



# GVI Costa Rica Conservation Groups Field Manual

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Safety and support for all program participants is paramount at GVI. This field manual serves as your go-to guide when preparing to depart on your adventure, including a packing list, further details on health and safety, arrival information, suggested preparatory reading (where relevant), and more. Importantly, it also provides you with useful logistical information about your arrival, and essential phone numbers in case you need to contact us at any point, so we recommend keeping this with you in your hand luggage when traveling to your chosen GVI location.

## Health & Hygiene (Post COVID-19)

In line with our commitments of 360 support and stringent health and safety, GVI has put in place a stringent [Health and Hygiene Policy and Procedures](#) to protect our participants, staff and community members. To ensure we are able to deliver the high quality programs we are known for, and ensure these procedures are rigorously applied across our operations, we unfortunately may need to apply an additional charge to contribute towards the additional costs of operating our programs and projects safely during these times. Participants will be notified if this fee applies to your program, at least 2 weeks before their start date. If applicable, participants will be given, upon arrival, their personal COVID-19 pack, which will be re-stocked for them weekly throughout their GVI Experience.

Along with the normal GVI welcome pack and t-shirt, participants will receive their COVID-19 pack, which includes:

- 1 personal water bottle
- 7 personal cloth face coverings
- 1 personal container of hand sanitiser
- 1 personal container of liquid soap
- 1 bar of soap
- 1 box of tissues
- 1 pack of travel tissues
- 1 physical distancing stick of 1 metre/3 feet (upon request)
- Personal dishes, drinking glass, mug and eating utensils
- 2 personal pillowcases
- 2 sets of personal bed sheets

Every week thereafter

- Replacement cloth face coverings
- Hand sanitiser refills
- Liquid soap refills
- Replacement box of tissues
- Replacement pack of travel tissues
- Replacement water bottle
- Replacement dishes, drinking glass, mug and eating utensils
- Replacement sheets and pillowcases
- Free use of laundry facilities

Included in your health and hygiene fee:

GVI will support you in reaching a COVID testing centre 72 hours prior to departure to your home country. This includes transport and accommodation in the nearest centre up to your program completion date with GVI.

## **Arrival**

Please note that arrival logistics may be altered at short notice – check for updates regularly to ensure you are aware of any late changes.

### **Where do I need to be?**

Arrivals area in the San Jose International Airport, Costa Rica

### **When do I need to get there?**

If you come to the Teens program please arrive between 12pm and 6pm on your start date.

### **How do I get there?**

*GVI has a list of recommended flights from the UK and USA. Travelling on the recommended flight ensures you will arrive within the pick up and departure windows and also means you may be travelling on the same flight as another GVI participant. Please contact [teentravel@gviworld.com](mailto:teentravel@gviworld.com) for additional information.*

Most volunteers arrange international flights to arrive at Juan Santamaria International Airport in San Jose (IATA code: SJO). GVI staff will be waiting in arrivals with a GVI branded sign between 12pm-6pm on the program start date. If you are arriving before the scheduled meeting time you may want to wait there. Please ensure field staff are made aware of your plans. You will travel with GVI staff and fellow volunteers after the pick up time (12-6pm) to the hostel. Once at the hostel, we will do a welcome meeting and there will be time to get to know the other volunteers and get some rest before leaving San Jose the next day. Please ensure you land with enough time to be at the meeting point before 6pm.

## **Departure**

You will be transferred back to San Jose International Airport on the final Saturday at the end of your program. Flights out can be booked for no earlier than 12 noon.

## **Pre-Program Accommodation**

Those arriving early will need to arrange their own accommodation. The following are convenient options that participants and staff have used in the past:

### **If you arrive earlier this are some recommended hostels**

For Under 18 Participants we advise arriving on the start date.

#### **Mi Casa Hostel**

Dorm bed \$19 breakfast included,  
Calle Las Américas, San José, Sabana Norte por el edificio del ICE  
(506) [2231 4700](tel:22314700)  
[reservations@micasahostel.com](mailto:reservations@micasahostel.com)  
<http://micasahostel.com/front/sanjose/>

#### **Urbano Los Yoses**

Dorm bed \$15 breakfast included  
50 Metros Sur del Automercado los Yoses, calle 39, entre avenida 2 y 8  
[infoyoses@hostelurbano.com](mailto:infoyoses@hostelurbano.com)  
<http://www.hostelurbano.com>  
(+506) [2253 4130](tel:22534130)

#### **Hostel del Paseo**

Dorm bed \$8 without breakfast  
Frente a Las Torres, Paseo Colon, San Jose

reserve@hosteldelpaseo.com  
(506) 4020-1212 Whatsapp – 00506-71562696  
www.hosteldelpaseo.com

## **Departure**

Please note that neither GVI nor our partners in the field can be held responsible for missed travel connections.

## **Visa Requirements**

It is your responsibility to ensure you have the correct visa for your trip.

Field staff advise that you enter the country using a 90 day tourist visa. Requirements are dependent on your citizenship, for most nationalities this does not need to be arranged in advance. Check with the immigration authorities of the countries you intend to visit, or see [www.cibt.com](http://www.cibt.com). Ensure you are given enough days to cover your stay.

## **Communications**

This program is run by GVI in country staff. Our professional and experienced team will be your primary point of contact when in the field, and will do their best to help resolve issues you encounter and answer your questions.

### **Primary Contact**

GVI Jalova Research Station (Programme manager)

Tel: (+506) 8955-2549 / 8706-0254

Local Tel: 8955-2549 / 8706-0254

Email: [tortuguero@gviworld.com](mailto:tortuguero@gviworld.com)

**Please note communications on base are intermittent**

### **Secondary Contact**

Costa Rica logistics

Tel: +506 86190923

Local Tel: 86190923

Email: [costarica.logistics@gviworld.com](mailto:costarica.logistics@gviworld.com)

## **GVI 24-hr Emergency Contact Numbers:**

UK Tel: 02080 903 080

USA/Canada Tel: (617) 674-2097

Rest of the world: +44 2080903080

## **Keeping in Touch**

You will have limited access to long-distance communications whilst on the programme, so make sure friends and family know how often they can expect to hear from you.

Participants typically use internet cafes to keep in touch, with access to phones and (sometimes unreliable) internet about once every two weeks when visiting the main towns.

Mobile/cell phone reception is very limited on base and unreliable unless you have a local sim card and a 3G phone.

### **Mailing address:**

(Post to participants/field staff) [NAME] c/o Victoria Hawkins Sucursal, Centro Colon, Edificio Colon, San Jose, COSTA RICA #252 - 1007

### **Physical address:**

[NAME] c/o Hostel Casa Colon Paseo Colon, Calle 24, en frente de la Torre Mercedes, San Jose, COSTA RICA  
(please let us know so we can inform the hostel staff)

Please note that mail can take several weeks to arrive, and items may be impounded by excise officials or subject to import duties. Please bear this in mind before shipping items.

(Delivery of larger items by courier, e.g. lost luggage)

If your bags go missing in transit, **don't panic!** This does occasionally happen, and you are usually reunited with your belongings within a few days. Consult airline representatives in the baggage claim area. You may be given a file/reference number; it is wise to also ask for a contact telephone number for follow-up.

## **Living Conditions**

Facilities will be more basic than you are accustomed to – please travel with an open mind and a willingness to adapt to local conditions.

Accommodation is in shared rooms with toilet facilities, running water (please note: no hot water on base), and basic amenities. There is a shared kitchen and living area where volunteers can plan lessons and enjoy free time. This is a Central American country and the standard of living is different. Bearing this in mind, accommodations are quite comfortable.

## **Food**

Volunteers take it in turns to prepare meals for the group. Food is very basic and mostly vegetarian, with meat rarely available. Breakfast could be porridge or occasionally pancakes, typical lunches and evening meals may include lentils, chickpeas, pasta, beans, or rice, with vegetables. Fresh fruit is provided each afternoon.

## **Electricity**

Please ensure that you have the correct adaptors for personal electrical items.

Supply: 110V 60Hz

Source: Solar and Generator

Sockets: US style (no earth)

## **Laundry**

Clothes can be washed by hand on base, although drying is very difficult due to the humidity. Laundry facilities are available in the main towns before and after your time in the field.

## **Getting Around and Exploring Further**

Your local weekend adventures will be your chance to see more of the area, including a visits to local Parks, communities, treks and beaches, as well as surfing lessons or other activity (all adventure activities are weather-permitting and substitutions may be made for the safety of the participants or due to inclement weather).

## **Security**

For information about security issues in the country you are travelling to please see the following resources:

UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office:

[www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

US Government State Department:

[www.state.gov/travel](http://www.state.gov/travel)

Information for Canadians Abroad:

[www.voyage.gc.ca](http://www.voyage.gc.ca)

Australian Government Travel Advice:

[www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)

New Zealand Government Travel Advice:

[www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz)

Whenever travelling you should be aware of the risk of opportunist crime and take common sense precautions to minimise the chance of becoming a victim. The vast majority of visits are trouble-free, but if you have any specific questions about your safety and security on the program please contact GVI.

## Finance

Local currency: **Colones**.

US\$ are often accepted, although small denomination notes are much easier to exchange. Change will usually be given in colones, even when paying in US\$. For an up to date currency conversion, visit the website: [www.xe.com/ucc](http://www.xe.com/ucc) For day-to-day expenditure you might want to have enough money for calling cards, bottled drinks, snacks, dinners, taxis, laundry etc. Allow for a budget of about 50\$ to 100\$ US per normal week, depending on what you choose to spend in town.

It is advised to contact your bank before flying and let them know you will be traveling, as some banks will block credit cards due to security reasons when suspected illegal activity.

## Background Check

A background/police check is required for this program

## Health & Safety

There are medical facilities in close by towns, with English speaking doctors available for emergencies. We have emergency procedures, first aid trained staff, and safety briefing on arrival. The project location is fully equipped with a comprehensive medical first aid kit. Please note that GVI cannot provide specific medical advice. Please consult your primary care provider (doctor, GP, etc.) or visit a travel clinic for further information. Please be forthcoming about any health issues before you join the course. Failure to do so may have serious consequences for you, the staff and other participants, including your removal from the course, possible serious injury or infections. It is recommended that you take a credit card with you to ensure you can get immediate treatment in the event of a medical emergency (if suitable insurance is held, you will be reimbursed by your insurance company).

## Pre Departure Training

Program staff in the field will provide training on the skills required, but you may benefit from learning more about local history, culture and customs before you travel ([www.costarica.com](http://www.costarica.com))

Come with ideas and lots of energy, but more importantly, bring an open mind.

## Packing List

### Essential Equipment:

- Large Rucksack (Backpack) or Duffle Bag Lightweight dry sacks / waterproof liners to store your equipment in Daypack (Backpack) (25+ litres / 1,500+ cubic inches)
- Binoculars (7 or 8) x (32 or 42) These numbers represent magnification and field of view, respectively)
- 1-2 pairs of closed-toe footwear Light-weight, quick-drying and comfortable footwear is essential. Previous volunteers have suggested Crocs.
- A pair of normal running shoes /trainers may also be used, however, these shoes will be used on the beach and will often get wet (it can take a long time for items to dry in a humid environment). Sandals are not used on surveys, as they don't offer the required protection.
- Sandals (flip-flops/thongs / crocs) to wear around camp
- Wellies/rubber boots/gumboots If you are working in Tortuguero you must wear Wellies on surveys in the forest (Hiking boots are not allowed)
- River footwear only if your program includes whitewater rafting trip, you'll need footwear that can get wet and will stay on your feet (NO flip-flops!).
- Keens /Texas/Chacos or inexpensive water shoes have worked well for many volunteers,
- 2-3 pairs of long working trousers light cargo pants/sports pants Ensure at least one pair is dark coloured for turtle night work
- 2-4 long sleeve working shirts bring any quick drying old shirts Ensure at least one shirt is dark coloured for turtle night work.
- Casual clothing T-shirts/tops and shorts for those hot days in camp bring a few Waterproof jacket/poncho/trousers All raingear should be in dark colours for turtle night walks. The humidity is always high and it will rain! Accept that you are going to the rainforest and therefore you will get wet. Having a dry set of clothes for time spent at camp is the best option.

- You are required to bring a waterproof poncho/jacket on every survey. The long-term staff generally use jackets rather than ponchos as they provide warmth when you are wet and resist the rain slightly longer. It is up to you to decide if this is a sound investment depending on your circumstances.
- Underwear At least 5 pairs and sports bras are recommended and plenty of pairs of socks (durable as they quickly wear out with all the walking)
- Swimming trunks/costume/bikini
- Towel A quick-dry travel towel or an old and worn towel that will dry quickly.
- Personal First-Aid Kit Head torch with red light Insect repellents Natural based products such as citronella or Eucalyptus are available, as well as DEET-containing repellents
- Water bottle(s) For short trips and for camp Camelback/Platypus water bladder with a hose,
- Sunglasses Make sure they offer 100% UV protection.
- Sun protection/ wide brimmed hat/cap High Factor Sunblock/Sunscreen We recommend at least SPF25+
- Toiletries PREFERABLY BIODEGRADABLE most major brands can be bought in Costa Rica, (including biodegradable shampoo). The expedition provides detergent/soap for washing clothes, but it is not available as biodegradable in Costa Rica.
- Contact lenses / glasses if you use lenses you will need to bring all supplies for the duration of the expedition, as you may not be able to source solutions etc. locally. If using spectacles / glasses bring a spare pair and a neck strap.
- A repair kit and hard cases are also a good idea.
- Stationery You will need a notebook and pens during the training period. Photocopies Of all important documents Whistle required for all surveys for safety reasons - can be cheap.
- USB port to put your favourite pictures in!

### Recommended Equipment:

- Camera MP3 Player
- Plastic / re-sealable bags
- Umbrella Warm clothing a fleece or warm jumper/hoodie
- Paracord/strong cord/string Approx. 5m (15ft) for hanging up mosquito net
- Vitamin tablets
- Ankle/Knee Support
- Electrical adaptor Duct tape
- Snacks/sweets
- Money belt/bum bag/fanny pack for transportation of money and passport.

During turtle nesting season (March - October) only dark clothing is allowed on turtle surveys at night, so please ensure that you are adequately prepared.

If possible avoid military supplies a small amount of army surplus is fine, but full camouflage is not acceptable.

### Hints on Buying Kit:

Please ensure that you can personally carry your bags. It is very hot in here and it rains everyday during the rainy season - clothing will get sweaty every day and may get discoloured due to insect repellent or mould (even clothes that you do not wear, but fail to keep dry when stored).

Avoid this by storing clean, dry clothes in airtight bags/sacks.

Be aware that leather items (belts, shoes etc.) are especially prone to mould.

Quick drying clothes are recommended, as it can be difficult to dry clothes due to the high humidity.

Denim jeans are terrible for this! Shop around for kit, if you are not going to use items afterwards, cheaper lightweight/quick drying clothing might be just as good as top brand items. Before setting off in search of your essential kit, compile a list of everything that you need.

By circulating this list around the several retailers you can collect a number of quotes for the entire kit list.

Having identified the best deal, you may choose to purchase your kit from one store, saving yourself a lot of time (and often money).

It's also wise to ask friends and relatives if they have any items they can donate you'll save money and help them clean out their old gear! You should also mention to the store assistants (or ideally the manager) that you are joining a volunteer project and ask for a discount on your purchases.

Some stores are authorised to offer a discount (typically 10-15%) at their discretion, so it is always worth mentioning that the kit is required in aid of a good cause!

### Additional Information

### Physical Fitness:

It is highly recommended that you build up your physical fitness in the weeks preceding your time in the field. It is highly recommended that you build up your physical fitness in the weeks preceding your time on the project. The heat and humidity can make working in this environment difficult when you first arrive: 28°C (82°F) can feel like 40°C (110°F). Do not underestimate the heat – it is typically our largest health & safety consideration. Having a good level of fitness before you arrive will make it easier for your body to acclimatise so that you can work hard & play hard with the team! The work that you will be doing is always physically demanding, with the majority of your time spent walking on the beach, or conducting transects on uneven and sometimes waterlogged terrain in the forest depending on the project.

### Weather & Climate

Costa Rica has two seasons, wet and dry. The dry season is between December and April, and there is generally very little rain with sun and high temperatures each day. The wet season or green season is May through November, with rain showers daily. Temperatures on the coast are much hotter than inland, averaging about 32C or 89F during the day and slightly cooler temperatures at night. The heat can be oppressive, but is usually somewhat tempered by the breeze coming off the ocean. Insects are also abundant-expect a high diversity in wildlife, including the six-legged variety! Never the less, shorts and t-shirts is the preferred attire when not on survey, changing into long-sleeved shirts and trousers in the evening, and/or using insect repellent at dusk. Covering up is the best way to avoid sunburn and insect bites

### Under 18 Participants

For Under 18s participants we follow Costa Rican regulations so minors cannot buy cigarettes in shops (if you smoke bring enough supplies for the length of your stay). We also have a strict no alcohol no sex relationships policy for minors; failure to follow will leave to the immediate expulsion of the program.

### Only for groups working in Tortuguero National Park. Scientific Permit:

GVI needs to obtain a scientific permit for all volunteers to conduct research within Tortuguero National Park. Without this permit, volunteers are not permitted to participate in surveys. In order to obtain this permit we will need:

\* Legible scanned copy of your passport

\* A brief copy (1 page max) of your CV or resume, translated into Spanish (ideally by a professional e.g. translator, a university professor, bilingual native Spanish speaker, etc. NOT by google translate)

\* Passport-sized photo - High quality digital head shots (4.5cm by 3.5cm)