

# Costa Rica Leatherback Turtle Volunteer Vacation



# Welcome Letter

Welcome to the SEE Turtles Costa Rica Leatherback Turtle Volunteer Vacation! On this unique vacation, you will spend four nights with researchers studying giant leatherback sea turtles, visit a unique butterfly farm, and more. By joining this trip, you will be directly supporting community-based conservation of these turtles by providing alternative income to poaching and generating funds to expand their efforts.

We started SEE Turtles in 2008 to encourage travelers to visit turtle conservation projects where their visit will make a difference in efforts to protect these endangered creatures and this has been our most popular tour. With the help of travelers like you, we have generated more than \$1 million for turtle conservation and local communities and have helped to save more than 10 million baby turtles at important nesting beaches. For these efforts, we received the prestigious Changemakers Award from the World Travel & Tourism Council.

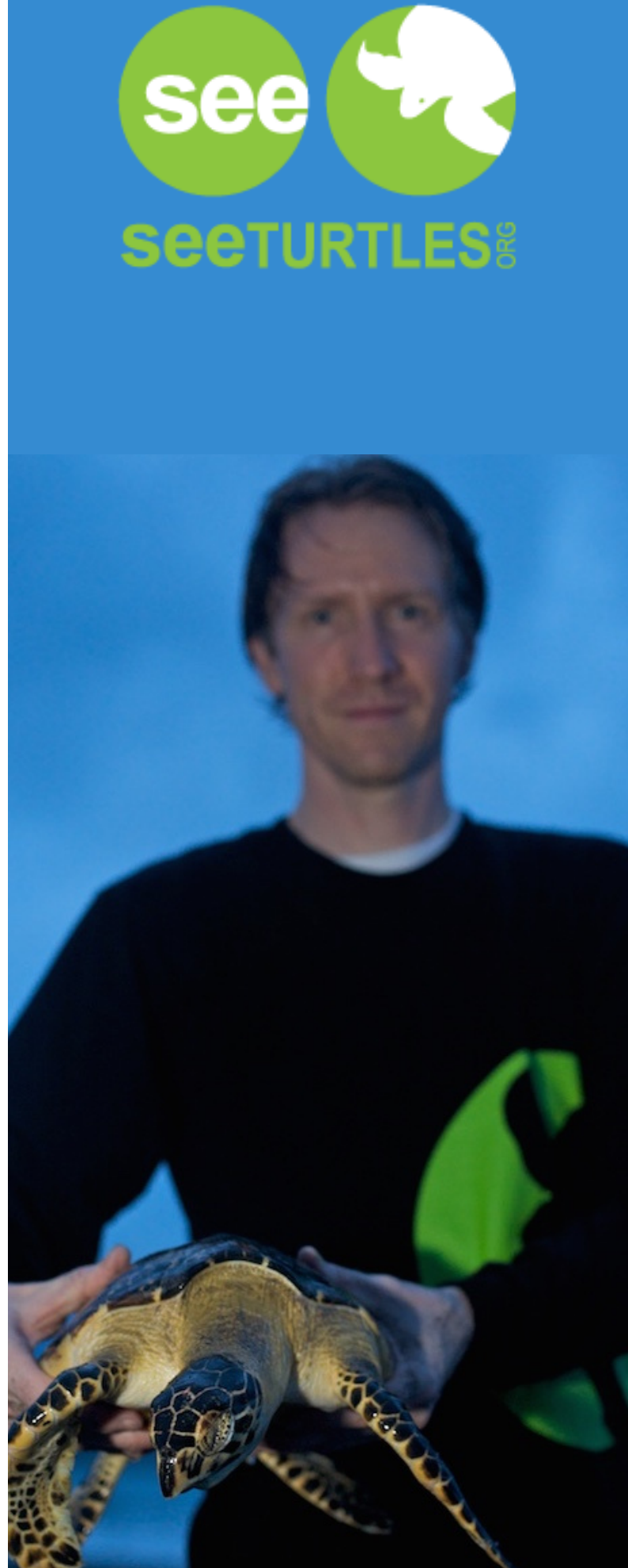
Please join us on this action-packed volunteer trip. We will meet and interact with the dedicated people working to protect their natural resources and learn much about the biology and threats facing Costa Rica's wildlife.

We hope to SEE you in Costa Rica!



Brad Nahill  
President & Co-Founder  
[brad@seeturtles.org](mailto:brad@seeturtles.org)

Cover photos: Hal Brindley (right), and IOI (left)  
Right: Neil Osborne



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# Trip Information

The leatherback is one of nature's truly unique creatures. Their immense size boggles the mind; these turtles can average more than 6 feet long and 800 lbs. But that's not the only thing that makes them unique. Their softer shell allows them to dive deeper than any other sea turtle and their size and dark color allows them to inhabit cold waters. The leatherback has had an impressive recovery over the past decade but human activities like consumption of their eggs and getting caught in fishing gear continue to threaten these extraordinary reptiles.

Spend 4 nights working with giant leatherback turtles at a turtle research station along the northern Caribbean coast. Walk the nesting beach at night with local researchers and relax and explore the rainforest during the day. The turtle work includes helping to measure the turtles, collect the eggs and move them to hatcheries, and working with hatchlings (late May - July).

## Is This Trip Right For Me?

Costa Rica is a safe and beautiful country that receives more than 1 million international tourists annually. This trip goes off the beaten path for 4 nights at the rustic and remote Las Tortugas Research Station (see accommodations for additional information). This is an active trip that requires a level of physical fitness and an ability to manage sometimes challenging conditions including weather and heat, bugs, and a schedule that can affect sleeping patterns.

## Conservation Impact Pricing:

SEE Turtles is the first and only operator to provide transparent pricing that shows the economic impact of each trip on turtle and wildlife conservation and benefits to local communities.

- **Turtle Conservation:** \$670 of the trip price goes to organizations working to protect sea turtles
- **Local Communities:** \$300 of the trip price supports communities around sea turtle habitats
- **Travel Costs:** \$1,025 of the cost covers guides, transport, accommodations, insurance, and other costs

[Register Here](#)

## 2024 Dates:

- May 18 - 24 (full)
- June 1 - 7 (open)

**Scheduled Trip Price:** \$ 1,995 pp

Private dates are also available for groups of 2 or more from March- June.

Private trip cost depends on total number of people signed up for each date.

- 2 people: \$2,395 per person
- 3-4: \$2,095 pp
- 5-8: \$1,995 pp
- 9+: \$1,895 pp

## Discounts:

- \$40 for paying by check
- \$50 off for kids under 18 years
- Additional discounts available for groups of 10+, contact us for pricing

**Includes:** In-country transport, meals, lodging, activities, guides, and a donation to turtle conservation.

**Excludes:** Airfare to Costa Rica, personal items, and tips for the guide and driver.

## Notes:

- Minimum recommended age is 8 years old, under 18 needs to be accompanied by an adult.
- Group size is limited to 12 people.

## Worry-Free Cancellation Policy

Book with us and you'll have peace of mind about your booking. If we cancel a trip, we'll refund 100% of the money paid or put it towards a future trip, your choice. If you cancel, all cancellation fees are usable for future trips with no penalty. Check out our terms and conditions for full details.

# Detailed Itinerary

## DAY 1 - ARRIVE TO COSTA RICA

Start your leatherback adventure by arriving to San Jose International Airport (SJO) anytime on the first scheduled day. Our guides pick you up from the airport and take you to Rosa del America, a comfortable hotel in Alajuela, about 15 minutes from the airport. Get a good night's sleep tonight, as the adventure starts early the next day. (Dinner the first night is not included).

## DAY 2 - LEATHERBACK RESEARCH

Today you will head out to the Caribbean coast to stay at a remote research station in the rainforest. First, wake up with a delicious Costa Rica breakfast buffet of eggs, gallo pinto (their famous breakfast rice and beans), fresh tropical fruit, delicious coffee, and more. After breakfast, board the private bus for a 4 hour ride to the Caribbean coast. You'll pass through the country's largest national park and then descend to the Caribbean lowlands.

The bus will drop your group at a small dock along the Tortuguero canals, where a boat will meet you to take you to the research station. The short boat ride passes through rainforest, so keep your eyes out for monkeys, sloths, toucans, and more along the way. Once you arrive, settle into your cabin and later, the researchers will give a presentation on sea turtles and the more than a decade of work that has gone into protecting this nesting beach. After dinner, you will head out for your first night of patrolling, accompanied by researchers who will guide you along the beach, spot the turtles, and help with the data collection. (B, L, D)

Please note: The station is fairly remote and isolated. The rooms are very basic and volunteers are expected to participate in cleaning up dishes after meals. The station has limited electricity, no hot water, and no internet. Bathrooms are basic and semi-private (shared between two rooms). Meals are simple and often include a meat like chicken or beef along with rice and beans, cabbage salad, and plantains. Vegetarian options are given at every meal. The station is in the rainforest, which can mean insects in the rooms (mosquito nets are provided).



### DAYS 3 - 5: TURTLE RESEARCH

For the next three nights, you will spend four hours each night walking the nesting beach in search of the giant leatherbacks. Years of hard work protecting these turtles has resulted in increases in nests in the Caribbean and the leatherback was downlisted from critically endangered to vulnerable in 2013. But despite this success, their numbers are still declining and protecting their nesting beaches is vital to their long-term survival.

The first thing you notice when a leatherback is nesting is their giant tracks, which look like a monster truck has driven up the beach. Tasks involved in the research include measuring the turtles' length and width (no small task with a giant turtle!), moving the eggs to a hatchery (where they are protected until hatching), and observing the condition of the turtles, looking for scars or injuries. From mid-May to June, you will have a chance to work with hatchlings, helping to do some basic research (measuring and weighing) and releasing them to the water. Green turtles also occasionally nest late in the season.

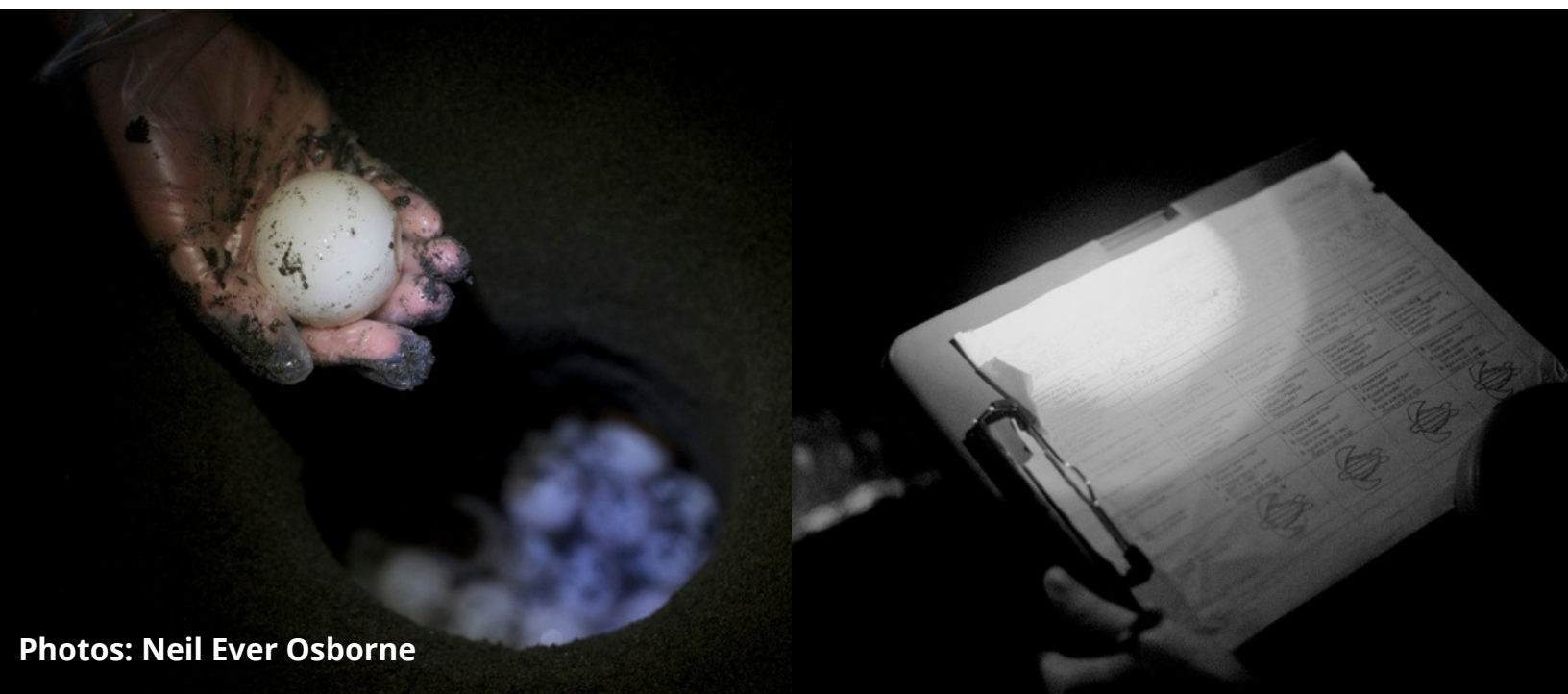
During the day, there is plenty of downtime to catch up on sleep, read a book, or walk along the beach. We do not recommend swimming at this beach however, due to strong ocean currents that can be dangerous. Planned daytime activities include a boat ride on the rainforest canals to look for wildlife including birds, sloths, monkeys, & caiman and a beach cleanup activity (even remote beaches have trash wash ashore). (B, L, D)

### DAY 6 - CENTRAL VALLEY

This morning after breakfast, you will catch the boat back to meet your bus. Along the way back to San Jose, you will visit Jardin Pierella, a unique butterfly farm, to learn about these fascinating insects and other wildlife. You will see hundreds of butterflies, poison dart frogs, giant walking sticks, and likely sloths and other wildlife. The wonderful family who runs this farm will prepare a delicious traditional lunch. After a final group dinner on the town, head to bed early to be awake in time to go to the airport for your flight the next day. Overnight at Rosa del America. (B, L, D)

### DAY 7 - DEPARTURE

Return home with a new appreciation for the hard work of conservation and to share your experiences. You will be taken to the airport in plenty of time to catch your flight.



# Turtle Research Information

Between March and June, volunteers and researchers patrol the beach from 8:00 pm to 4:00 am in 4 hour shifts (8pm to midnight and midnight to 4 am) and in different sectors. It takes at least 4 hours to patrol the beach effectively and if a nesting turtle is found, the eggs are collected and relocated into a hatchery, where a new nest is dug and the eggs are watched until hatching.

A team of biologists and researchers trained in conservation techniques carry out the important work and are also responsible for guarding the nests at the hatchery and releasing baby turtles. Volunteers help with tasks including measuring length and width of the turtles, recording information on data sheets (see photo below), holding the bag that collects the eggs, and other tasks. Participants may be asked to help with beach clean-up activities as well.

## Night Patrols

A group of volunteers, led by an experienced patrol leader, walks one of the sectors of the 4 km long beach searching for nesting females. Once a turtle is encountered on a night patrol, the volunteers work directly with it, taking carapace and nest dimension measurements, placing tags on their flippers, collecting eggs, moving them to the hatchery, and recording the data. The collected eggs will be relocated on the beach or taken to the hatchery where the volunteers on shift will build a new nest (according to measurements that were taken) and rebury the eggs. The number of eggs, nest location and turtle identification information (tag number) are then recorded by the hatchery attendant for further data analysis, for example hatchling survival rate.

## Hatchlings

If hatchlings are encountered they are counted and released in the evening to an appropriate location along the high tide line and observed until they reach the sea. Some hatchlings will also be selected for data collection including length and weight. Hatchlings that emerge during the day are held until evening to be released under cover of darkness.



Photo: Neil Ever Osborne

# Background Information

## Leatherback Sea Turtles

The largest of all sea turtles, and one of the largest reptiles on earth, the leatherback turtle ranges in size from 4-8 feet in length (1.2 - 2.4 meters) and weighs between 500-2,000 pounds (225 - 900 kg). The average adult measures in between 5-6 feet (1.5 - 1.8 m) and weighs 600-800 pounds (270 - 360 kg).

The oldest of all sea turtle species, it has been around for more than 150 million years! They survived the extinction of the dinosaurs and thrived until the last several decades when human interactions have taken a major toll. Leatherbacks are considered vulnerable according to the IUCN Red List, upgraded in 2013 from critically endangered due in large part to efforts around the Caribbean to protect important nesting beaches.

At Estacion Las Tortugas, the leatherbacks nest starting in early March through the end of June/early July with a peak from mid-April to early May. Hatchlings start arriving mid to late May and peak in mid June. [Learn more about leatherback turtles on our website.](#)

## Green Sea Turtles

The green turtle is the second largest after the leatherback. They can weigh up to 500 lbs (225 kg) and reach four feet (1.2 m) in length. The adult is an herbivore, dining on sea grasses, seaweeds, algae and other forms of marine plant life. Their beak is sharp and finely serrated, perfectly adapted for grazing in seagrass beds and scraping algae off of hard surfaces.

This species can be found in the sub-tropics and tropics worldwide, with major nesting beaches in Tortuguero (Costa Rica), Oman, Florida, and Raine Island (Australia) where thousands of turtles nest each night during peak nesting season. They are also found nesting on French Frigate Shoals in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, Guam, American Samoa, Suriname, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. At Pacuare, green turtles start nesting in early July through October.

[Learn more about green turtles on our website.](#)



Photo: Neil Ever Osborne



Photos: Hal Brindley



# Accommodations

## La Rosa del America

Located in Alajuela, a short drive from Juan Santamaria Airport, La Rosa de America is an oasis of lush gardens and special amenities, close to the most beautiful and popular sights and attractions in and around the Central Valley. They have a lovely pool, excellent breakfasts, and is quiet and secure. The group will stay here on the first and last nights of the trip.



## Las Tortugas Research Station

In 2000 Stanley Rodriguez, founded Estación Las Tortugas (The Turtle Station) in an effort to help save the population of sea turtles that visited Mondonguillo beach. This beach lies between the Mondonguillo Lagoon in the north, bordering with the Pacuare Nature Reserve, and the Urpiano Lagoon in the south, bordering with the Urpiano Lagoon Turtle Project. The beach protected consists of three kilometres of land, and the station is located about 25 kilometers (as the crow flies) north of Limon, on the Caribbean Coast of Costa Rica.

The area where the actual station is situated today used to be a coconut plantation and the beach was a major area for illegal egg collecting. The poaching rate throughout the years has diminished quite drastically after initiating the protection of the beach and from 100% of poaching to begin with, it has fallen to less than 5%. This beach was and continues to be mainly a leatherback turtle nesting beach, but green and hawksbill turtles also nest in small numbers each year. Las Tortugas includes a small educational center with displays and samples of sea turtles, as well as paths through the forest and many species of plants. Regular wild visitors include howler monkeys, sloths, blue morpho butterflies, toucans, and many other species of birds.



Photos: Hal Brindley

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Turtle Questions

### **Am I guaranteed to see a sea turtle or hatchling?**

As with most wild animals, there is never a guarantee to see a sea turtle (they are endangered of course). However, if you plan to go during the peak of the leatherback nesting season (mid-April to mid-May), you have a very good chance of seeing multiple turtles. There are fewer nesting turtles early in the season (early March) and late in the season (mid-June to July). Hatchlings start arriving in mid-May and from early June through July, you have a very good chance of seeing hatchlings.

### **Is walking on the beach at night safe in Costa Rica?**

In most places, yes. However, there are turtle nesting beaches that are also used to bring drugs into the country that are not safe. We do not take people to any unsafe beaches and have never had a safety concern on any of our tours. You will be walking with local researchers and guides who know how to handle any situations that might arise.

### **How does this trip benefit turtle conservation?**

Of the \$1,995 cost, \$670 of that goes to Las Tortugas Research Station for beach patrols and funds that support our Billion Baby Turtles (which helps save 500 hatchlings) and our programs to combat the illegal wildlife trade and plastic pollution, and general operations. The trip also includes 4 volunteer shifts patrolling the leatherback nesting beach.

### **Will I get to do every volunteer job on the trip?**

As we can't guarantee that you will see a sea turtle, we also can't guarantee you'll get to do every job in the volunteer program. We hope to give every participant the opportunity to do each job but it depends on the number of participants, the number of turtles encountered, and the individual circumstances with each turtle (sometimes more complicated situations require the researchers to do specific jobs). Generally the tagging is done only by research staff. If there is one specific job you really want to do, let your guide know and he will do his best to accommodate your request. Check out the Turtle Research Information page for details about the tasks involved in sea turtle research.

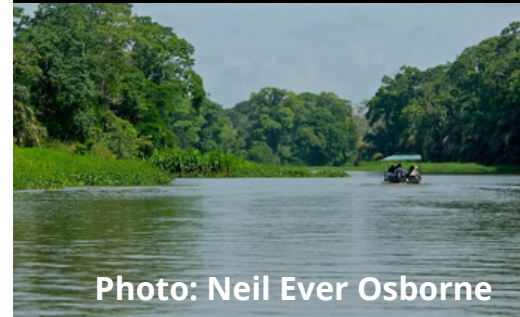


Photo: Neil Ever Osborne

## Logistical/Travel Issues

### **How much money should I bring?**

We recommend that each participant bring \$250 in cash for tipping and spending money. U.S. bills of \$20 and less are widely accepted in Costa Rica (with change given in dollars or Costa Rican colones). Many shop owners are wary of accepting torn or “old looking” bills – so please bring crisp newer bills if possible! Small bills (\$1’s and \$5’s) are useful at the turtle projects where there are no banks and people have a harder time finding change for larger bills.

### **How much should I tip?**

Tipping guides isn’t mandatory, but it is customary. We recommend tipping \$8 to \$10 dollars per day per participant to divide between your guide(s) and driver. (That would be \$70 to \$100 per participant depending on the length of the trip). Participants will not need to tip anyone else along the way but feel free to leave additional tips if you have great service at restaurants or the station if you like.

### **Can I call home or check my email while in Costa Rica?**

Calling home from Costa Rica can be expensive. For email, you should not rely on or expect to be able to get online while on the trip other than in San Jose. Cell phones from the US or Canada often do not work in Costa Rica or automatically switch you to a local service which activates international roaming fees. If you plan to bring a phone, please check with your provider about coverage and cost. The hotel in San Jose will have wifi and cell signal.

### **Are the electrical outlets the same?**

The voltage in Costa Rica is the same as the states. However, most outlets are 2 prong instead of 3 prong, so if you are bringing something that needs 3 prongs you need to bring an adapter. Electricity at this station is generated by solar power, so there is not enough power to charge electronics.

### **Can I go to an ATM in Costa Rica?**

Although there are ATMs in Costa Rica, much of the time you will be in places where they are not available. ATM's don't always work, so while you may be able to get cash from ATMs, don't count on it. Your best bet is to do that while in San Jose before heading to the station.

### **How should I handle medications I need to bring?**

If you plan to bring personal medicine, please consider the following:

- Carry just the necessary quantity, which is the quantity normally used by a person having your health problem.
- Have the medicines labeled or properly identified.

### **Do I need any vaccinations?**

Since we are not doctors, we cannot give you advice on vaccinations. We recommend speaking with your doctor or visiting a travel clinic. You can also [check the CDC website for Costa Rica](#) for the most up-to-date information.

### **What is the weather like on Costa Rica’s Caribbean coast?**

On the Caribbean, there are no defined wet or dry seasons like the Pacific coast. Generally it's pretty hot (80's to 90's F) and humid.

### **Can I photograph the turtles?**

Nesting turtles are sensitive to white light (including camera flash). To prevent disturbance, conservation organizations prohibit photographs at night (even with infrared). If there are hatchlings during the daytime, those can be photographed.

# Testimonials

Read some of the feedback we've had from our past Costa Rica trips:

My trip to Costa Rica with SEE Turtles was a well-run, thrilling, and meaningful experience! I'll never forget the experience of releasing loggerhead hatchlings into the ocean, watching a mother sea turtle attempt to lay eggs on the beach, or the wonderful group of guides and volunteers who dedicate themselves to this effort, who I was proud to be a part of for a week. A well-run and unforgettable trip! For any one who is looking to make a difference in environmental conservation, explore a new culture, and/ or go on an adventure in the process, then this trip is for you.

-Noelle R.

The trip was amazing and couldn't have asked for more!! Jose (our guide) was such a great guy and made the experience. The marine guides at the station were all wonderful and educated us greatly on the Leatherback species. All the guests on the trip became life long friends. The highlight of the trip was seeing these incredible species in person. Will keep this experience with me for life!

-Austin C.

This trip more than exceeded my expectations! Our guide was extremely knowledgeable regarding all aspects of the Costa Rica ecosystems and culture. He continually educated and entertained us. My 11 year old son did not even miss his video games once while we were at the station and completely "unplugged". Our driver was kind and always safe. Both the guide and driver were so very excellent with my son through the trip. The researchers and staff were grateful to have our presence, and patient in answering all our questions. They went out of their way to ensure we saw a turtle and were involved with the hatchlings. The experience fostered an environment that lead to a close knit group with all of us on the tour. We were all sad when it had to end. I could not recommend this experience enough!

-Anonymous

Conservation is an extremely important thing. Likewise, the websites that teach us about conservation and give us the opportunity to help put conservation to work are just as important. SEE Turtles is an absolutely great and reliable organization that truly cares.

-Anonymous



Photo: EcoTeach



Photo: Neil Ever Osborne

# Conservation Travel

SEE Turtles strives to reduce the environmental impact of our trips wherever possible. Sometimes we need help from you, the traveler, so here are some ways that we (and you) can help.

## Tortoiseshell Jewelry

Did you know that tortoiseshell is actually hawksbill sea turtle shell? This is a major threat to hawksbills, which are critically endangered. Souvenirs made from their shells include bracelets, earrings, guitar picks, and combs. Below is a photo to recognizing these items and we encourage our travelers not only to not purchase these items but also to refuse to purchase from stores that offer them and to alert your guide when you see these items for sale. Learn more at [SEEturtles.org/TooRareToWear](http://SEEturtles.org/TooRareToWear) and [download our SEE Shell App to identify these products here](#).

## Reducing Plastic Use

Another major threat to sea turtles is plastic in the ocean, which can be confused for jellyfish. SEE Turtles runs the [Travelers Against Plastic](#) project which encourages travelers to reduce plastic waste created on vacation. We encourage travelers to bring reusable water bottles to refill; you can go through as many as 15-20 bottles on one trip per person. Another suggestion is to ask for no straws with your drinks. Souvenirs can be stored in day packs instead of disposable bags.

## Reef-Friendly Sunscreen

Did you know that sunscreen can damage coral reefs? The ingredient “oxybenzone” has been found to cause harm in even very small quantities and an estimated 4,000 - 6,000 tons per year. Look for sunscreen without this ingredient (zinc oxide or titanium oxide are both safe), or wear a shirt while swimming to reduce the need for sunscreen. [Check out this great resource from our friends at Oceanic Society to learn more](#).

## Reducing Carbon Emissions

Travel by its nature is very carbon-intensive. Some ways you can reduce your emissions include leaving electronic devices at home, using fans instead of AC, by turning of AC, fans, and lights when not at hotels or cabins, and by using public transportation when possible. For sites with limited electricity, you can purchase a solar powered charger to recharge small electronics. You can also purchase carbon offsets. One we recommend is “[Seagrass Grow](#)” a program with our former organization The Ocean Foundation. The offsets are used to restore important seagrass beds, which are important habitat for green sea turtles.



## HOW TO IDENTIFY & AVOID HAWKSBILL TURTLESHELL

Endangered hawksbill turtles are hunted for their shells to make souvenirs. Help save this turtle by avoiding vendors selling turtleshell products.

IMITATION		TURTLESHELL	
	<b>PLASTIC</b> Uniform pattern with markings		<b>COLOR</b> Browns, oranges, amber, yellow
	<b>COCONUT</b> Brown on top, beige underneath		<b>PATTERN</b> Assymetric and irregular shapes
	<b>HORN</b> Heavy with black/white coloring		<b>SURFACE</b> Color pattern visible throughout

## Download our SEE Shell App



Apple



Android

# Conservation Impact Pricing

We believe in transparency and that travelers should know how much their trips are helping, so we now list the impact of every trip on our conservation partners and local communities. Your participation on these trips makes a big difference to the work on the ground and in the water.

We break up the impact into three categories:

- **Conservation:** For this trip, an estimated \$670 of the trip cost supports conservation efforts. This includes funds that go to local partners to protect nesting beaches and conduct in-water research, as well as support for our [Billion Baby Turtles](#), [Sea Turtles & Plastic](#), & [Too Rare To Wear](#) programs and our general operations. We also list the amount of volunteer opportunities in each trip. Since our launch, we have generated more than US \$1 million for turtle conservation and our 1,000+ travelers have completed nearly 5,000 volunteer shifts for an additional \$50,000 in in-kind benefits.
- **Local Communities:** For this trip, an estimated \$300 of the trip cost is spent in local communities. We believe that money spent communities around turtle hotspots is as important as direct funding. When communities benefit from turtle watching, they are more likely to support protecting sea turtles and less likely to participate in activities like illegal egg harvesting. This category includes tour costs going towards staying in local accommodations, eating in local restaurants, and paying local staff (including local guides for tourist activities.) We have pumped more than US \$300,000 into coastal communities near sea turtle sites since our launch.
- **Travel Costs:** For this trip, an estimated \$1,025 goes towards travel costs. Every tour involves costs to get you to places to see the sea turtles, hiring a guide and driver to get you there safely, airport transfers, as well as profits and administrative costs of our local operators and partners.



# Recommended Packing List

Pack in a duffel bag/suitcase/backpack that you can carry yourself and a day pack (If you have a suitcase with wheels, please realize there may be times when you will need to carry it short distances - wheels don't work well in sand, gravel or mud). \* Indicates required items.

## Clothing

- **Sturdy sneakers or close-toed sandals for beach walks\***
- 3-4 Pairs socks
- **2 Pairs of dark & lightweight pants (nylon is better than cotton)\***
- **2 Pairs of long sleeve dark colored lightweight shirts\***
- 3-4 Pairs of shorts
- 5-6 T-shirts or short sleeve shirts
- Lightweight jacket
- **Rain gear or poncho (dark color for turtle patrols)\***
- Sun hat for the beach

## Toiletries

- Comb/brush
- Shampoo/bath soap (ideally a biodegradable variety)
- **Sunscreen 30+ (waterproof & reef-friendly)**
- Insect repellent & after-bite stick
- Deodorant
- Toothpaste/toothbrush
- Washcloth
- Beach towel
- Hand Sanitizer (small bottle)

## Other Stuff

- **Refillable bottle for water (clean water will be provided)\***
- Passport and a photocopy
- Money (recommend US \$200-\$250 clean bills for tips and souvenirs)
- Camera
- Binoculars (your guide may also have a pair)
- Games, cards, things to do during down time
- Small flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries and red light setting
- Sunglasses
- Prescription medications (bring in carry on baggage in original packaging)



# About Us

SEE Turtles was launched in 2008 as the world's first effort to protect these species through ecotourism. Since then, we have expanded to include educational programs and our Billion Baby Turtles project. To date, we have brought more than 1,500 people to visit turtle projects, generated more than US \$1 million for turtle conservation and local communities, saved more than 10 million turtle hatchlings at more than 60 projects around the world, and reached more than 10,000 students with our educational programs. SEE Turtles is an independent 501c3 organization based in Oregon. We received the Changemakers Award from the World Travel & Tourism Council for our work to protect wildlife through travel. SEE Turtles is an independent 501c3 organization based in Oregon.



[www.SEEturtles.org](http://www.SEEturtles.org)  
[info@seeturtles.org](mailto:info@seeturtles.org)



Photo: Juan Ma Gonzalez



# Terms & Conditions

## Payment Policies

Full payment of the total price of the expedition is due no later than 60 days (2 months) before departure. Travelers can choose to do monthly payments (the balance of the trip cost after deposit, divided evenly between the remaining months before the final payment is due) or pay 50% of the balance at 120 days before the trip with the remaining balance due 60 days before the trip. Monthly payment plans are not available within 4 months of trip departure. We reserve the right to cancel a reservation if payment is not made on time. In such cases, all payments are non-refundable.

**Cancellation Policy:** If you cancel your space, it must be in writing (email is acceptable) and is effective the day we receive it in our office. Your cancellation will entitle you to a refund of any deposit or payment made to us, less a cancellation fee, according to the following schedule:

- 120 days or more prior to departure: \$300 per person (or whatever the specific trip deposit is)
- 60 to 119 days prior to departure: 50% of expedition fee per person
- 59 days or less prior to departure: 100% of expedition fee per person

Cancellation fees can be used towards one future SEE Turtles trip with no penalties or expiration except in the case of cancellations within 60 days prior to departure, when payments to local providers has already been completed. Any fees paid can be deducted from a future trip, based on available dates for cancellations made before 60 days prior to departure. Trip credits can be transferred one time only, if a second trip is cancelled by the traveler, all fees will be forfeited with the exception of extreme circumstances, which is up to the discretion of SEE Turtles staff.

## Transfers:

Depending on availability, you may transfer from one trip to another four months prior to departure at no charge. If you transfer less than four months prior to departure, you may be subject to the cancellation fees. Registration fees paid may be transferred to another traveler up until 2 months before departure with prior notice provided. In some cases, transfers may be made less than 2 months before departure.

## Cancelled Trips:

We reserve the right to cancel any trip prior to scheduled departure due to not meeting our minimum number required or logistical problems (vessel breakdown, strikes, etc.). You may transfer to another expedition or we will refund all payments made to SEE Turtles in full. In no event, however, shall our liability exceed the obligation to refund the amount you paid to us. Trip cancellation due to too few registrations normally occurs at a minimum of two months prior to departure. Refunds will not be given for individual hotel rooms, meals, sightseeing trips, or expedition arrangements for any reason. Expedition costs are quoted as a package; credits are not given for services not used.

## Trip Cost Includes:

Accommodations, airport transfers as specified in the trip itinerary, excursions, entrance fees, local guides, most permits, and meals, unless otherwise indicated in the itinerary. SEE Turtles reserves the right to make any changes in the itinerary or to substitute hotels, modes of transport, or guides, for those mentioned in the literature if circumstances require it.

## Trip Cost Does Not Include:

The cost of international air to the tour starting point (unless otherwise indicated in the itinerary) airport taxes, passport and visa fees, immunizations, insurance of any kind, alcoholic beverages, laundry, tips, excess baggage, items of a personal nature, medical costs, costs of hospitalization, additional expenses arising from the delay or extension of a trip due to weather, political disputes, illness, failure of transportation, or other causes beyond our control.

## Children on Trips:

Some SEE Turtles trips are suitable for children, depending on the child's age and experience. Anyone under age 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

**Unexpected Trip Costs:** We reserve the right to raise the trip fee if there are cost increases beyond our control. These cases are extremely rare and would only occur where unforeseen cost increases from suppliers would result in a financial loss for the organization. In these cases, registered clients are given the option to transfer or cancel with no penalties.

**Accommodations:** Land accommodations are based on double occupancy unless otherwise indicated in the trip description. We can try to match single travelers of the same gender but some trips require a single supplement if single rooms are preferred or there is no match available.

**Single Travelers:** If you are a single traveler wishing to share accommodations, we will try to match you with a roommate. If no roommate becomes available, you may be required to pay the Single Supplement Fee listed in the trip description if applicable. If you request a single, private room you must pay the Single Supplement Fee listed in the trip description regardless of sign-up date. Please note that single accommodations are not always available.

**Budget Airfare Caution:** We recommend against buying non-refundable airline tickets until your trip departure has been confirmed (usually a minimum of 90 days before departure). Budget air tickets often carry restrictions and you risk penalties in the event of itinerary or date changes or trip cancellation. Please await confirmation of the trip before purchasing non-refundable airfare.

**Withdrawal:** SEE Turtles reserves the right to require any participant to withdraw from an expedition at any time if the expedition director deems their acts or conduct to be detrimental to or incompatible with the interest, harmony, comfort, or welfare of the expedition. In such cases, no refunds will be given.

**Medical Issues:** Although SEE Turtles trips are not generally very physically demanding, you must be in general good health to participate. It is the passengers' responsibility to judge the appropriateness of their physical capabilities to these travel activities. Anyone with medical problems or restrictions must make them known to us well in advance of the trip and should have a personal supply of any special medications they may need. The trip leader has the right to disqualify any member from the group at any time if considered medically necessary; no refund will be made under such circumstances. SEE Turtles and its affiliates take no responsibility for special arrangements required by passengers physically unable to complete a trip and assume no liability regarding provision of medical care or medical evacuation.

**Release Forms:** On some trips you may need to sign an additional release form by our local partners and/or tour operators.

**Suppliers of Services:** SEE Turtles is performing a nonprofit service by informing potential participants of worthwhile expeditions. However, SEE Turtles is acting independently and has no business association as partner or joint venture with any boat owner, resort, hotel, carrier, SCUBA operation, or other services. Any claims for inadequate performance or non-performance of services may be made against the supplier of those services but shall not be made against SEE Turtles.

**SCUBA Diving:** SEE Turtles does not offer SCUBA diving as part of any of our trips. Participants may participate in diving while on a trip but acknowledges that SEE Turtles has no responsibility for the actions, performance, or equipment of any SCUBA services offered by hotels or dive shops. We recommend that any travelers planning to dive while on a SEE Turtles trip research the safety record of the operators and obtain additional divers insurance.