com](http://www.wexas.com)) is the UK's tailor-made travel expert. A WEXAS consultant with significant experience with Earthwatch and our programs is on hand to provide you with travel advice and support. Call them on: 0044 (0) 20-7838-5858 or email: [earthwatch@wexas.com](mailto:earthwatch@wexas.com). If asked for a quote code, use **EWE01/02**.

WEXAS is normally a members-only travel agency. However, as an Earthwatch volunteer, you benefit from our WEXAS membership, so be sure to **tell them you are an Earthwatch volunteer** for full access to WEXAS' best rates.

- Earthwatch is a partner with **Travelocity in their Travel for Good/Change Ambassadors Grant Program**, which allows would-be volunteers to apply for funding that can be used to cover the costs of an Earthwatch expedition and its associated travel costs. Visit [www.travelocity.com/TravelForGood](http://www.travelocity.com/TravelForGood) for more details.

Australian volunteers may apply here: [www.zuji.com.au/](http://www.zuji.com.au/).

- **STA Travel** is the preferred travel supplier for Earthwatch Australia. Every booking made through STA Travel will benefit Earthwatch's research programs. STA Travel services all types of travel requirements and one of their biggest strengths is in complex travel requirements. In addition, STA Travel offers unique Student, Teacher and Youth airfares that are not available through any other travel agent. To find out how STA Travel can help, please contact Worasak Triprasertant by phone at (03) 9207-5908, or by email at [nccc@statravel.com.au](mailto:nccc@statravel.com.au).

Travelers in the US may visit STA Travel's US website at <http://www.statravel.com>. UK travelers may visit STA at <http://www.statravel.co.uk>.

# Appendix

## Literature Cited

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- Spotila, J.R., A.E. Dunham, A.J. Leslie, A.C. Steyermark, P.T. Plotkin, and F.V. Paladino. 1996. Worldwide population decline of *Dermochelys coriacea*: are leatherback turtles going extinct? *Chel. Conserv. Biol.* 2:209–222.
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- Steyermark, A.C., K. Williams, J.R. Spotila, F.V. Paladino, D.C. Rostal, S.J. Morreale, M.T. Koberg, and R. Arauz. 1996. Nesting leatherback turtles at Las Baulas National Park, Costa Rica. *Chel. Conserv. Biol.* 2: 173–183.
- Wallace, B.P., P. Sotherland, J. Spotila, R. Reina, B. Franks, and F. Paladino. 2004. Biotic and abiotic factors that affect the nest environment of embryonic leatherback turtles, *Dermochelys coriacea*. *Physiological and Biochemical Zoology*. 77(3): 423-432.
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# Expedition Packing Checklist

## Required Items

- This Expedition Briefing
- Photocopies of your passport, flight itinerary and credit cards in case the originals are lost or stolen; the copies should be packed separately from the original documents
- Passport and/or visa (if necessary)
- Certification of inoculation (if necessary)
- Documentation for travel by minors (if necessary) (See *Volunteers Under 18 Years of Age* in the *Travel Planning* section)

## Clothing/Footwear for Fieldwork

- Be sure to bring your Earthwatch t-shirt and remember to wear it, as appropriate, throughout your expedition
- At least three comfortable t-shirts
- At least two pairs of shorts / short trousers
- At least one pair of lightweight long pants to wear on the beach at night
- A long-sleeved, lightweight sweatshirt for cooler nights
- A light rain jacket or poncho, plus rain pants if you wish (especially for October-November)
- Plenty of socks for protecting your feet while walking in sand
- Two pairs of **comfortable, broken-in** (necessary to avoid blisters) sneakers (high-tops keep sand out more effectively) or light hiking boots to walk in sand (two pairs are required so that if one gets wet the other will be available for the following day)
- Wide-brimmed beach hat for sun protection
- Lightweight, quick drying, long-sleeved shirts and pants/trousers
- A pair of sturdy sandals for daytime beach work

## Clothing/Footwear for Leisure

- One set of clothing to keep clean so that you have something to wear on the plane home, or if it is decided to take a trip somewhere where nice clothing would be required (this will be decided by expedition participants)
- Sandals and/or flip-flops for daytime walks on the beach (good for around the houses, restaurant and pool, but not for the village or while working on the beach)
- Loose, comfortable cotton clothing for the evenings (long sleeves and long pants are recommended to discourage insect bites, scrapes and bruises)
- Two bathing suits for swimming and relaxing (one if you don't mind wearing a damp one)
- A pair of walking boots if you are interested in daytime excursions into the mangrove estuary and other adjacent habitats
- Loose, comfortable clothing for wearing during the day while not working (shorts and t-shirts)

### **Field Supplies**

- ESSENTIAL:** One low-intensity headlamp (a small 2xAA size headlight is recommended). **Note that halogen bulbs are NOT allowed.** A red filter will be applied, as turtles are sensitive to white light. If you have a suitable red gel or plastic filter please bring it, as supplies in the field are limited. Red filters can be purchased through most outdoor outfitters.
- You can also bring a small Maglite™, in addition to a headlamp
- Small daypack/rucksack for daily needs
- Dry bag or plastic sealable baggies (e.g. Ziploc brand) for protecting equipment such as camera from dust, humidity and water
- Sunscreen with a rating of at least SPF 30 (water/sweat-proof recommended)
- Insect repellent
- Water bottle(s) able to hold at least two liters
- An alarm clock

### **Bedding and Bathing**

- At least one large bath towel for personal use
- Beach towel
- Light fleece blanket for bed (one fitted and one flat sheet will be provided)

### **Personal Supplies**

- Personal toiletries (biodegradable soaps and shampoos are encouraged)
- Antibacterial wipes or lotion (good for cleaning hands while in the field)
- Personal first aid kit (e.g. anti-diarrhea pills, antibiotics, antiseptic, itch-relief, pain reliever, bandages, blister covers, etc.) and personal medications
- Contact lens supplies if necessary

### **Miscellaneous**

- Spending money either as cash or traveler's checks (US\$350-400 or the equivalent in colones is usually plenty unless you are planning additional side trips) and a credit card (most credit cards are readily accepted)
- Camera, film/memory card(s), extra camera battery, interface cables for downloading if you bring a digital camera, etc. **(remember, flash photography is NOT allowed on the beach, so choose appropriate film, and BE CERTAIN you know how to turn off the automatic flash)**
- A small travel alarm clock
- Sunglasses
- Digital, light-up, water repellent watch

## Optional Items

- A few feet of duct tape (a whole roll is not necessary)—Good for repairing items.
- Extra snacks like granola bars or trail mix, as they are quite expensive in Costa Rica
- Blank writable CD/DVD or memory stick to share digital photos at the end of the expedition
- Book(s), journal, games, DVDs, etc. for personal time
- Bandana(s) to keep bugs and sand out of your hair
- Snorkel and mask if you want to snorkel on a nearby beach during recreational time (we have a few sets to share at the station but if you have your own and are a serious snorkeler you may wish to bring your own set)
- Earplugs to block noise while sleeping/ sleep mask to darken sleeping conditions
- Dry box to protect personal equipment from humidity (cameras, hearing aids, etc.)
- TEAM 4:** You will be celebrating American Thanksgiving with the field team and are invited to bring any of your holiday favorites (e.g. cranberry sauce, French-fried onions), and any useful cooking gadgets you may have.

## The Wish List

The following items are used on the project. Donations are greatly appreciated.

- Batteries (AA)
- Mini Maglite™ flashlights, and spare bulbs
- Non-prescription first aid supplies (e.g. cotton balls, gauze, bandages, antibiotic ointment)
- Alcohol swabs
- Insect repellent
- Disposable latex and/or nitrile (non-latex) examining gloves
- Plastic garbage bags (small and medium)
- Supplies for the local primary school (e.g. pencils, pens, crayons, color pencils, notebooks, small children's toys, folders, paper, books in Spanish, posters, paints and brushes). These will be collected and presented to the school during Children's Turtle Festival.
- Individually wrapped, small-portioned candies or ANY chocolate
- BBQ sauce (loved by many project staff and volunteers, and not available in Costa Rica)
- Donation of books you have read and loved

***Please note: Required and optional items lists are accurate to the best of Earthwatch's knowledge at the time of publication.***