

WELCOMING

¡BIENVENIDOS A PLAYA GRANDE!



[\[Disponible en Español\]](#)

On behalf of the entire SosGrande team, welcome! We are thrilled that you're interested in supporting conservation while visiting Costa Rica. Thank you for considering dedicating your time and energy to our shared mission: the conservation of nature.

This guide is your first step into the incredible conservation journey that awaits you in Playa Grande and its surroundings. We can't wait to begin this adventure with you!

OUR MISSION

To build a global community of advocates for nature by offering unforgettable opportunities to experience and participate in real-world conservation.

OUR AIMS

Our work is dedicated to protecting Las Baulas Marine National Park and strengthening the vital connectivity of the Baulas Conchal Coastal Marine Biological Corridor. We achieve this through the following objectives:



Participatory science

Promote knowledge about biodiversity, its conservation status and the monitoring of indicators that facilitate management decision making through research and citizen science.



Environmental education

Promote the analysis and debate of criteria for sustainable development through bio-literacy and environmental education.



Community outreach

Involve citizens and their efforts in opportunities for socio & environmental benefits related to the conservation of nature and the objectives for sustainable development.

THE PROJECT

Playa Grande is an ecological treasure of Guanacaste, a vital sanctuary for the nesting and reproduction of species of incalculable value. However, this fragile paradise faces growing pressure from accelerated development that threatens its delicate balance. Aware of this challenge, the community has responded bravely over the years, driving the creation of Las Baulas Marine National Park, the Baulas-Conchal Biological Corridor, and various local organizations dedicated to its defense.

In this context of urgency and hope, our project was born in 2019 with the goal of channeling environmental education, research, and ecotourism initiatives to strengthen conservation efforts. The global pause brought on by the pandemic gave us a unique opportunity to evolve, solidifying ourselves as **Sostenibilidad en Grande**: an association of passionate professionals with extensive experience in wildlife protection.

At Sostenibilidad en Grande, we transform concern into action. Through hands-on fieldwork, we generate crucial data that strengthens the decision-making of local leaders and resource managers. At the same time, we promote a deep environmental consciousness in every volunteer and collaborator, seeking not only to mitigate impacts on the ecosystem but also to inspire each person to become an agent of change and leave a positive, lasting footprint on their community.



HOW YOU WILL HELP

On the first day, you will be oriented on how to assist local leaders in working with conservation projects along Playa Grande and its surroundings. In the mornings, informal presentations about the main project, other research projects, and the need for conservation may be given before the activities.

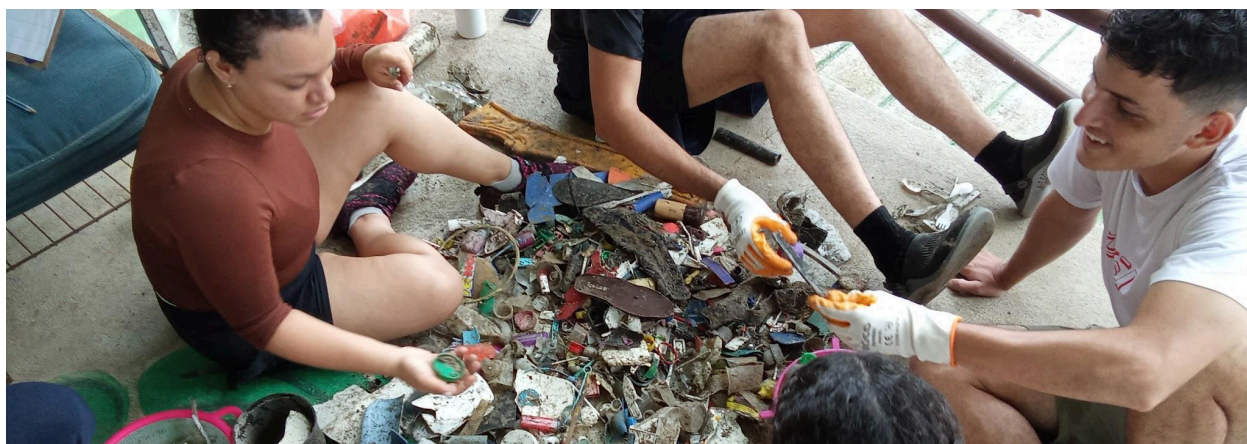
Guided by local leaders, participants will support hands-on conservation and data collection activities, which may vary depending on the date and time of the tide:

- **Marine Debris Lab:** Monitoring and assessing marine debris with a focus on collecting plastics, then sorting the material, completing data sheets, and analyzing the results.
- **Wildlife Surveillance Patrols:** Accompanying community park rangers and research assistants to monitor and survey local biodiversity. This involves walking the beaches or trails of the national park and helping to inform visitors about park regulations.
- **Sandy and Rocky Shore Monitoring:** Collecting data, such as beach profiles and marine invertebrate counts, to assess the health of these coastal ecosystems.
- **Coastal and Aquatic Bird Monitoring:** Searching for and counting birds to identify and quantify the species present on the park's beaches and in the Tamarindo estuary wetland.
- **Environmental Education:** Cooperating with teachers and facilitators in environmental education activities at the Playa Grande Elementary School and the local Kids Club.
- **Forest Fire Prevention:** Collaborating with the local Forest Fire Brigade to create and maintain the firebreaks that protect the national park.
- **Ecological Connectivity Monitoring:** Conducting patrols in hotspots of human-wildlife conflict or tracking howler monkey troops as part of an urban resilience project.
- **Reforestation Initiatives:** Assisting in activities such as working in the tree nursery, planting trees, and conducting follow-up monitoring to support forest regeneration and biological connectivity.
- **Art in Hands:** Helping in the creation and maintenance of signage with creative messages to promote national park rules and environmental awareness.
- **Playa Grande Collection Center:** Aiding leaders in the community recycling program and education regarding waste management.

Some activities will be only coordinated during these months:

- **October - March:** participants will assist community rangers in night patrols for tracking nighttime wildlife including sea turtles, night mammals (rabbits, raccoons), crabs, and such others.
- **April - September:** focused on coastal conservation and research, activities are done mainly during the daytime.

During this journey, participants may have the opportunity to learn about sustainable development, responsible consumption and climate change resilience.



THE JOURNEY

In this conservation experience, participants will collaborate with community leaders and scientists to improve the Las Baulas Marine National Park in Guanacaste and enhance ecological connectivity in Playa Grande, part of the Baulas-Conchal Coastal Marine Biological Corridor.

Once settled in the community, the program begins with an introduction to the ongoing conservation and research projects, detailing how participants will assist and what data will be collected. You will learn methodologies for assessing plastic and light pollution, as well as how to identify common local species and understand the various interactions they have with human activities.

Participants will be immersed in a coastal tourist community on the North Pacific coast of Costa Rica, a town that has chosen to prioritize nature conservation and sports like surfing. You will work closely with community rangers, leaders from the Playa Grande Community Development Association for Environmental Conservation, researchers from The Leatherback Trust and Kuemar, and park rangers from the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC).

Among other activities, participants will have the opportunity to visit other sea turtle nesting sites near Playa Grande, explore the aquatic trails of the Tamarindo Estuary (a Ramsar Site), and take part in local workshops and ecotourism expeditions.

Additionally, we can coordinate optional tourist activities for participants to enjoy, such as surf lessons, ATV tours to nearby sites, snorkeling, or visiting other recommended locations.



ITINERARY

Activities vary depending on the time of year and the tides, with shifts lasting up to 6-8 hours a day and time off for other activities. **Consider one day or 2 days off per week to visit or rest (we're open to run all week).**

DAY 1

- Meeting up, introductions and orientation.

EARLY MORNINGS

(5 am - 7 am)

- Wildlife patrol at the beach and in the firebreak trail
- Monitoring of aquatic birds in the Ramsar Site Tamarindo Wetland
- Data collection for research projects

MORNINGS AND AFTERNOONS

(9 am - 12 md; 2 pm - 5 pm)

- Marine Debris Lab
- Data collection for research projects
- Support in the Recycling Collection Center
- Environmental education at schools or with local children
- Workshops or expeditions

NIGHTS

(7 pm - 9 pm; 11 pm - 4 am)

- Wildlife patrol at the beach and in the firebreak trail
- Assisting sea turtle monitoring programs
- Data collection in night pollution survey

POLICIES

PHOTOGRAPHY AND LIGHT

Photographs can be taken during all daytime activities, including morning walks and wildlife patrols (no selfies with wild animals are allowed by the Costa Rican government, more info: stopanimalselfies.org). Some of the activities will take place at night. Bright lights disturb sea turtles or hatchlings, during the night please follow the following rules :

- **No Night Photography:** To protect the nesting turtles, photography is strictly forbidden on the beach at night. This rule includes cameras, phones or any device capable of taking pictures, such as cameras (even without flash) and smartphones.
- **Professional Permits for Photographers inside the National Park:** Professional photographers require a special government permit for taking pictures at night. Please contact us at least 90 days in advance to start this lengthy process.

- **Shared Photos:** Our project staff will share a folder of photos with you. Please credit the photographer when using them.
- **Red Light Only:** Only flashlights and headlamps with a red light are allowed on the beach after dark. We can provide a red filter if you need one.
- **Minimal Light Use:** To preserve the natural habitat, please use your light only when essential for research tasks and not for walking along the beach.



ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

It is prohibited the consumption of alcohol by individuals under 18 years of age, as well as improper sexual relations with minors and the trafficking of illicit drugs (as defined by the [Ministry of Health](#)).

Any personal consumption of alcohol or narcotics, and any personal relationships formed with local individuals, are the sole responsibility of the participant.

Such activities must not interfere with the participant's work, damage the reputation of the collaborating organizations, or violate national park regulations.

HEALTH & SAFETY: WILDLIFE AND FIELD PROTOCOLS

Our projects are located in an area rich with biodiversity. To ensure a safe and positive experience for everyone, please read the following guidelines carefully.

Wildlife Awareness

It's important to be mindful of local wildlife that can cause stings, bites, or allergic reactions. This includes insects such as mosquitoes, bees, wasps, and ants, as well as other creatures like scorpions and snakes. Always be aware of your surroundings, watch where you step, and never leave personal items or food unsecured.

Required Safety Protocols

To ensure your safety and minimize our impact on the environment, the following rules must be followed at all times:



Proper Footwear. Sturdy, closed-toe hiking boots are **mandatory** for all fieldwork on trails. For activities in estuaries or on rocky beaches, aquatic footwear is required.



Nighttime Safety. At night (especially during turtle season), you may **only use a red-light headlamp**, and only with the direct permission of your supervisor.



The Golden Rule: Do Not Touch Wildlife. This is our most important rule and it applies to everyone, regardless of previous experience. For your safety and for the well-being of the animals, **handling any wildlife is strictly forbidden.**

SWIMMING

Playa Grande is in front of the Pacific Ocean, where extremely dangerous rip tides have led to drowning, even in cases where people were in the water only up to their knees. Volunteer lifeguards might be present in North Playa Grande during Sundays. **Swimming in the ocean during your time off is at your own risk.**

The accommodations are close to the Tamarindo Wetland, which is crossed by the Palo Seco River. During downtime, there will be opportunities to visit the wetland and its aquatic trails. Please note that no lifeguard is on duty, and crocodiles might be present. Always notify a staff member when you will be visiting the wetland by kayak or canoe, and never swim.



ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

All participants must be able to:



Walk in soft sand for 3 - 4 hours (with total distances up to 8 mi/12km), sometimes under difficult conditions (high tides, rain, high humidity, etc.).



Get prepared to work outdoors in all weather conditions, such as heavy rain, high heat, and extreme humidity. Fieldwork continues in the rain but will be suspended during lightning storms.



Get along with a variety of people from different backgrounds and ages, surrounded by a language and/or culture different from yours.



Be comfortable in vehicles moving along steep, winding, and occasionally bumpy roads for up to an hour.



Visit rocky and sandy beaches, also trails with bushes and under the trees. You will likely encounter insects, snakes, and other local wildlife.



Sea turtle sightings are not guaranteed. **Touching or handling wild animals is prohibited.**



Be able to communicate with the staff in case of experiencing distress or need assistance.



COORDINATION & LOGISTICS

Your participation fee with **Sostenibilidad en Grande** will depend on how you engage with us:

\$15
per day

Are you coming as an Intern?

If your objective is to develop a specific research project or work (often linked to your university or another organization), a special fee applies.

\$25
per day

Are you coming as a Collaborator or Volunteer?

If you wish to provide more general support for the various projects we have underway, a standard fee applies.

WHAT IS INCLUDED?

- Professional guidance for your internship or conservation journey, provided by a marine biologist and other experienced professionals.
- Tools and equipment for the development of the projects.
- Internal transportation to/from the projects and your location in Playa Grande.
- Contribution to the projects, government permits and fees.

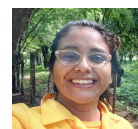
WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED?

- Plane / bus tickets.
- Shuttle from/to Playa Grande and your arrival location.
- Accommodations and food.

KNOW YOUR LEADERS



Christian Díaz Chuquisengo
Director



Paola Ramírez Monzón
Field coordinator

Christian bridges field experience with strategic planning to forge a sustainable future. With a background that includes his role as a park ranger at Las Baulas Marine National Park and his work in sea turtle conservation, he has firsthand knowledge of the region's challenges. His main focus is promoting mindful urban planning through participatory science. Furthermore, he is a key board member of the Playa Grande Development Association and the Matapalo Water Board, demonstrating his deep commitment to the community.

Driven by a collaborative spirit, Paola connects science with community action. With a strong background in sea turtle conservation in Mexico and Costa Rica, her approach is fundamentally interdisciplinary, seeking to develop joint solutions through participatory science.

Beyond her conservation work, she is the coordinator of the Cabo Velas forest fire brigade and a recognized community leader in Playa Grande, showcasing her hands-on leadership and deep local roots.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND FOOD

SLEEP

We can coordinate activities for participants that already have lodging in Playa Grande, or looking for a place to stay? While you will need to book your own lodging, we're happy to help you get started! Below are a few local options that you might want to consider. Feel free to explore them and book the one that best suits your needs:

Kike's Place



Experience authentic Costa Rican hospitality at this [family-owned lodge](#). They offer cozy cabins with all the essential comforts for a pleasant stay. Relax by their pool and then delight your senses at the adjacent bar and restaurant, where you can savor homemade dishes that celebrate the best of traditional Costa Rican cuisine.

Distance to park office: 800 m (0.5 mi)

Distance to the beach: 900 m (0.6 mi)

Estimated room prices per day:

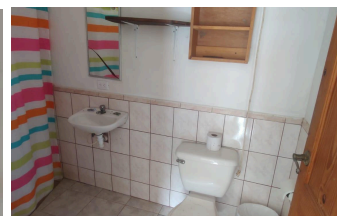
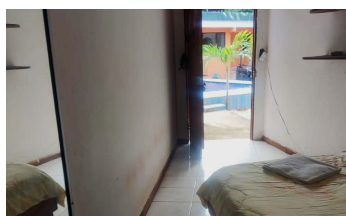
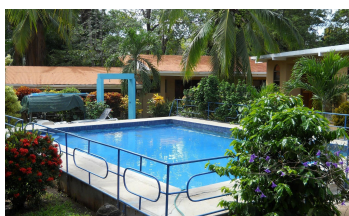
- Single room (1 - 2 people): \$ 35
- Double room: (2 - 3 people): \$ 50

Wifi: available with low - medium speed.

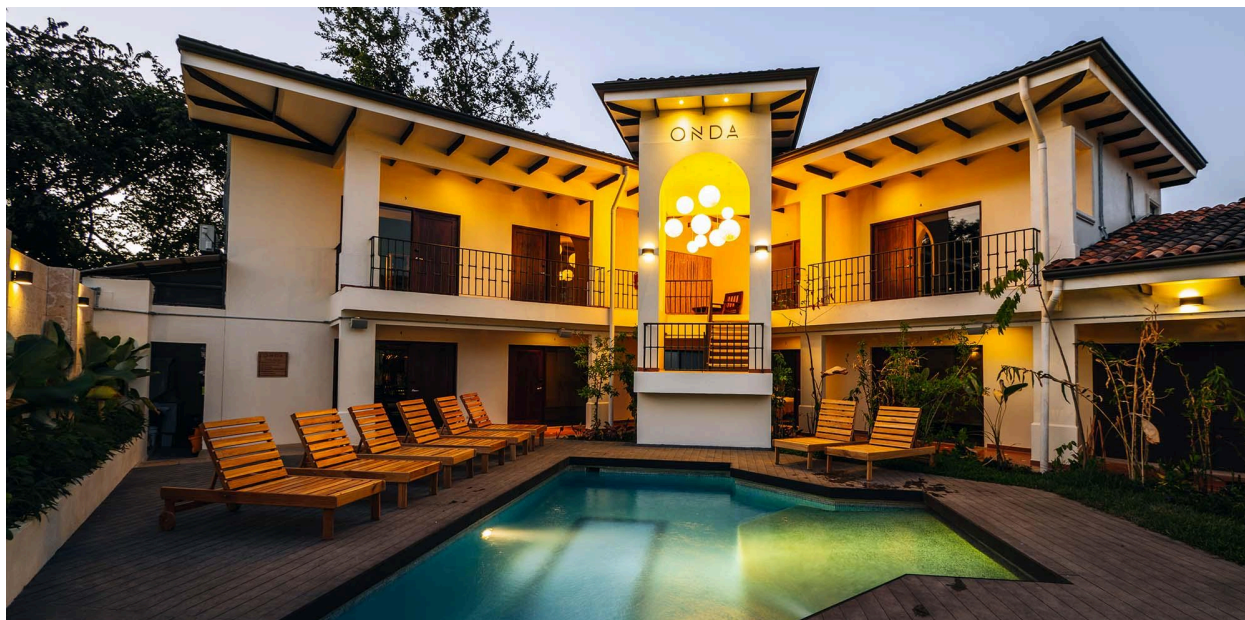
Other amenities: pool, restaurant and bar.

Estimated room prices per month:

- Single room (1 - 2 people): \$ 250
- Double room: (2 - 3 people): \$ 380



ONDA



Experience a modern approach to lodging at ONDA, which is a leading concept in the rapidly growing boutique hostel space – combining the social atmosphere and budget-friendly aspects of a hostel with the creature comforts of a boutique hotel and bar/restaurant. Their fully online and automated process eliminates administrative headaches, ensuring a smooth start to your volunteer journey.

ONDA provides private rooms with ensuite bathrooms, plus shared dorms (both mixed and female-only) with shared facilities. A communal kitchen is available to all guests. Look more about their amenities at:

stayonda.com

Distance to park office: 350 m (0.2 mi)

Distance to the beach: 400 m (0.2 mi)

Room prices benefits*:

- 1 - 29 days: *25% discount coupon*
- +30 days: [35% discount on website](#)

Wifi: high speed dual internet connections.

Other amenities: pool, rest/bar, co-working space.

Estimated room prices per night:

- Bed in mix dorm (1 person): \$15 - \$20
- 2 Twin - 1 King rooms (2 people): \$60 - \$70

* Reservations on the ONDA web platform are valid for stays within the next 6 months.



Hotel Las Tortugas



Experience a closer approach to the only hotel located directly on Playa Grande. More importantly, it has a rich history in local conservation. Its founder was instrumental in protecting the Tamarindo wetland by promoting the creation of the wildlife refuge, prior to the national park.

For volunteers, it offers a comfortable base with a pool, jacuzzi, and restaurant to unwind after a day's work. Taco Star, a local burrito store also offers drinks and pastry. They have a range of room accommodations, making it a convenient and meaningful choice that supports a historic local partner in conservation, more at:

lastortugashotel.com

Distance to park office: 100 m (308 ft.)

Distance to the beach: in front.

Estimated room prices per day:*

- Single room (1 - 2 people): \$40 - \$60
- Mix dorms: (2 - 3+ people): \$30 - \$60

Wifi: available with low - medium speed.

Other amenities: pool, restaurant and bar.

Estimated room prices per week:*

- Single room (1 - 2 people): \$550
- Mix dorms: (2 - 3+ people): \$190

* Please note that our prices fluctuate depending on the season. [Look at the rates here](#).



FOOD AND WATER

Tap water in Playa Grande is drinkable. Volunteers and interns on past expeditions have generally found that two meals per day are sufficient, for this reason we suggest eating in a local restaurant who offers a special discount on brunch and dinner. Participants typically will not have sit-down lunches, if you wish to make something to eat at lunchtime, some snacks could be acquired in local stores.

Dietary Needs and Local Cuisine

Please be sure to detail any needs on your registration form. This includes allergies (e.g., nuts, gluten), intolerances (e.g., lactose), medical diets (e.g., diabetes), or if you follow a vegetarian or vegan diet. Providing this information in advance allows us to coordinate effectively with local restaurants.

For those on a vegan diet, please be aware that preparing strictly vegan dishes can sometimes be a challenge in rural areas. We will always do our best to meet your needs, but variety may be limited.

A Note on Costa Rican Food

Costa Rican cuisine is centered around fresh ingredients. The base of most meals, like the famous *gallo pinto* and *casado*, consists of rice, beans, salads, and vegetables, making vegetarian diets generally easy to accommodate.



A Helpful Tip: If you are accustomed to eating between meals, or if you require specific snacks for your diet or activity level, we highly recommend bringing a small personal supply from home. This is a great way to supplement the main meals and ensure you always have what you need on hand.



Kike's Place Bar & Restaurant

Conveniently located in the center of Playa Grande, just 800 meters from the national park offices, this locally-owned restaurant serves traditional cuisine for brunch and dinner.

In partnership with the owners, who are longtime supporters and leaders in local conservation efforts, we have created a special menu together:

\$10

A traditional meal consisting of a rice and beans base, with one protein or a vegetarian option, and includes a drink.

Abastecedor La Marina

Between the Playa Grande School and Kike's Place, you will find the La Marina Mini-Supermarket where you can find basic products, as well as some fresh fruits and vegetables.

Within the community, farther away, there are also vegetable stands and other larger stores with a wider variety of products.



COMMUNICATIONS

To help you get the most out of this unique opportunity, we strongly encourage participants to immerse themselves in the experience by minimizing non-essential calls and screen time. This allows for a deeper connection with the projects, the local culture, and the incredible natural surroundings.

We kindly ask that you share this philosophy with your family and friends, requesting that they limit contact to important messages only. This helps create a focused and present environment for all participants.



*Before you arrive, it's a good idea to ask your phone company about roaming in Costa Rica. If that's not a good option, you can easily buy a prepaid SIM card when you get here. If you decide to get a local SIM, we recommend **Liberty**, as they have the best coverage in our area.*

*Many local restaurants and public places offer free Wi-Fi, but the connection is often unreliable. For a dependable, high-speed internet connection, your best options are **ONDA** and **Pots and Bowls**.*

*When dialing to Costa Rica, you must add a **+506** or **00506** to the 8-digit number you want to contact. Within Costa Rica you can dial only the 8-digit number phone contact.*

LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

Our staff will pick you up to head to the starting point for the activities. Most activities take place within 2 kilometers (about 1.25 miles) of the center of Playa Grande and are typically within walking distance. For activities located further away, **transportation is included**.

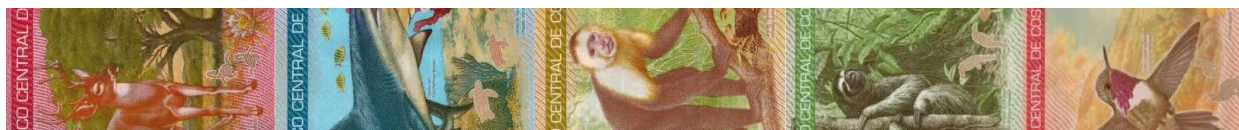
MONEY AND CURRENCY

Local Currency



Costa Rican colón.

US dollars are accepted almost everywhere (though you will receive change in colones).



Personal Funds

Credit cards are accepted in the region at all supermarkets and shops, however local pop-up artisanal craft stalls and street food options only take cash.

It is recommended that you carry a small amount of cash for souvenirs and other incidental expenses. Airports, banks and some super markets have an ATM, as should all medium-sized towns like **Huacas** and **Tamarindo**.

We recommend exchanging or withdrawing the equivalent of at least \$50 USD per week to have cash available for personal expenses.

You can download apps for reference on money exchange.



PLAN YOUR TRAVEL

MEET UP LOCATION

We can meet at Las Baulas National Marine Park Office in Playa Grande, or we can meet you up in a closer location within the Huacas- Tamarindo area in case you come by bus, boat or plane.

How to arrive Playa Grande?

We can meet you up in any of these locations:



San José - Matapalo

Online reservation at:
tguanacaste.com

Book: San José - Flamingo
(Liberia) - 8:00 am.

Departure
8:00 San José Terminal, Paseo
Colón, in front of Children
Hospital. **It makes a stop at half
way for bathroom use and food
break.*

Arrival
~14:00 to Matapalo Soccer Field
Pick up included.



Tamarindo - Playa Grande

Schedule: 8:00 - 16:30

Departure: Tamarindo Boat
Cooperative

Arrival: Palm Beach Estates,
South Playa Grande.
Pick up included.

Estimated price: \$2



Tamarindo or Liberia

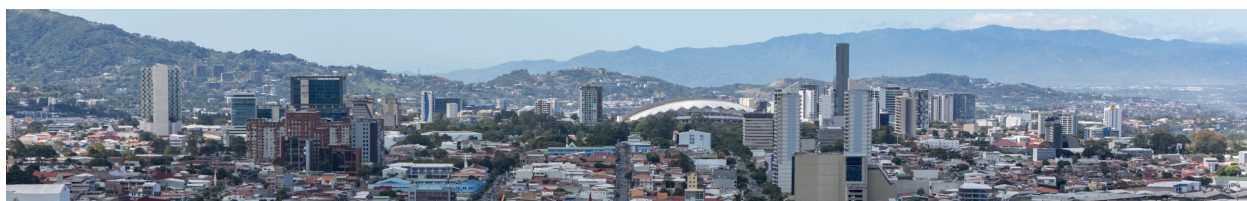
TNO - Tamarindo Airport
Airstrip for local flights from
Liberia (LIR) or San José (SJO).

LIR - Guanacaste Airport
International airport with flights
mainly from North America and
Europe. **Additional fee applies for
pick-up.**

SJO - Juan Santamaría Airport
Costa Rica's main international
airport. **Layover in San José is
recommended before leaving by
bus or plane to Guanacaste.**



A Helpful Tip: You can explore the city independently by using apps (like Uber) for transport and finding lodging on sites like Airbnb or VRBO. It's a great opportunity to visit the museums and landmarks at your own pace. Alternatively, if you would prefer a unique guided tour with our staff or want us to coordinate all your lodging and transportation, please contact us in advance for details and pricing.



ABOUT YOUR DESTINATION

We strongly recommend that travelers investigate and get familiar with the destination's entry/exit requirements from your country, visas, and customs to ensure smooth travel. You are responsible for reviewing and abiding by your destination's entry/exit requirements.

Entry visa requirements differ by country of origin, layover, and destination and do change unexpectedly. For this reason, please confirm your visa requirements at the time of booking and again 90 days before travel. If a visa is required, participants should apply for a **TOURIST visa**.

Please note that obtaining a visa can take weeks or even months. We strongly recommend using a visa agency to expedite and simplify the process. Please apply early for your visa in case it is required (we recommend starting six months before the start of your expedition). Refunds will not be made for volunteers who cancel due to not obtaining their visa in time to meet the team at the rendezvous.

PROJECT CONDITIONS

The project is set in a stunning landscape where rolling, dry-tropical hills and grasslands meet the Pacific Ocean.



Local Climate & What to Expect

Our climate is tropical and warm year-round. Daytime temperatures typically range from **30–35°C** (85–95°F). Evenings cool down significantly to around **20°C** (68°F), so it's always a good idea to have a light layer for the evenings.

The year is generally divided into two main seasons:

Rainy Season (Approx. July – November) During these months, you can expect warm, humid days, often with afternoon rain showers that keep the landscape lush and green. For expeditions during this period, we recommend packing a lightweight rain jacket and a long-sleeved sweatshirt for the cooler nights.

Dry Season (Approx. December – April) This season is characterized by hot, sunny, and often windy conditions with very little rainfall. Sun protection, such as a hat and sunscreen, is essential.

HEALTH AND SAFETY



EMERGENCY NUMBER: 9-1-1

Our team will have a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week emergency hotline number.

Project staff members are not medical professionals. A medical clinic and a mid-size hospital is within an approximately 15-minute drive of Playa Grande. While performing fieldwork, it can take 1–2 hours (or more) to reach a big hospital in Liberia for emergency care.

All projects have detailed Emergency Response Plans; this will be shared with participants at the beginning of the journey.

IMMUNIZATIONS & TRAVEL VACCINATIONS

Please be sure your routine immunizations are up to date and that you have the appropriate vaccinations for your travel destination. Medical decisions are the responsibility of each participant and their doctor. Visit the webpage of your local Department or Ministry of Health for guidance on immunizations.

If traveling from countries or regions where yellow fever is endemic, you must have a certificate of vaccination.

SUN AND HEAT PROTECTION

Our work takes place in a hot and humid tropical climate. To stay healthy and comfortable, preventing heat-related illnesses like dehydration, heat exhaustion, and sunburn is essential. Please follow these key protective measures:

- **Stay Hydrated:** Drink water consistently throughout the day, even before you feel thirsty. You **must** bring a reusable water bottle (1-liter capacity recommended) to all activities. We also suggest bringing electrolyte packets or powders to add to your water to replenish what you lose through sweat.
- **Protect Your Skin:** Sunburn can occur quickly. Always apply a high-SPF (30+), water-resistant sunscreen. A wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses are also crucial for protection.
- **Dress Appropriately:** Wear lightweight, loose-fitting, and light-colored clothing to help your body stay cool. Breathable long-sleeved shirts and pants can also provide excellent protection from the sun during fieldwork.



PROJECT RISKS AND CONDITIONS

ROAD TRANSPORTATION

There is a risk of road traffic accidents during team transport. Roads are often in poor condition, lack clearly marked lanes, and have narrow shoulders and large potholes. During the rainy season (May-November), landslides and washed-out roads are common. We will transport participants in project vehicles. Seat belts must be worn at all times. Participants are not permitted to drive. Driving after dark will be avoided, except in emergencies or depending on the projects.



WALKING/HIKING/CLIMBING

Walking on soft sand on the beach can be strenuous, especially at night in the dark. You must be in good physical condition and have good vision. Comfortable, closed-toe footwear (such as sneakers or hiking boots) and socks are essential to reduce the risk of broken toes, blisters, twisted ankles, scorpion stings/insect bites, and other injuries. We recommend Crocs sandals with thick socks as a possible option.

ANIMALS/PLANTS

To ensure a safe and successful experience, it's essential to be aware of our local environment. Please review these guidelines carefully.

Insects & Arachnids

Our tropical setting is home to a wide variety of insects and arachnids.

- **Mosquitoes and Sand Fleas:** Mosquitoes can be common in accommodations, and sand fleas may be present on the beach at night. A reliable insect repellent is highly recommended.
- **Stinging Insects:** Bees, wasps, and ants are plentiful. Always be mindful of your surroundings, especially when outdoors.
- **Spiders & Scorpions:** These may seek shelter in dark, undisturbed places. **Crucial Safety Habit:** Always shake out your shoes, clothing, and bags before putting them on.
- **Allergies & Reactions:** If you typically have strong reactions to insect bites, we advise bringing anti-itch ointment or other personal medications. If you have a known severe allergy (e.g., to bees), you **must** bring your emergency kit (like an EpiPen) and notify staff of its location upon your arrival.

Snakes and Other Wildlife

While venomous snakes are present in the Guanacaste region (including coral snakes, fer-de-lance/terciopelo, and rattlesnakes/cascabel), encounters are rare. The best precaution is to be vigilant, stay on marked paths, and never attempt to handle any wildlife.



WARNING: Please learn to identify and stay clear of the Manzanillo tree ([Hippomane mancinella](#) in the image below), which can be found in the area. All parts of this tree—its bark, leaves, sap, and fruit—are highly toxic and can cause severe skin reactions upon contact.



Protocol for Animal Bites or Scratches

This protocol applies to any contact with mammals, including stray dogs, cats, or bats.

1. **Immediate First Aid:** Thoroughly wash any bite or scratch for several minutes with soap and clean water. If available, apply an antiseptic solution.
2. **Report Immediately:** You must report any incident to a staff member right away for further assessment.
3. **Medical Follow-Up:** While human cases of rabies are very rare, it is present in Costa Rica. Prompt medical evaluation is essential after any animal bite or scratch. The pre-exposure vaccine provides extra protection but **does not** eliminate the need for post-exposure medical care.
4. **Post-Trip Health:** If you feel ill after your trip, inform your doctor that you have recently traveled to a tropical region in Central America.

AWARENESS OF NATURAL HAZARDS

Costa Rica is a meteorologically and geologically active country. While major events are uncommon, it's important to be aware of potential hazards. Our team is prepared to handle these situations, and your safety is our highest priority.

Potential Hazards

- **Weather-Related Events:** The hurricane season officially runs from June to November. During this time, the entire country can experience heavy rains from tropical storms, which can lead to localized flooding or landslides and may disrupt travel.
- **Geological Events:** As a country on the Pacific Ring of Fire, Costa Rica experiences occasional seismic activity (earthquakes). The nation is also home to several active volcanoes.

Our Safety Protocol & Your Role

1. **Staff Monitoring:** Our field staff actively monitors official local sources for any alerts regarding natural events. We will always provide you with clear instructions and safety information in a timely manner.
2. **Your Responsibility:** In any situation, your primary responsibility is to **follow all instructions from our staff calmly and immediately**. During your personal travel time, we advise you to stay informed by paying attention to local news and heeding any official public warnings.

GENERAL AWARENESS IN PUBLIC AREAS

Like in many tourist destinations, be mindful of your surroundings to prevent theft and pickpocketing. This is especially important in cities like San José and Liberia and at popular beaches. Always keep a close watch on your personal belongings, such as bags, phones, and wallets. When traveling, use official red taxis (or orange airport taxis) or trusted ride-sharing apps. Avoid unmarked vehicles.

DISEASES

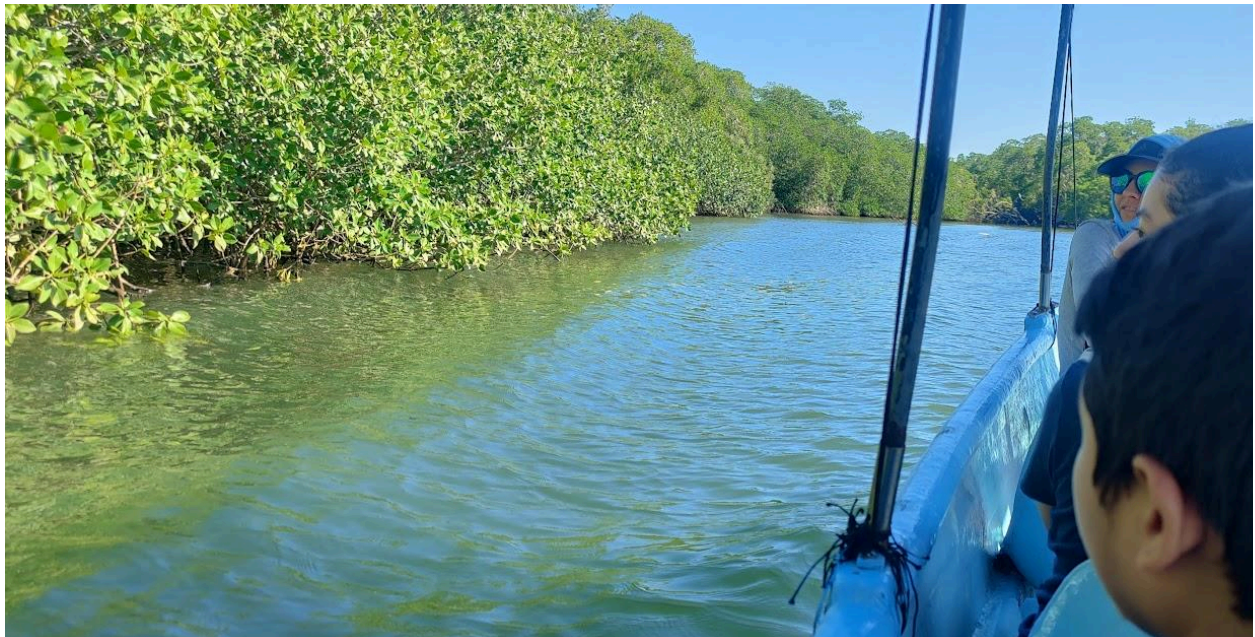
Diseases present in Costa Rica include HIV/AIDS, malaria, Zika virus, dengue, chikungunya, Chagas disease, leishmaniasis, tuberculosis, leptospirosis, typhoid, hepatitis, hantavirus, rabies, and others. Consult your local travel physician well in advance for personal recommendations for immunizations. Beyond routine immunizations (e.g., measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DPT), varicella (chickenpox) vaccine, polio vaccine, and your yearly flu shot), Hepatitis A and Typhoid vaccines may also be recommended for travel.

The CDC does not currently list Guanacaste Province as an area of active malaria transmission. However, mosquito-borne diseases like Zika virus, dengue fever, and chikungunya have been reported in the region. The best protection against infection is to limit mosquito bites by wearing protective clothing (long-sleeved shirts and long pants) and using insect repellent. The CDC recommends EPA-approved mosquito repellents containing 20% DEET or natural repellents made with lemon oil eucalyptus. Our team has tested lemon oil eucalyptus repellents at Playa Grande and found them quite effective—and friendly to local ecosystems!

BOAT SAFETY IN TAMARINDO WETLAND

Our research in the Tamarindo Wetland requires travel by boat into the aquatic trails. Your safety on the water is our top priority, so please review the following guidelines carefully. These are some potential risks & precautions:

- **Boarding and Disembarking:** Please be extremely careful when getting in and out of the boat. The vessel can be unstable, creating a risk of slips, sprains, or strains. Always wait for instructions from staff before moving.
- **Motion Sickness:** The movement of the boat can cause motion sickness, even in the estuary. If you are prone to this, we **strongly recommend** you bring and take appropriate medication as a precaution before we depart.
- **Falling Overboard:** Always remain seated and maintain your balance while the boat is in motion to minimize the risk of falling overboard.



SEE YOU SOON!

For government permits you will be asked to provide a copy of your passport and travel or life insurance (**repatriation must be included**). By approving these terms and conditions, please register to our conservation journey!

Register at sosgrande.org/volunteer

More info: info@sosgrande.org

Photo credits: [Ginneth Matos](#), Sostenibilidad en Grande and to those who correspond.

PACKING LIST

Check the following materials before arriving:

- ☐ Proper footwear (include sandals, close sandals or crocs, waterproof and anti-slippery shoes, hiking boots)
- ☐ Comfortable clothes (include long sleeve to avoid mosquitoes and protect from the sun, casual clothes, long pants, dark clothes for night patrols)
- ☐ Rain coat
- ☐ Protection from the sun and insects (sunscreen and organic base repellent)
- ☐ Water bottle
- ☐ Hat
- ☐ Flashlight with red light (optional)
- ☐ Personal medicins
- ☐ Valid passport and visa if required

WISH LIST

We appreciate your support in case it is possible to bring some of this materials we require:

- ☐ Crayon packs
- ☐ Powdered electrolyte drinks
- ☐ Repellents
- ☐ Sunscreens

MUST READ

THE MYSTERY OF THE DISAPPEARANCE OF AURA

by Katiana Murillo Aguilar

Tatiana is a little girl who goes on a trip with her parents to the Las Baulas National Marine Park in Guanacaste and whose nap on the beach is interrupted by a mangrove hummingbird, who asks her for help to investigate what happened to Aura, the leatherback turtle, who disappeared without a trace and was supposed to be back to lay her eggs. This search becomes a journey full of adventures and interesting encounters with many species that tell them about what is happening in the park and surrounding environments and how to prevent species like Aura from disappearing.

Download here: <https://www.sosgrande.org/aura-en.html>

¡Gracias por su apoyo!

El equipo de SosGrande