



A guide to the:
Sloth Conservation and Wildlife Experience



Sloth Conservation and Wildlife Experience

Focus: Costa Rican Wildlife
Location: Costa Rica

Start Date: Every Day
Arrival & Starting Point: San José

Situated in the heart of the Costa Rican rainforest, the Sloth Conservation and Wildlife Experience has a remarkably unique and inspiring backstory, its origins leading back to a heart-warming decision made by two young girls.

Back in 1999, two nine-year-old friends named Janine and Aislin came up with a big idea to make a difference to their local wildlife. Raised in Manuel Antonio, the girls had witnessed first-hand the destruction of the rainforest and the impact that this had on the animals in the area, so felt compelled to step in and help. Despite being young, the two girls were keen to raise funds to replenish the rainforests, selling handmade crafts on the roadside in the hopes of earning enough to protect plots of land. Sadly, there was no way for the girls to know if the money they had earned and donated would have truly been put back into conservation, so Janine's mother suggested – why not start their own organisation?



With the help of their families and members of the local community, the girls were able to grow their roadside fundraiser into a true conservation effort, with acres of land being purchased and protected from destruction. Today, those efforts have evolved into something much bigger: an impressive wildlife sanctuary and rescue center. The rescue center rehabilitates and releases as many injured animals as possible while the sanctuary provides a permanent home for those that wouldn't be able to survive in the wild.

The Sloth Conservation and Wildlife Experience aims to continue its original goal: to help preserve and protect the rainforest and its wildlife, whilst also educating visitors from around the world on the ecological importance of the environment. As a volunteer, you will become a vital cog in the centre's mission, aiding a number of activities in order to keep the sanctuary running smoothly. From enrichment to food prep, your role here will be varied – and certainly worthwhile! Your involvement is crucial, ensuring that the animals residing here are well cared for and that the forest, into which they someday hope to return, is still there for them upon their release.

From sloths to coaties, monkeys and more, you will be working alongside some of Costa Rica's most beloved and in-need species. Find out more about this fantastic volunteer project by reading through our guide, and get ready to make a difference to Costa Rica's wonderful wildlife!

Enrichment

It is important that the animals which arrive at the centre are able to learn or retain the vital skills which they would need in the wild, and you will be able to assist by taking part in enrichment activities! Enrichment can be both environmental and nutritional: for the former, you will head into the rainforest under the supervision of a member of staff to find the leaves of native trees. These will help the animals' enclosures to feel as natural as possible, improving the quality of life for each animal resident here. During nutritional enrichments, volunteers will come up with ways to make the animals work to find their food. This keeps their hunting/foraging instincts strong.



Food Preparation & Distribution

As this is an active wildlife sanctuary, you will spend some of your time on the project collecting, preparing, and distributing food to the animal residents. This activity will be done alongside a trained animal caretaker who will oversee your work, ensuring that the correct food is given to the correct animals.



Enclosure Cleaning

Due to the high volume of animals coming into the wildlife sanctuary each year, extra hands are always needed to help clean the animal enclosures. As a volunteer on the project, you will help to clean the enclosures and will work alongside an animal caretaker resident at the project site to ensure that the correct procedures are carried out in a safe manner.

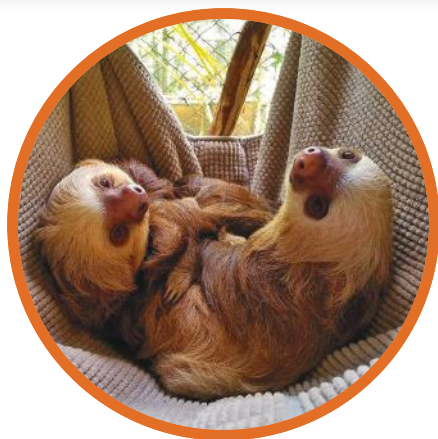


Rescue & Release

If there is an animal rescue or release taking place when you are at the sanctuary, you will have the opportunity to join this alongside the team. This offers an exciting way for anyone to discover what it takes to make a real difference to the lives of Costa Rica's in-need wildlife species, beginning with their arrival at the rescue center and hopefully ending in their eventual release back into the rainforest. Almost 200 animals are rescued or released by the team each year, and though this activity is not a guaranteed part of your itinerary (as rescues and releases do not happen continuously throughout the year), if you do get to join one, it is sure to be an experience you will never forget!



Activities



Boot Camp & Nursery

While animal rescues and releases are ideal in helping you to understand the project's efforts, a visit to some of the sanctuary's key areas can be just as illuminating. You will therefore be given a brief tour of the on-site 'boot camp', an area where rescued sloths and other animals test out their climbing skills in the hope of someday being re-released into the wild. You will also have the chance to briefly visit the nursery, where the younger animals receive care at this critical stage of their lives.

Extra Activities

Depending on the demands of the sanctuary, the project team may opt to take you and your fellow volunteers on a trip to the local marina. With plenty of shops and restaurants to choose from, you may wish to indulge in a little retail therapy or enjoy a delicious meal with your group! Alternatively, you are welcome to stroll the boardwalk and admire the yachts which dock in this luxurious part of town. Please note that this is not a guaranteed part of your itinerary; similarly, you are welcome to opt out if you wish.



Free Time

Once a week, you will have a day off to either spend relaxing at the project site or to go exploring the local area. Visit any of the local beaches to go jet-skiing, kayaking, paragliding and more, or simply soak up the sun with a coconut in hand. Alternatively, you might like to take a visit to the world-renowned Manuel Antonio National Park: considered one of the most beautiful in the world, this reserve is famous for its 680 hectares of varied terrain, from tropical beaches to rugged rainforest (plus a large variety of exciting wildlife species!).



Itinerary

Below is an example of a 2-week itinerary. Please note that this project is based at a wildlife sanctuary, and while sloths are resident here, there are numerous species of animals which also require care. We kindly ask that volunteers come with an open mind and are willing to work with a range of species, not just sloths.

Day 1

After you have transferred to the project site, you will be given time to settle in and meet the other volunteers. Depending on your arrival time, the project coordinator will show you around the site, including the laundry room, kitchen, pool, and all of the other facilities. Enjoy a delicious evening meal and spend some time getting to know the rest of your team before returning to your accommodation and getting some much-needed rest before the next day's activities!

Days 2-14

These are your dedicated project days, and you will take part in a variety of tasks as described in the 'Activities' section of this guide. Below you will find a breakdown of a typical day on the project, though please note that the day's activities and timings may vary. One day per week, you will have the opportunity to visit the local marina with your group - take a walk along the pier, go shopping, or simply enjoy some good local food! You will also have one other day off to spend at leisure, so why not check out some nearby tourist spots, such as Manuel Antonio National Park?

Day 15

Today is your final day at the project, which sadly means it's time to say farewell to your fellow volunteers. Enjoy a delicious lunch and share your memories and favourite experiences with the team.

For your return to the airport, you can either take a taxi from the project site, or a bus from Quepos. Please speak to a member of the travel team to discuss your preferred option.

A breakdown of a typical day at the sanctuary

7:30am	Enjoy a breakfast of your choosing, such as cereal, toast or fruit.
8:00am	After breakfast, it's time to feed the animals! You will head to the animal kitchen to prepare a range of meals for the sanctuary's residents, including platters for those with special dietary requirements. Once the food is prepared, you will distribute the meals between the enclosures.
9:00am	Once the animals have enjoyed their first meal of the day, you will help to clean their enclosures. After this, you may be asked to source enrichment items (such as leaves) to place inside the enclosures.
12:00pm	It's now time for lunch, so you will head to the dining area where your food has been prepared for you! Choose from a buffet of salad, rice and beans, alongside other items such as meat or fish.
1:30pm	By this point in the day, the nocturnal animals are probably getting quite hungry! You will therefore head back to the animal kitchen to prepare another range of meals before distributing them.
3:00pm	The remainder of the afternoon will be spent taking part in an activity, such as enrichment. The project coordinator will delegate tasks as needed, so please be willing to assist in any activity that may come up.
4:00pm	Before the day is through, you may be asked to help prepare food for the sloths at the sanctuary. After this, you will have the evening to spend at leisure.

Accommodation

During the project, you will be staying in a basic but comfortable shared accommodation with up to 5 other volunteers (3 bunkbeds and one single bed, subject to availability). Bathrooms are shared between the volunteers, with a toilet and shower in the main room being split off by a stone partition. You will have access to a kitchen with a fridge, where you are welcome to store your own drinks and snacks. Two balconies at either side of the accommodation offer views of the project site and the beautiful rainforest.

There are also private cottages available, should you wish to upgrade your accommodation. These cottages provide an added level of comfort for families, couples, or even solo travellers looking for a little more privacy. Each room is equipped with a double bed(s) and bathroom/shower facilities. Please let us know if you would like to upgrade your accommodation, and we will be happy to check their availability.



Standard Accommodation



Accommodation Upgrade

Food & Drink

Three meals a day will be prepared for you by the chef in the on-site restaurant. Your meals will change on a regular basis to ensure variety but you can expect a range of Costa Rican dishes made with rice, beans, vegetables, meat and fish, as well as some western staples!

Water and a variety of juices are available to drink throughout the day, with soft drinks available to purchase onsite. Whilst volunteers are permitted to drink alcohol during their evening downtime, it is not provided. Please note that the project can cater for vegans and vegetarians, but please let us know before you travel so that we can get the appropriate ingredients in.



What's Included

- Accommodation
- Three meals per day
- English-speaking project leader
- Wi-Fi
- Laundry service (once a week)
- A donation to the project

Not Included

- Flights
- Visa
- Travel insurance
- Transfers (these can be organised for you at an additional fee)

Volunteer Reviews

Anne

"So many memories will last forever, watching the sloths eat, being entertained by monkey antics...it's an experience of a lifetime."



Elaine

"I love the variety of animals encountered, and their stories. I had an amazing time!"



Amy

"The entire experience is something I'll never forget. I made friends that I know I will keep forever. This project completely changed my view and knowledge of wildlife conservation projects."





What Next?

Becoming a volunteer on the Sloth Conservation and Wildlife Experience 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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