

# EarthConnect

A Costa Rican Adventures Summer Program for teens 13 - 15



*Beyond A Vacation*

## Costa Rican Adventure's

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The **2012 EarthConnect Program** at Costa Rican Adventures is a unique fusion of the best features of a camp experience and a traveling tour in one of Earth's most splendid environments. Each week is a complete experience unto itself, and yet the weeks merge with one another seamlessly. Thus, a powerful experience can be had from our 2 week, 3 week, or 4 week program options. The opportunity to experience Costa Rica in different locations, each of which is home to unique ecosystems and diverse cultures, allows the student to learn and live in a variety of genuine settings. Having four different locations (see itinerary) opens up the door for dynamic experiential learning. Throughout the program, students experience a base camp type of community culture and a comfortable atmosphere. Each week there are incredible adventures, cultural immersion, service opportunities, Spanish language learning and practice (if desired, regardless of level or experience), wilderness exploration, and educational opportunities galore. 'Discovery Channel' moments with the natural world are routine, whether you are deep in the forest or strolling through an open market. A full time Naturalist Guide and a Counselor are the leaders, and they stay with their group throughout the entire trip. Additionally, there are friendly local staffs at each venue that add to the experience. The activities are woven onto a coherent, integrated experience by virtue of our Story Approach, the teaching method used by our staff. The EarthConnect program started in 2000. Throughout the years it has grown to become one of the best summer programs in Costa Rica.

Participation in **CRA EarthConnect** takes the traditional camp or trip abroad program to an entirely new level in a dramatic, unforgettable setting with some of the most interesting people you will ever meet. We look forward to meeting you!

[www.costaricanadventures.com](http://www.costaricanadventures.com)

### Who:

13, 14, and 15 years olds looking to expand their horizons in a paradise setting that includes adventure, wilderness exploration, cultural immersion, and service learning.

### Program stay:

Any 2, 3, or 4 weeks (Tuesday – Tuesday) consecutively from day 1 of week 1 on June 26, 2012 until final day of week 4 on July 24, 2012. Minimum 2 weeks. Pricing encourages longer experiences.

### When:

Starting Dates: *(Note—all trips start at the San Jose, CR Airport on one of following Tuesdays)*

**June 26** Pickup at SJ Airport and go to Base at Tres Equis (Village) on Caribbean Slope.

**July 3** Pickup at SJ Airport and go to Seelye Family Farm, Mountain Lodge in Cloud forest on Continental Divide.

**July 10** Pickup at SJ Airport and connect to remote Osa Peninsula on Southern Pacific Coast.

*Please note that our starting day each week is on a Tuesday. This allows the parent to book flights for the day of the week that is typically the least expensive. All flights from your departure point are to terminate in San Jose, CR where we pick up each student.*

### Price:

Land Cost for EarthConnect 2012 – includes all facets of the Land experience.

*Airfare is not included, but we are glad to help out.*

- 2 weeks: \$3,125
- 3 weeks: \$4,395
- 4 weeks: \$4,995



**See the itinerary on pages 2-5 for specific program details!**

2012 EarthConnect Program

toll free 800.551.7887

# Costa Rican Adventure's EarthConnect Itinerary 2012

June 26 – July 24, 2012 | Any 2, 3 or 4 weeks | 2 week minimum

*Note: Students may enter Program on Tuesday, June 26, July 3, or July 10, 2012. There is a seamless transition each Tuesday whether coming or going or staying! Thus there are 4 weeks, Tuesday to Tuesday and 29 program days.*

*Week 1 is Program Days 1-8 (June 26 – July 3, 2012), week 2 is Program Days 8-15 (July 3 –10, 2011 ) etc.*



## Week 1: Caribbean Splash

### Day 1: Tuesday, June 26

**Pura Vida!** Welcome to Costa Rica! You have now landed in the capital city of **San Jose** where you will meet your **EarthConnect companions** and group leaders for the educational adventure of a lifetime! Once at our hotel, we will spend some time relaxing, eating local fresh fruits, and getting to know one another.

**Overnight: San Jose**



### Day 2-3: Wednesday, June 27 – Thursday, June 28

After an early breakfast we board the bus and make our way to **Cahuita National Park**, a 1,067-hectare park that hugs the turquoise Caribbean coast. Once there, we search for **Howler and White Faced monkeys**, as well as many reptiles and birds. We spend the day in the park learning about coastal ecology and enjoying the beach. The next day we **learn the art of surfing!** Once you catch a wave, you're hooked! In the afternoon, take a short, relaxed hike through the **Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge** where the path travels from the beach into the jungle. Our guides will show us the wonders of this Caribbean reserve while explaining the medicinal and edible uses of many of the trees, fruits and plants along the way.

**Overnight: Caribbean Area**



### Day 4: Friday, June 29

After breakfast we visit the **Jaguar Rescue Center**, whose mission is not to be a zoo, but rather a rescue and education center with the end goal of releasing the animals back into the wild. From there we make our way to the **Homestay** portion of our trip in **Tres Equis**, where we will meet our homestay families at the **Salon Comunal**. Spend the evening getting to know our new families and acclimating to our new hometown.

*Home stays are stepping stones to learning about the country and culture you are visiting. Travelers stay with rural "Tico" (Costa Rican) families in their homes for several days or more. This unique experience not only exposes the traveler to a different lifestyle and culture, it allows individuals to practice and enhance their language skills and make new friends. All of our families go through a lengthy selection process and are approved by our local community contact, Raphael Montenegro, whose enthusiasm and hospitality are truly remarkable.*

**Overnight: Tres Equis (Homestays)**



### Day 5-7: Saturday, June 30 – Monday, July 2

Homestays, Community Service, Environmental Education and Spanish lessons daily. In our time at **Tres Equis**, we can look forward to Community meals, improving our **Spanish** (no matter what your level or experience!) interacting with students at the local school (possibly joining some class time!), soccer and Frisbee games, visiting a snake museum, hikes, and learning how to make delicious cinnamon rolls!

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## Week 2: Extreme Forest

### Day 8: Tuesday, July 3

Say goodbye to our homestay families and new friends in the town of Tres Equis, and travel to the **magical highland paramo forests**, at the **Seelye family farm**. On the way we visit the nearby **serpentarium** which allows the rare opportunity to 'meet' some of the forests' most feared residents as we learn from the country's foremost expert about the evolving status of the fer-de-lance population.

### Day 9-11: Wednesday, July 4 - Friday, July 6

The Seelye farm is an **off-grid farm** that was founded in 1989. It is a learning lesson in how to live in harmony with nature on a most sustainable level. During your experience at the Seelye farm you will have the chance to do volunteer projects. **Experiential learning projects** can include gardening, trail work, milking cows, making cheese, cooking, minor construction, hydro-electric work and farm responsibilities. The Seelye farm is a wonderful place for nature exploration in the unique ecosystems of the highland paramo forests. Climb the **1,000 year old Castle tree**, search for wildlife, and hike in the incredible forests full of endemic species. At the Seelye farm, you will be served (and can help make!) bountiful and delicious home cooked meals. Music, dancing, and tea by the fire are always part of this wonderful place where you are sure to feel right at home.

**Overnight: Seelye Farm**



### Day 12: Saturday, July 7

Today we say goodbye to Seelye farm. We will take a short hike to our overnight destination, which is one of Costa Rica's most enchanted locations, **Diamante Verde Waterfalls**. Along the way we pass an **organic garden** where we have the chance to try **fresh sugarcane** and learn about the medicinal herbs grown here. After a delicious lunch, we enjoy the many nearby **swimming holes**. We enjoy watching the sunset over the Pacific Ocean from the top of a **900 foot waterfall**. Tonight we sleep on comfortable cots in a giant cave, directly behind two waterfalls!

**Overnight: Diamante Waterfalls**



### Day 13-14: Sunday, July 8 - Monday, July 9

After breakfast we take time relax and continue to **soak in the magic** of this hidden treasure, before we **hike out**, then get on the road to Costa Rica's "last frontier," the **Osa Peninsula**. Upon arrival, we visit an **organic chocolate farm**. After we have had our fill of chocolate we head to **Iguana Lodge**, on the coast. We settle into our lodge and enjoy the evening on the beach. In the morning, we paddle on a guided **sea kayak tour through a magical mangrove forest**. From the mangrove we head out into the calm open waters in **search of dolphins**. In the afternoon we explore the area in search of wildlife.

**Overnight: Osa Peninsula**



## Week 3: Wild Pacific

### Day 15-19: Tuesday, July 10 - Saturday, July 14

We say goodbye to Iguana Lodge and head on to our next location in the **magical Osa Peninsula** to start a **research project** focusing on dolphins and nocturnal frogs where you will work directly with a local biologist in spectacular marine and forest reserves.

**Overnight: Osa Peninsula**

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### Week 3 continued

#### Day 20: Sunday, July 15

We leave the dolphins and frogs behind as we head to the central pacific town of **Dominical**. Here we have an amazing chance to learn about the meaningful conservation projects at the **Hacienda Baru Nature Reserve** located near the coast. After dark, take a **night hike** through the reserve.

*Overnight: Pacific Coast*

#### Day 21: Monday, July 16

Leave Dominical and transfer to the **cloud forest of Monteverde**. We relax upon arrival and then go out on a **Night Hike!** We see all sorts of life in the surrounding forest, including endemic species of frogs, and maybe even the extremely rare **bare-necked umbrella bird**. Throughout the night we have a chance to explore and learn about this amazing forest that is home to monkeys, coatimundi, puma, peccary, over 425 species of birds, and colorful, elusive frogs.

*Overnight: Monteverde*



## 📌 Week 4: Adventure Challenge

#### Day 22: Tuesday, July 17

Today we fly! We take a **canopy zip line tour** with **Selvatura**. Expert guides allow us to soar through the canopy in this magical cloud forest world. Soak in the incredible views as your soar through the forest. In the afternoon we have the chance to lend a helping hand, doing something of global importance. We work with local NGO, the **Bellbird Foundation**, as we participate in a reforestation project. Projects may include planting trees, planting seedlings, transferring soil into bags and/or working in the greenhouse.

*Overnight: Monteverde*



#### Day 23: Wednesday, July 18

Spend the morning in conversation with **Guillermo Vargas**, director of the **Cooperativa Santa Elena**, a fair-trade certified organization that ensures that farmers receive a just and honest price for their product. Take a tour of some of the **working coffee plantations** in the area, and learn about the critical role this lynchpin product plays in the Central American economy. Late in the afternoon, we drive down from the mountains of Monteverde and around **Lake Arenal** on the way to the slopes of the **Arenal Volcano**, Costa Rica's most active volcano. We check into our eco-lodge and enjoy dinner with views of the volcano.

*Overnight: La Fortuna*

#### Day 24-26: Thursday, July 19-Saturday, July 21

Spend the next three days exploring the area around **La Fortuna**. The first morning we visit the beautiful **Fortuna Waterfall**. Swim in the natural pools at its base or just soak up the beauty of these stunning falls. After lunch we meet up with local students from a small school outside the town of La Fortuna to participate in a day of **cultural exchange and community service**.

On the next day we wake early for a morning tour **on horseback!** We ride beside lush and beautiful rainforest while spotting toucans, monkeys, and other tropical creatures. In the afternoon we head to Don Juan's, where we investigate **organic farming**, raising tilapia, milking cows, and even squeezing sugarcane juice! In the evening, we relax and soak in the soothing **natural hot springs**, hoping for a clear view of the erupting volcano!

An early start this morning takes us to a breathtaking canyon where we **rappel** some of the most spectacular waterfalls in Costa Rica. On our way back into town we head to **Arenal Volcano National Park** to do the **Lava Hike!** Here we hike the base of this amazing volcano and learn about the geology of the area.

*Overnight: La Fortuna*

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**Week 4 continued**

**Day 27: Sunday, July 22**

We get an early start for an unforgettable two days of **white water rafting** on the **Pacuare River**. This is one of the **top 5 rafting rivers** on the planet with class 3 and 4 rapids. Expert experienced guides safely guide us on our adventure. In the evening our river guides cook an amazing meal and we sleep in cabins perched on a hillside by the river.

**Overnight: Pacuare River Camp**



**Day 28: Monday, July 23**

Wake up to the **sounds of the river** and enjoy breakfast with your group. After breakfast you continue rafting down the Pacuare River and head to **San Jose for a farewell dinner** with the rest of the groups and your guides.

**Overnight: San Jose**

**Day 29: Tuesday, July 24**

You board the plane home with new friends, new stories, and memories that will last a lifetime!

**Pura Vida!**



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**800.551.7887 Toll Free**

[requests@costaricanadventures.com](mailto:requests@costaricanadventures.com)

[www.costaricanadventures.com](http://www.costaricanadventures.com)