

Travel List for Costa Rica

WHAT TO BRING-This list is modified from the OET list.

Travel as lightly as possible but bring what you think you'll need. Expect any bag you bring into the field to get dirty and wet.

Every year some students wish we put more items on the list of suggestions below while others think the list is much too long. So take the list as just a suggestion and think about what you plan to do or what you typically require when you go out in the field. Talk to former students.

TO BRING:

a. PASSPORT. BE SURE THAT YOUR PASSPORT IS VALID FOR AT LEAST 6 MONTHS AFTER YOUR ENTRY DATE(S) INTO COSTA RICA. MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE AT LEAST 2 BLANK PAGES IN YOUR PASSPORT. This is vital. Costa Rica really will prevent you from entering the country if your passport is not up to snuff.

b. CASH, CREDIT CARDS

c. CLOTHING AND PERSONAL ITEMS: If possible, check with past participants about details. You will need one very warm outfit to wear while we are at Cerro de la Muerte/High Elevation Site Cuericí. Avoid nylon, polyester, and acrylics for our lowland sites; they are hot. Use all-cotton or blends that are mostly cotton. However, for Cuericí cotton is not a good idea because it will get wet and never dry. Fleece jackets, polypro underwear, and even those nylon fast-drying field pants will make your life better in the Cuericí. Label all clothing with waterproof markers, sewn-in labels, or sewn-in distinctive insignia, for we have communal laundry, and all socks tend to look alike. Except for your "town clothes," most of your clothing will get muddy and receive rough treatment. Do not bring expensive watches or jewelry.

Do bring large Ziplocs and put your clothes in them.

- shirts; 1 town shirt plus 4-5 for the field (long-sleeved are good for bugs, roll them up when too hot). Lightweight cotton workshirts are ideal, plus several T-shirts.
- pants; 1 pair presentable for town, plus 2 or 3 pairs for field. While blue jeans are fine for casual wear, they do not make good field pants; denim is hot, heavy, and very slow drying. AVOID tight pants or yoga pants! You want loose fitting hiking pants.
- shorts or cut-offs for relaxation, the occasional hike, or field wear.
- swimsuit
- underwear (cotton recommended)
- socks; including a couple pairs of warm ones for Cuericí. You might find rubber boots more comfortable with heavier socks. I ONLY use Wool Socks in the field.
- sweater, sweatshirt, or a wool shirt for San José, Cerro
- very warm clothes for Cuericí—sweater, hat, large bandana for use as a scarf, plus

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- a windbreaker .
- sleeping bag for the Cuericí if you are very cold-sensitive. The station has many blankets.
- laundry bag (pillowcase is best) is optional but useful
- soft (foldable) hat with a broad brim for sun and rain, or baseball cap
- bandanas (I own about 30 and wear them daily)..
- rainwear; bring a poncho or a light breathable rain jacket, rain pants and an umbrella;
- umbrellas are very useful when caught out in a shower and for staying dry when walking between buildings at our field sites.
- boots; fancy leather hiking boots are not advised. We suggest RUBBER BOOTS! you may be able to buy them in San José on the day you arrive or at a Ferreteria en route, but we cannot guarantee it especially if you have “gringo grande” feet. Otherwise, bring light-weight and fast-drying hiking boots, work boots or "jungle boots." For trails in the forest, boots are required.
- a headlamp
- sneakers or tennis shoes
- Tevas or similar sturdy sandals for the lab.
- towel; a thin one is better and dries faster than the thick luxury types
- toiletries. Most items (shampoo, toothpaste, etc.) are available in Costa Rica, but you should not expect to find your favorite brand.
- personal medical supplies. The course has first-aid kits, but you should bring a small supply of aspirin, antiseptic, hydrocortisone cream, or Rhuli Gel, moleskin, Band-Aids, vitamins if you use them. Definitely bring a 2-month supply of any prescription medication you use, foot powder as well as topical antifungal medicines. Women who are subject to yeast or urinary tract infections should bring along proper medication. (You can usually get Cipro from your doctor to combat traveler’s diarrhea.)
- insect sting kit—some people have severe (and dangerous) reactions to insect stings. If you are one of these, bring an emergency adrenaline kit, such as "Anakit" or "EpiPen" available by prescription, to keep with you, and inform the coordinators of your sensitivity to insect stings. (IF YOU ARE ALLERGIC—YOU MUST LET LEADERS KNOW)
- extra eyeglasses or contact lenses and prescription, in case yours get broken or lost
- sunglasses
- high rated (15 or greater) sunscreen. The tropical sun is dangerously intense. In addition, Costa Rica is experiencing UV levels of 10 and 10+ in some of the areas we will visit.
- sewing needles, strong thread, extra buttons, safety pins, extra shoe/boot laces
- clothespins (a few)
- if you bring photos of friends and family, consider having them laminated. The humidity will otherwise destroy the photos. If you bring stuffed animals, be aware that they may contract a dot-fungus that will pigment them permanently. Better to leave them at home.

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d. IMPORTANT FIELD EQUIPMENT

- a good light is an absolute MUST! A headlamp is often better than a flashlight because your hands are free; you can walk and do other work for hours at night without getting arm fatigue. However, you should also bring a flashlight. This can be a small maglite type light. If you like night hikes, you will want a light that is not LED. I recommend LED LENSER. Consider, in addition, getting one of the small “keychain” LED lights to clip into your backpack. It’s always good to have multiple sources of light, in case one fails. I have a rechargeable headlamp.
- extra batteries. Pack batteries in watertight containers. The course cannot supply batteries, so anyone expecting to do night work should bring all he or she expects to need. You can get good alkaline batteries readily in Costa Rica, but they are more expensive than in the US.
- a day pack for daily field use
- pocket knife or multitool
- wristwatch, inexpensive, water-resistant (Casio digital watches survive well in lowland humidity.)
- insect repellent
- lecture notebook. Be sure it is durable.
- waterproof or sturdy field notebooks. Forestry Suppliers has excellent field notebooks. Rite-in-the-rain notebooks are the books of choice for many tropical ecologists, but sturdy fieldbooks also work well. WE CAN ORDER THESE FOR THE CLASS
- pencils, ballpoint pens and sharpies
- 10x hand lens
- clipboard (very useful!)
- plastic bags, including ziplocks to use for carrying specimens and for packing your gear in during moves when your pack will probably get wet
- binoculars: Even if you're not a birder these are essential for numerous field problems, such as examining trees whose foliage, flowers or fruits are 30 m up.
- compass (optional)
- large envelope or plastic folder for handouts and other papers you will accumulate
- water bottle/canteen, 1-liter size
- earplugs (worth several times their weight in gold to counter the San José street noise or for occasions when you want to sleep and your bunkmates do not.)

e. ALMOST ESSENTIAL FIELD EQUIPMENT (depending on your interests)

- camera (Unless you are philosophically and irrevocably opposed to photography, you'll be sorry if you don't have one. An extra lens cap and a haze (=skylight) filter to protect the lens are wise investments.) Digital cameras are great because they allow photos to be shared among the participants, to be added to presentations, and to the course book. We will make a communal photopool and share pics.
- flash or strobe for camera, and batteries, if you bring a non-digital camera (A flash is essential for lowland rain forest sites, and of course for night shots; it is dark in the forest, even in the daytime.)
- film, if you bring a non-digital camera,—Bring plenty; it's expensive in Costa

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Rica, and some types are generally not available. Again, remember that the forest interior is dark, so bring some higher speed film, e.g., ASA 400 along with the usual 100-200 ASA.

- watertight plastic bag or storage container for camera, flash, film, and calculator. If you bring silica gel to pack in your container, be sure it is the “indicator” kind.
- aspirator and insect net, if you are entomologically oriented
- dissecting kit, fine forceps, small ruler, if so oriented
- a roll of duct tape ... where would life be without it? And it is good for getting seed ticks off clothes.
- field guides, books, reprints on special topics of interest
- USB Memory Stick for your papers etc.
- Your laptop computer
 - If you want to work on data and statistics, please download R and Rstudio
- iPods, MP3s, or CDs of music for parties (If you have favorite Latin dance music, please bring it along. We can use them at our parties!)
- Guitar or other portable instruments. Bring yours if you feel comfortable traveling with it.
- snacks (raisin-nut mixtures, etc.); this is especially important for vegetarians and others with special dietary requirements, since meals will become a bit monotonous for you.
- cleats. The national sport of Costa Rica is soccer, and we will have opportunities to play at several sites. It is hard to make a good showing if you can't stay upright on muddy fields. Bring cleats if ya got em'.

Your own personal habits and research interests should be considered in deciding what to bring.