



Fact: Leatherback turtles are under serious threat of extinction, as their numbers diminish due to egg poaching and drowning in fishing nets. Only one in 1000 hatchlings survive to adulthood. Our gap year projects and volunteering opportunities in Costa Rica includes valuable time spent improving your Spanish and becoming part of the community at the Pacuare Reserve. You will volunteer on a turtle conservation project experience Costa Rican city life, tranquil Caribbean beaches and travel all in one venture!

Project Summary

Departs: COMING SOON

How long? 11 Weeks

Accommodation: Homestay families / catered lodge

Project Work: Spanish, Turtle Protection, Eco-tourism

Explore Further: Beaches, Trekking, Surfing, Wildlife



Project Overview

<p>Orientation + Briefing (4 days)</p>	<p>Orientation and Spanish lessons at the CPI Spanish school in San Joaquin de Flores. A chance to get to know your AV group whilst improving your Spanish and attending briefings on Ecuadorian culture, history, safety and the work of Rainforest Concern and the Endangered Wildlife Trust to protect the turtles.</p>
<p>Project Work (Approx 10-12 weeks)</p>	<p>Volunteering at the Pacuare Turtle Lodge – accompanied by guides and biologists you will be conducting beach patrols, turtle monitoring and egg protection.</p>
<p>Independent Travel (4 weeks)</p>	<p>Explore Costa Rica further using the confidence and local knowledge gained on your project to make the most of your travels. The pacific and Caribbean both have some amazing beaches and there are volcanoes, rain forests and Panama all close by. You choose what you do, but we are still on hand to help.</p>

Detailed Itinerary

ARRIVING IN COSTA RICA

The group flight departs from London Heathrow and will be seen off by one of the AV team. You will fly into Costa Rica's capital, San Jose, arriving in the late afternoon/early evening, and be met by our representative. You will be taken to the language school in Centro Panamericano de Idiomas in San Joaquin de Flores, close to the international airport.

You will have your first briefing with the AV representative. This will cover the essentials, a guide to the area you will be living in and what will be happening over the next few days. At the end of this briefing your homestay families will arrive to collect you. All the families have been carefully selected and offer a warm welcome to AV volunteers. You will spend the weekend getting to know them and settling into your new home before returning to the Spanish school for the start of lessons on Monday morning.

BRIEFING AND ORIENTATION

In Central and South America a basic grasp of Spanish goes a long way, not only when travelling but it will also be useful when living at the Pacuare turtle lodge. To help you the first three weeks of the project are spent living with homestay families in San Jose and attending Spanish school each day. The orientation course will run alongside your Spanish lessons, with briefings on Costa Rican history and culture, safety and options for the independent travel phase of the venture.

You will stay as an individual with a family and immerse yourself deep into the life (and language!) of the Costa Ricans. From Monday to Friday, by day, you will join the others in your group and attend three to four hours of Spanish at the level appropriate to you - absolute beginner to advanced. The rest of the teaching days are spent in the city doing some practical exercises, to bring on your confidence, and your evenings will be spent with your family or out on the town with the other AV volunteers and friends you will make.

THE PROJECT

At the end of the Spanish course you will start the volunteer phase of the venture at the Pacuare Turtle Lodge. AV has joined forces to work in partnership with Rainforest Concern and the Endangered Wildlife Trust, supporting their efforts to protect the great leather back and green turtles. The project takes place during the laying season on the Caribbean coast at Pacuare - the most important turtle beach in the country. Working under the direction of biologists, you will keep overnight vigil, collect data, monitor birth sites and, perhaps, even help deliver the eggs.

The morning after your language course finishes, with all of you now speaking pretty good Spanish, the whole group will head off to Pacuare - a 3 hour journey. You will disembark at La Rocha jetty and board a boat for the last 30 minutes of your trip into Pacuare Turtle Lodge, overlooking the Caribbean.

After the initial familiarisation, you will spend a day on induction and briefings so that you have a clear understanding of the history, culture and customs of the people you will be living with and an introduction to turtle conservation. Your main task over the next two weeks will be night beach patrols, which can take between three to five hours depending on the number of turtles coming in to lay eggs.

Always accompanied by guides or biologists you could help measure or tag turtles, and also count eggs as they are laid. If the turtle has already laid her eggs, you will help try to disguise the nest from poachers. If she has still to lay her eggs, these may be collected in a bag while she lays and then placed in an artificial nest that is dug nearby, which can be more easily camouflaged from poachers. There will be time for educational workshops on turtles and a chance for you to help tidy up the reserve - clearing the beach and even painting murals.

Food + Accommodation

In San Jose

In San Jose you will live with a home stay family. We take great care in placing you in a welcoming and friendly family who will look after you throughout your time at the language school. You will be asked to complete a short questionnaire after your place on the AV scheme is confirmed, this information will then be used to help select your homestay. You will stay as an individual with a family and immerse yourself deep into the life (and language!) of the Costa Ricans but AV volunteers from your group will be living with families nearby. You will have your own bedroom and in some cases a private bathroom too. You will eat all of your meals with the family and help with the preparation of the food where possible, picking up some cooking tips as you go!

At the Pacuare Turtle Lodge

Whilst on the Reserve you will be accommodated as a group in simple but comfortable cabins with two or three to a room. All rooms are mosquito-screened and there is a communal block with showers and flush toilets. There is no electricity in the reserve. Candles and lamps provide light. Refrigeration and cooking are by gas. By the end of your project you will appreciate your home comforts. Meals are taken together in a dining area, and there is also a separate lecture room for students.

Independent Travel

As your project comes to an end it is not quite time to say goodbye... AV includes approximately four weeks of independent travel at the end of the venture, to ensure a good balance of volunteering and adventure. Costa Rica and the surrounding countries have lots of exciting and beautiful places to explore which you won't get a chance to do in your weekends alone. Many AVs want to stay on and travel but don't know if others on the project will too. Therefore we include this extra time to ensure that you experience as much as possible and know that you will have people to travel with. From our experience, travelling is often when problems occur, from lost passports to getting ill – that's why we have the motto, 'Once an AV, always an AV' - we'll still be there to help you, even though your project has finished.

Different travel options available include: relaxing on the beaches of the Pacific or Caribbean coast; visiting nearby volcanoes, neighbouring Panama or travel further into South America. There is plenty to see and do – the only rule is that you do not travel alone.

Dates + Costs

The Costa Rica Venture is a new to AV, please contact the office for further details on info@aventure.co.uk or +44(0)1380 729009

For all of the current AV departure dates + costs please visit the website – www.aventure.co.uk

AV PROJECT COSTS INCLUDE:

Before departure:

- Pre-departure information, support and advice
- A nominated member of the UK volunteer support team
- One-to-one face to face briefing for UK applicants
- Telephone briefing for non-UK applicants
- References taken up
- Comprehensive online health check
- Advice on group flight booking or individual flight arrangements
- Briefing for group departure from London airport

In-country:

- In-country representative
- 24/7 in-country backup
- Meet and greet at airport (if arriving with the group)
- Airport transfer (if arriving with group)
- In-country induction course
- Transfer from induction course to school/project
- Accommodation (except during independent travel)
- Food allowance (except during independent travel)
- Management of emergencies, including lost passport, illness, etc. whilst in-country
- Language school accommodation
- Spanish lessons

Upon returning home:

- Returning home advice
- Full telephone debriefing

AV PROJECT COSTS DO NOT INCLUDE

- Flights
- Travel Insurance
- Country visas
- Meeting of non-group arrivals
- Accommodation for early/late arrivals
- Medical expenses, e.g. inoculations, malaria prophylactics

- In-country medical expenses
- Drinks
- Tips/gratuities - No tips/gratuities for AV staff are necessary or expected
- Spending money
- Extra activities that you choose to do
- Food, transport and accommodation on independent travel

Still got questions? We're here to answer them and remember if you want to talk to an AV volunteer who has been there and done it just let us know and we'd be happy to put you in touch! Contact the AV office on +44(0)1380 729009 or info@aventure.co.uk