

VISIONS Costa Rica

June 29 - July 26 (28 days / 4 weeks) • \$4,550

CARIBBEAN COAST TURTLE RESERVE (1 WEEK)
CENTRAL INTERIOR VILLAGE (3 WEEKS)
IMMERSION IN SPANISH TICAN CULTURE
PARQUE NACIONAL CAHUITA, GUAYABA NATIONAL PARK
ECO-ADVENTURE EXPEDITION, RAINFOREST HIKES, BEACHES
MIN. 95 HOURS SERVICE CREDIT

Nowhere else in such a small area of the world is there such diversity of flora, fauna and natural habitats. Costa Rica's position in the Western Hemisphere made it the link for millions of years between North and South America for animal species and eco-systems, and for the earliest humans and ancient cultures.

Costa Rica has the highest standard of living and education rate in Central America due largely to tourism and the absence of political upheaval. Even so, economic pressures, unemployment, poverty, and limited access to formal education persist. With nearly a quarter of the national budget earmarked for foreign debt payments, educational programs and environmental regulations, so critical to preserving Costa Rica's beauty, suffer from under-funding. And a growing ex-pat population has driven up the cost of living.

While accustomed to Westernization, Ticos maintain a culture that is *pura vida*, as they say. Kind and open, ready with stories and willing to listen, unhurried, ever-patient Ticos go about their lives holding friendships, family, community, and laughter as the standards of a good and pure life.

Costa Rica's charms are the small towns with few roads, one little shop, and only a couple places to eat. Despite well traveled tourist paths, one can as easily find a completely out-of-the way spot absent of tourists. It's relatively simple still to stray off the beaten track to a little place serving *gallo pinto con salsa lizano* and all the fresh fruit you can eat.

Ticos are mindful of their relationship with nature and display an evident awareness of environmental issues (cab drivers discuss global warming with their fares, for example). Whether through protecting sea turtles, planting trees to create a forested corridor from mid-Costa Rica to Nicaragua, building potable water systems or organic community gardens, VISIONS participants discover how Ticos approach the fine balance between human activity and the environment.

For the first week in Costa Rica, we live on the Caribbean Coast in Quelonios del Caribe, a remote sea turtle reserve accessed by boat. Roberto and Maytsi Solano operate this small protection effort, which VISIONS assists through beach patrols, collecting and recording sea turtle data, by building or renovating hatcheries and other structures. Then we travel inland to Roberto's home village of San Ramon de Guayaba on the edge of Guayaba National Park in Cartago Province. Service projects there mix construction, renovation, organic gardening, farming and more. Roberto, Maytsi and other Tico friends labor and relax with us.

Recreation and exploration include rafting, jungle trekking, touring canals, visiting small towns, hot springs, waterfalls, organic farms and nature preserves.

Participants in this language immersion program must have minimum two years of high school Spanish or equivalent proficiency.

WORK HARD PLAY HARD LIVE DYNAMICALLY CONNECT DEEPLY SERVE PURPOSEFULLY SEE DIFFERENTLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE

<http://www.visionsserviceadventures.com/programs/costarica.htm>