



2007 ECOTEACH TRIPS PREDEPARTURE INFO FOR PARTICIPANTS

Plane Tickets: Airlines frequently change schedules and flight numbers. We recommend that you call the airlines 48 to 72 hours in advance to confirm the flight number and departure times.

Frequent Flyer Miles: To collect frequent flyer miles, call the airlines after tickets are issued and give them the flight info and your frequent flier number. You can also sign up for a frequent flyer number over the phone. This can be done during check-in, but we recommend doing it prior to departure.

Money: We recommend that each participant bring \$250 in cash for tipping and spending money. U.S. bills of \$20 and less are widely accepted in Costa Rica (with change given in dollars or Costa Rican colones). Many shop owners are wary of accepting torn or “old-looking” bills – so please bring crisp new bills if possible! Small bills (\$1’s and \$5’s) are particularly useful at the turtle projects where there are no banks and people have a harder time finding change for larger bills.

Tipping: Tipping guides isn’t mandatory, but is customary (like tipping waitress here in the states). Our recommended guidelines add up to \$50-\$90 per participant (depending on the length of your trip), and breaks down like this:

- \$3-4/day for your head guide
- \$2-3/day for your assistant guide
- \$1-2/day for the bus driver

If you have just one guide, we recommend \$5-\$7/day (\$50-\$70)

Participants will not need to tip anyone else along the way.

School Visits: We try to arrange for every group to visit a school, and schools supplies are always appreciated. Please consider bringing \$5-\$10 worth of basic school supplies to donate. If for some reason we are not able to arrange a school visit, we get school supplies you bring to a needy school.

Gifts: We are often asked for ideas of what you might bring down to share with the various projects in Costa Rica or to give as gifts to your Homestay hosts. We do have a list of suggested items if you need some help deciding what to bring. Not every place listed in the gift document may be pertinent to your group.

Phoning Home/Internet Access/Cell Phones: Calling home from Costa Rica is expensive, and, at times it takes a while to get a line out. We’ve found that the cheapest and easiest way to call home is with international phone cards purchased in Costa Rica. EcoTeach guides can help you purchase these cards. (They cost about \$10, and you can talk for 10-15 minutes). For email, you may be able to find an internet café in Arenal or other places, but no one should rely on, or expect to be able to, get on email while on the trip.

Cell phones from the states or Canada generally do not work in Costa Rica (though I have heard this may change, you can check with your cell phone provider on coverage and cost).



Exit Taxes: When you arrive in the country, they may remind you to save money for Exit Taxes. You don't need to worry about this –the exit tax is covered in the program fee!

Electricity: The voltage in Costa Rica is the same as the states. However, most outlets are 2-prong instead of 3-prong, so if you are bringing something that needs 3 prongs you need to bring an adapter. And remember that, depending on which turtle project you go to, there may only be solar power, and no outlets available during those days.

ATMs: Although there are ATMs in Costa Rica, much of the time you will be in places where they are not available. And in places where they do have ATMs, they don't always work. The bottom line – while you may be able to get cash from ATMs, don't count on it.

Medication: If you plan to bring personal medicine to Costa Rica, please consider the following:

- Carry just the necessary quantity, which is the quantity normally used by a person having your health problem.
- Bring a prescription or a written statement from your doctor, specifying that the medicine is being used under his/her control and that you need it for your physical health.
- Have the medicines labeled or properly identified.

Food & Flights: As most of you know, the airlines have been cutting services, including meals. Some airlines still serve a meal, others have food to purchase, and others have absolutely nothing more than a bag of peanuts or pretzels. We'd like to encourage everyone to buy a meal or something to eat before you board your final flight to Costa Rica. We will have snack for you when you arrive, but don't assume that a substantial meal will be available.