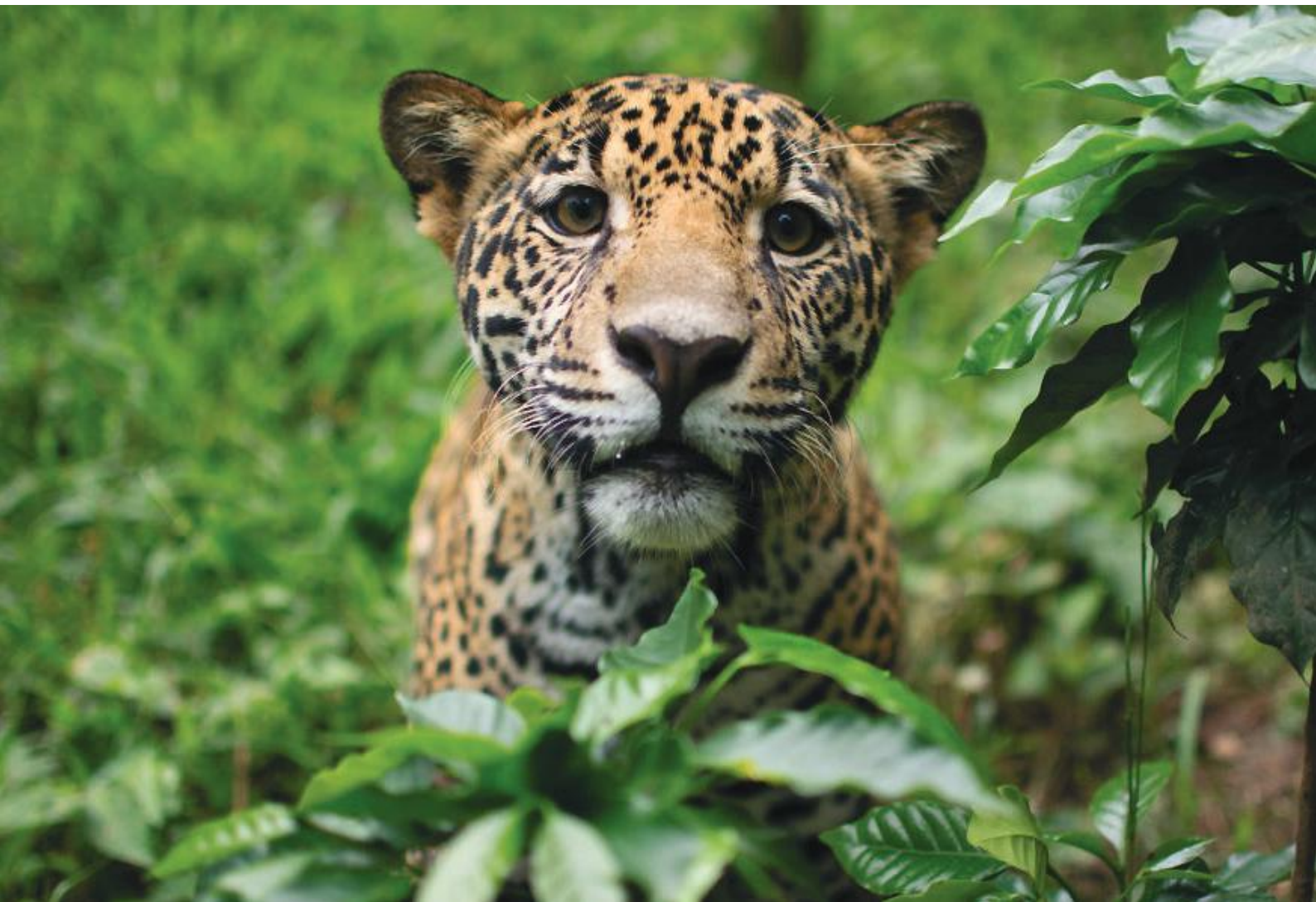




A guide to the:

Costa Rica Wildlife Sanctuary



Costa Rica Wildlife Sanctuary

Focus: Multi-species
Location: Costa Rica

Start Date: Fridays
Arrival & Starting Point: San José

Costa Rica stands as one of the world's most biodiverse regions, a natural wonder wedged between two coastlines and adorned with rugged rainforests, cascading waterfalls, and towering volcanoes. This vibrant land is home to nearly 5% of Earth's estimated species, making it a magnet for wildlife enthusiasts from across the globe. However, amidst its natural splendour, a dark underbelly of animal exploitation and illegal trade persists.

Just beyond the bustling capital city, nestled in the Central Valley, lies the Costa Rica Wildlife Sanctuary, a beacon of hope for the nation's vulnerable wildlife. This sanctuary's story began in the late 1980s when the purchase of a dilapidated private zoo transformed the lives of resident animals and paved the way for an exceptional wildlife refuge and rescue centre.

Over the years, the sanctuary has evolved into a powerful force for wildlife conservation. Its state-of-the-art Lifetime Care Sanctuary, Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, Endangered Species Breeding Programme, and additional purchase of two release sites have collectively forged an exceptional front against wildlife crime and the ecological damage the trade leaves behind. The sanctuary's accomplishments to date are nothing short of remarkable; it has successfully reintroduced more than 500 great curassows, 50 spider monkeys (formerly kept as pets), and 770 scarlet macaws into the wild, all thriving with steadily growing, healthy populations. Notably, all three of these species had vanished from the Nicoya Peninsula over 70 years ago, making their resurgence a testament to the sanctuary's dedicated efforts. The once-endangered spider monkeys, in particular, have made a remarkable return to the wild, marking a significant victory for the most endangered primate in Costa Rica.



For rescued animals that arrive at the sanctuary too injured, traumatised, or accustomed to human interaction to be released, a permanent and loving home is provided, ensuring the highest quality of care. This includes the creation of natural habitats, specialised diets, and the encouragement of wild behaviours, all made possible through the invaluable support of dedicated volunteers. As a volunteer on this project, you will contribute to animal husbandry, conduct behavioural data research, design and implement enrichment activities, forage natural foods for baby animals, and gain an understanding of the intricate and rewarding work involved in safeguarding wildlife from unruly trafficking widespread across Central America.

From sloths and monkeys to jungle cats and more, choosing to volunteer at the Costa Rica Wildlife Sanctuary will provide you with a chance to work with incredible wildlife at multiple stages of rehabilitation, meeting like-minded people along the way - all in a country best described as Mother Nature's Disneyland.

Animal Enrichment



One of the main focuses of this project is creating environmental and behavioural enrichment. Enrichment is hugely important for the physical and mental well-being of the animals; it helps to alleviate boredom, reduce stress, and stimulate their natural instincts. For release candidates, enrichment is a perfect way for the animals to develop and strengthen the skills needed to survive in the wild. You'll assist in creating puzzles and tasks designed to encourage the animal's natural behaviours, like foraging for food. Simpler forms of enrichment might include introducing new scents or moving things in their enclosures around, mimicking the unpredictability of life in an ever-changing rainforest. Your creativity will make a big difference in the well-being of the animals and is always appreciated by the team, so make sure to put ideas forward!

Food Preparation & Animal Feeding

The Costa Rica Wildlife Sanctuary rescues approximately 3,000 wild animals every year and is a permanent home to around 800 non-releasable animals, amounting to over 125 species! With many mouths to feed, volunteers may help in the kitchen, preparing nutritious meals and delivering them to the animals in both the Lifetime Care Sanctuary and Endangered Species Breeding Centre. As many animals have been rescued from the pet trade in unfavourable captive conditions or who arrive ill or injured, they follow specialised plans replicating a natural diet to ensure the animals recover their health. Volunteers will also learn how to recognise and forage for wild foods for baby sloths and howler monkeys in the Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre - you can take pride in knowing that you'll be introducing infant animals to the very food they will forage for when released as adults.



Assist at the Endangered Breeding Centre

Assist at the Endangered Species Breeding Centre, where over one hundred scarlet macaw breeding pairs are thriving! Your role involves helping with feeding, creating enrichments, and closely monitoring breeding behaviour. During the breeding season, volunteers assist in checking nest boxes, weighing and measuring chicks, and conducting health assessments under supervision. During the fledging season, you'll witness the chicks' journey from hatching to fledging as you monitor their social integration into the flock. Thanks to this very program, the sanctuary has been able to release over 700+ scarlet macaws back into the wild!



Animal Behaviour Monitoring

During your time at the sanctuary, you'll help collect valuable data for behavioural research in both the Lifetime Care Sanctuary and the Endangered Species Breeding Centre. You'll closely observe the animals, recording their behaviours and interactions with enrichment and other animals. This is a crucial component in understanding the well-being of the animals and helps in developing strategies to improve their care and overall quality of life. You'll also be contributing to the broader knowledge of wildlife behaviour, which is vital to conservation efforts.



Veterinary Clicker Training

For animals in the Lifetime Care Sanctuary, clicker training is used to facilitate veterinary examinations. Clicker training, rooted in positive reinforcement, is an effective method for teaching animals to cooperate during medical assessments, helping to minimise stress and anxiety. Volunteers will assist in clicker training sessions under the supervision of trained staff. By fostering a relationship built on trust and cooperation, the sanctuary is able to maintain the psychological well-being of the animals, while treating them physically.

Conservation Talks

You'll have the opportunity to engage in a lecture series run by the sanctuary on wildlife care, rehabilitation, and conservation. These conservation talks may cover a wide range of topics, including animal behaviour, habitat preservation, and the intricacies of wildlife rehabilitation. This provides volunteers a chance to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges facing the environment and its wildlife, helping you to contribute effectively to the sanctuary's mission and broader conservation efforts.



Free Time

Volunteers enjoy two days off each week, providing the perfect opportunity to discover what Costa Rica has to offer! San Jose, a vibrant cultural centre, boasts local cuisine and lively nightlife and beyond the city, the country is celebrated for its stunning beaches, ancient volcanoes, and jungles brimming with wildlife. Adventurers can engage in white-water rafting, zip-lining across ravines, relaxing in hot springs, snorkelling in vibrant reefs, or simply unwinding on white sandy beaches. The choice is yours! While these activities are not part of the project, the sanctuary team will be more than happy to assist you in arranging them.



Itinerary

Day 1

After making your way to the project site (approximately a 20-minute drive from the airport), you will have time to settle in, familiarise yourself with your accommodation and meet the other volunteers. Depending on your arrival time, you may have some time to explore the sanctuary grounds before grabbing dinner and resting up, ready for the week ahead!

Days 2-13

These are your project days, where you'll get stuck into a range of activities listed above. An example of a daily breakdown is below, though please note that this is just an example, as the itinerary may change depending on the sanctuary's needs. You'll have two days off a week to rest, explore and enjoy what Costa Rica has to offer.

Day 14

For this example of a two-week itinerary, today you'll head back to the airport to catch your return flight home or continue your onward travel plans; alternatively, you may want to join some of your fellow volunteers in exploring what Costa Rica has to offer! For those staying at the sanctuary, you'll continue working with a whole host of incredible animals and amazing people!

An Example Itinerary of a Typical Day

6:30am	The day officially starts at 7am, so make sure to give yourself enough time to grab a coffee and some breakfast before starting the day!
7:00am	Spend part of the morning identifying and collecting natural foods for baby sloths and monkeys in the Rehabilitation Centre.
9:30am	Time for a break! Take half an hour to relax and hydrate, ready for your next task.
10:00am	Let your creativity flow, it's time to design and create enrichment for animals in the Lifetime Care Sanctuary!
12:00pm	Head over to the onsite restaurant for lunch, where there's a great menu to choose from! Take the hour to recharge before your afternoon activities.
1:00pm	It's time to serve an afternoon meal to the great green and scarlet macaws in the Endangered Species Breeding Centre.
2:00pm	Unlock the secrets of care, rehabilitation, and conservation during a wildlife lecture.
4:30pm	Opt to spend time with the big cats in a clicker training session and treat them with some enrichment!
5:00pm	The evening is at your leisure; unwind with your fellow volunteers with lots of fun after-hours activities, start a darts tournament, watch a movie or take a dip in the on-site swimming pool.

Accommodation

As a volunteer, you'll stay in a shared three-bedroom house with two bathrooms and a kitchen, where you are welcome to store your own drinks and snacks. The bedrooms feature bunk beds and come equipped with bedding, bath towels, net screen and ample, lockable closet space. Rooms are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, though every effort will be made to accommodate groups. Wi-Fi is accessible around-the-clock in the accommodation, restaurant, outdoor café, rehabilitation centre, and various locations within the Lifetime Care Sanctuary, all within the fenced and 24-hour secured grounds. Best yet, you'll have access to the sanctuary's theatre and swimming pool!



Food & Drink

Three meals a day are provided for you on the project and include breakfast prepared by volunteers themselves with cereal, eggs, fruit, milk, tea, and coffee provided. Lunch and dinner can be ordered via WhatsApp from the onsite restaurant, with vegetarian or vegan options available for most menu items. Burgers, salads, soups, fajitas, etc. are some of the items you can expect to find on the menu. If you do have specific dietary needs, kindly inform us upon booking. You can eat at the restaurant from 9am to 5pm, and afterwards, a takeaway service is provided, with a reusable plate. Within the Lifetime Care Sanctuary, there are options to purchase food from the a la carte restaurant, as well as an ice cream shop, a snack shop, and an outdoor café offering freshly made juice pops and great coffee.



What's Included

- Accommodation
- Three meals per day
- Airport transfers
- Wi-Fi
- Laundry facilities
- A donation to the project

Not Included

- All flights
- Visas
- Travel insurance

What Next?

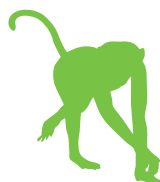
Becoming a volunteer at the Costa Rica Wildlife Sanctuary is simple, and you can help make a difference to wildlife conservation efforts in just a few simple steps...



Visit the website to select your start date and how long you would like to volunteer for.



Secure your place online by paying a deposit of £195. You'll have up to 60 days before your start date to pay your remaining balance.



Prepare for your trip and ask your dedicated travel expert any questions before packing your bags and heading off to Costa Rica!



Finally, have an incredible time and don't forget to send in or tag us in your photos!

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