



Academic Programs



Experience **Costa Rica**
with experts in **Biodiversity Conservation**
Enrich and strengthen your relationship with nature





Menú

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Cloud forests are unique ecosystems formed where clouds intersect the mountain slopes. (F1). B. Cole.



Introduction

The Tropical Science Center (TSC, or CCT in Spanish) is a non-profit, Costa Rican organization with more than half century of experience in biodiversity conservation. One of the main principals of our mission is the conservation of more than 4,500 hectares (11,120 acres) of forest in Monteverde, Sarapiquí and Valle del General regions. Our conservation approach goes beyond the preservation of these forests. We invest in sustainable development practices and environmental education in the local communities where our protected areas are embedded. Our conservation efforts are organized under a collaborative platform designed to articulate management, educational and operational activities in our protected areas and biological corridors.

Organized groups from high schools, universities, colleges, government and non-government organizations, businesses, institutions and the general public are welcomed to participate in the educational activities offered by TSC in Costa Rica. The emphasis of our educational efforts include, but are not limited to bio/eco-literacy, biodiversity conservation and sustainability. Make your travel experience in Costa Rica more meaningful and rich, leave a positive impact and return to your home country more inspired to spend quality time in nature and more prepared to take action towards the conservation and restoration of our planet. Our academic programs office is located at the Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve and we would be honored to offer our assistance and expertise in organizing your educational trip to Costa Rica.



The Guardian has called cloud forest “the jewel in the crown (of Costa Rica)”. (F.2). F. Camacho.





Services for organized groups



1. Access to primary Cloud Forest via an extensive network of trails at the Monteverde Reserve.

Tropical cloud forests are lush, dense and evergreen ecosystems formed where clouds intersect the mountain slopes. The additional cloud water input, also known as horizontal precipitation, combined with cooler temperatures and higher humidity levels, significantly influence the ecosystem's bio-physical characteristics, which may result in abundant epiphytic vegetation, lower decomposition rates and higher endemism due to specialization to these particular environmental conditions.

The Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve protects one of the most pristine and well-studied cloud forest in the neotropical region. With more than 13 km of trails in the public access area, naturalists and students have the opportunity to explore the reserve to observe the abundant vegetation and search for local wildlife. Student and organized groups staying at the Reserve's lodge have free access to the trails network during the day.



Our cloud forest is prime habitat for the Resplendent Quetzal (*Pharomachrus mocinno*). (F.3). B. Cole.



Suspension bridge allows canopy exploration at the Reserve. (F4). B. Cole.



Services for organized groups



2. Food and Lodging at the Monteverde Reserve.

La Casona de la Reserva Lodge offers bunkbed-style accommodations for groups of up to 50 people, and double rooms for faculty and

program staff. Rooms are equipped with private bathrooms, hot water and WiFi. Three delicious Costa Rican-style meals are served daily at our restaurant, which is located in the same building as the lodge. Box lunches may be prepared for field days.



Lodging at La Casona de la Reserva. F.5 y F.6.



Restaurant at La Casona de la Reserva. (F.7) F. Camacho y (F.8)



Services for organized groups



3. Access to a multi-use classroom/working space ideal for lectures, workshops, and seminars.

With capacity for 30 people, the classroom is equipped with power point projection and WiFi. It must be reserved with anticipation through the academic program in order to secure its availability during your stay at the reserve.



Classroom in the Cloud Forest. (F.9 y F.10) F. Camacho.

4. Educational activities.

Our educational activities are organized in three concentric circles, offering a wide variety of field, hands-on and experiential learning opportunities.

Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve
Monteverde region and Bellbird Biological Corridor
Rest of Costarrican territory

Educational activities are organized in three concentric circles. F.11.
F. Camacho.





Services for organized groups



4.1. Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve

All programs using our educational services are customizable to the objectives and interest of the program's faculty/director. The following list is a menu of extracurricular-educational activities at the Reserve catered to enrich the program's content and participant's experiences. Other activities not listed here may also be arranged upon request.

Activities	Description
Field activities	
Guided natural history walk	Explore the cloud forest with one of our expert naturalists to search for the local biodiversity and learn about the ecosystem dynamics. Allow 2-3 hours.
Guided night walk	Expand the ecosystem exploration to the night and experience the nocturnal forest ecology. Allow 2 hours.
Lectures	
Life zones and biodiversity of Costa Rica	An introduction to the ecosystems of Costa Rica based on Holdridge's life zones ecology system. 1.5 hrs
Natural history of Monteverde	An introduction to Monteverde's natural history, ecology and conservation. 1.5 hrs
Quetzal (<i>Pharomachrus mocinno</i>) research and conservation	Current research and conservation initiatives of the most mystical species in Monteverde. 1.5 hr
Climate change and extinction of the Golden Toad (<i>Incilius periglenes</i>), an endemic species in Monteverde	The impacts of climate change in the cloud forests, extinction history and current findings on amphibian's research in Monteverde. 1.5 hr
Monitoring terrestrial mammals with camera traps	Current findings on Monteverde's cloud forest terrestrial mammals, based on camera traps research. 1.5 hr
The Bellbird Biological Corridor	Restoring forest connectivity through community involvement on the Pacific Slope of Monteverde. 1.5 hr
Ecotourism as a tool for Conservation in Costa Rica	An analysis of the synergies and challenges between conservation and ecotourism in Costa Rica. 1.5 hr



Services for organized groups



Society's contribution to conservation and the Tropical Science Center's conservation model	A conservation model that goes beyond the preservation of an ecosystem. A summary of experiences learned from more than 50 years of conservation efforts in Costa Rica and an in-depth view of TSC's System of Private Preserves (SiReP). 1.5 hr
The Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve: a pioneer in conservation	Established in 1972 by a coalition of biologists, Quakers and Costa Rican farmers, the Monteverde Reserve is a referent in forest conservation and a pioneer organization in sustainability and environmental stewardship. Get inspired with its history and evolution!!! 1.5 hr
Sustainability processes at the Monteverde Reserve	Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) and Blue Flag Program. Achievements and challenges. 1.5 hrs
Current research at the Monteverde Reserve	Many biologists and forest ecologists carry out research in the cloud forest. Depending upon their availability, lectures on their findings and field experiences may be arranged with our affiliated researchers. Inquire for availability and costs.
Workshops	
Holdridge Life Zones ecosystem classification	Learn how the life zones system works and practice using it as a tool to classify terrestrial ecosystems. 1.5 hr
Tropical plant families Identification	Learn how to recognize the most common plant families in the tropical region. 1.5 hr
Introduction to bird identification	Provide tools for effective bird identification in the field. 1.5 hr
Introduction to insect identification	Learn how to classify insects according to their orders, a useful skill to enhance field experiences and research. 1.5 hr



Services for organized groups



4.2. Organized visits and field trips to other areas and sites of interest in Monteverde.

Monteverde offers a variety of educational opportunities for academic programs. The following is a menu of educational activities that have a meaningful impact in the community. Other activities not listed here may also be arranged upon request.

Activities	Description
Reforestation in the Bellbird Biological Corridor	Native tree species are planted along the pacific slope of Monteverde in order to reestablish forest structural connectivity and restore wildlife migration patterns. Tree planting is done only in the rainy season (May-October). The rest of the year we focus on tree nursery activities (seedling care). We welcome your help at any time. Allow 2-3 hrs
Pacific slope trail	An all day hike along the Pacific Slope with magnificent vistas of the Gulf of Nicoya and the Monteverde Cloud Forest. Entrance fees help fund the San Luis community development association.
Sustainable coffee farm	Sustainable shade-grown coffee in diversified farms is an effective method for landscape restoration. This is an opportunity to learn directly from local farmers about their traditional coffee production techniques. 2-3 hrs
Community development and service projects	An opportunity to collaborate with community development through service projects in the adjacent communities to the cloud forest. Inquire for projects and cost. 2-3 hrs
Environmental education in local schools	Participate in the reserve's environmental education program at the local schools in Monteverde and Guacimal districts. This program has been active for 30 years. 2-3 hrs
Dinner with a local family	A great opportunity to learn about and experience the local culture and lifestyle in Monteverde by making and sharing a meal with a local family. 2-3hrs
Canopy exploration	Explore the forest canopy from suspension bridges at the Sky Walk theme park. 2-3 hrs



Services for organized groups



Bellbird Biological Corridor (Monteverde-Gulf of Nicoya). (F.12). B. Cole.



Services for organized groups



4.3. Organized visits and field trips to other areas and sites of interest in other parts of Costa Rica.

Our program offers the possibility to arrange visits to other areas of Costa Rica to enrich the participant's educational experience in biodiversity conservation, culture and sustainability. The following is a list of potential sites and ecosystems that may be included in the field trips. Visits to other sites not listed here may also be arranged upon request.

Activities/Destination	Description
Dr. Alexander Skutch Los Cusings Bird Sanctuary and Historical Museum	Los Cusings is a bird sanctuary located in Quizarrá de Pérez Zeledón, San José province (southern CR, lowland rain forest). This property was Alexander Skutch's home, author of the field guide to the Birds of Costa Rica. It is also part of the Tropical Science Center's (TSC) system of private reserves (SiReP) and a historical museum that reveal Skutch's life as a pioneer naturalists and conservationists.
Kelady Great Green Macaw conservation	Kelady is also a protected area of the TSC's system of private reserves (SiReP). It is located in Sarapiquí (Caribbean slope, lowland rain forest) and was established in order to promote conservation of the Great Green Macaw (<i>Ara ambiguus</i>), a highly endangered species due to deforestation and habitat fragmentation. Academic programs have the unique opportunity to participate in monitoring and educational activities related to the Green Macaw's conservation efforts in the area.
Tropical dry forest Guanacaste national park	Guanacaste national park (northern CR) is the only remaining example of Measoamerican tropical dry forest. It is also one of the most progressively managed public protected areas and has one of the most comprehensive biodiversity research programs.
Lowland rain forest	Lowland rain forest is found on the Caribbean and Pacific slopes. La Selva Biological Station and Tirimbina reserve in Sarapiquí, are private conservation projects with trails and facilities to access this ecosystem for exploration.
Sarapiquí	Sarapiquí also offers a variety of activities with educational value such as visits to cacao, banana and pineapple plantations.



Services for organized groups

Osa peninsula	Corcovado national park, located in the Osa peninsula (southern CR), is one of the largest protected rain forest in Costa Rica. It is home to a stunning biodiversity. Organized visits may be arranged via Puerto Jimenez or Drake's bay.
Veragua rain forest	Veragua rainforest, located near the city of Limón, on the Caribbean slope, is a private research and educational theme park where visitors are invited to participate in various field activities guided by on-site biologist and nature guides in the lowland rain forest.
Hacienda Barú	Hacienda Barú is a private wildlife refuge, ecolodge and theme park in the Central Pacific coast near Dominical and Uvita. Ideal location to observe lowland rainforest species and explore the nearby beaches and coastal forest.
Selva Bananito	Selva Bananito is an ecolodge and preserve located south of Limón (Caribbean slope) city with access to lowland rain forest at the base of the Talamanca mountain range.
Subalpine paramo and oak forest San Gerardo de Dota and Cerro de la Muerte	These ecosystems are located in the highlands of Costa Rica between 2,000 and 3,800 meters above sea level (approximately 6,500 to 12,000 feet). The oak forest forms a belt of vegetation where several species of Quercus sp. dominate the forest composition. Subalpine paramo is located above the tree line and is dominated by non-arboreal vegetation such as grasses and small shrubs.



Services for organized groups



Coastal areas

La Ensenada Gulf of Nicoya mangrove forest and wildlife refuge

Marino Ballena national park

(whale tail) Ostional marine turtle conservation

Puerto Viejo de Talamanca and Cahuita

Tortuguero national park

Sea turtle conservation by APM

Terminals Moin beach Limón

Reserva Pacuare

Costa Rica offers a variety of opportunities to explore coastal ecosystems such as mangroves and beaches, including areas for whale and sea turtle conservation. La Ensenada is a wildlife refuge located on the opposite extreme of the Monteverde cloud forest in the Bellbird Biological corridor with access to the Puntarenas Mangrove and the Gulf of Nicoya. It is a great destination for bird-watching coastal species. Marino Ballena is a national park located in the southern-central pacific offering one of the most spectacular beaches known as the whale tail, which is formed only in low tide. It is also a prime site for humpback whale observation (July-October). Tortuguero (Caribbean) and Ostional (north Pacific) are important sites for marine sea turtle conservation. Puerto Viejo de Talamanca is an ideal destination for coral reef snorkeling and coastal exploration of pristine beaches and lush rainforest. Also one of the most culturally diverse areas of the country enriched with African-Jamaican and indigenous descendants. Costa Rica is building one of the largest marine ports of Central America near Moin beach in Limón city (Caribbean slope). The Tropical Science Center was hired to carry out the environmental impact study and mitigation plan for the port. Our scientists found out that Moin is one of the most important sites for Leatherback sea turtle nesting on the Caribbean slope. They also announced that the majority of nests are destroyed by the local population to sell the eggs in the black market. As a mean to mitigate this problem, TSC, APM terminals and the local authorities established a sea turtle conservation and environmental education program in Moin, where educational visits to the nursery may be organized to increase awareness and protection of this highly endangered species. To date, more than 600 nests have been protected and more than 25,000 hatchlings have been released since 2015. Reserva Pacuare is another prime destination for Leatherback sea turtle conservation and lowland rain forest exploration. It is a very pristine and secluded site with more than 30 years of experience in conservation.





Services for organized groups



Volcanoes Arenal Poas Irazú	<p>Costa Rica has three prominent volcanic mountain ranges dissecting the country NW to SE: Guanacaste, Tilarán, and Central. Most volcanoes are protected as national parks and play an important role in biodiversity conservation and ecotourism. These have low volcanic activity and are safe to visit throughout the year.</p>
Indigenous reserves	<p>Costa Rica has eight indigenous groups distributed in 24 territories, where six native languages are spoken. Although most groups have been marginalized, some have preserved their cosmology, traditions, connection and respect towards nature. As part of our effort to preserve the cultural heritage and promote sustainable economic development in indigenous territories, we sell artwork from the Chorotega (pottery, Guanacaste), Maleku (masks, northern plains) and Boruca (balsa woodart, southern region) at our gift shop in Monteverde. This effort has allowed us to create a meaningful connection with the indigenous groups across the country. We think that organized visits to these indigenous reserves provide a unique and authentic opportunity to enhance the educational value of any academic program. During these visits, hosts prepare cultural demonstrations, food, art workshops and cosmology lectures where program participants are encouraged to take part and exchange experiences that may help enrich and transform their perceptions and perspectives of the natural world and indigenous cultures.</p>
Other reserves and sites of interest	<p>Other reserves and sites of interest not listed here may also be included in the itinerary. Inquire for availability and costs.</p>



Services for organized groups



Arenal Volcano National Park. (F.13). F. Camacho



Services for organized groups



5. Example itinerary

Day 1:

Arrival and travel to Monteverde
Orientation to the Cloud Forest

Day 2:

Natural History walk at the Monteverde Reserve
Lecture, Life zones and Biodiversity of Costa Rica
Night walk

Day 3:

Early morning birdwatching in the Cloud Forest
Canopy exploration
Lecture, Quetzal Research and conservation

Day 4:

Plant identification workshop
Insect identification workshop

Day 5:

Pacific slope trail
Visit to coffee farm

Day 6:

Service day, reforestation
Lecture, Extinction of the Golden Toad

Day 7:

Travel to Sarapiquí
Natural history walk at Arenal Volcano on the way

Day 8:

Great Green Macaw monitoring program with TSC
Staff

Day 9:

Visit to Pineapple and Banana plantations

Day 10:

Travel to Puerto Viejo de Talamanca
Leatherback sea turtle conservation in Moin
Natural history walk at Cahuita National Park

Day 11:

Snorkeling tour in Manzanillo
Cooking workshop on Caribbean food with local
family

Day 12:

Travel to Kashabri de Bribri indigenous community
Bribri cosmology lecture with Kashabri's Awás
Overnight stay at Palenque

Day 13:

Travel to San José
Visit to Cacao plantations on the way

Day 14:

Visit Poas Volcano
Jade and gold museum

Day 15:

Departure





Services for organized groups



6. Educational travel packages



Foto: Marco Avalos



<https://cloudforestmonteverde.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Costa-Rica-From-the-Mountains-to-the-Sea.pdf>





Services for organized groups



7. Costs

Inquire for prices.



Sunset at Arenal Lake. (F:14). F. Camacho

8. Contact information

For more information, please do not hesitate to contact:

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(F:15).



