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OSA CONSERVATION

The Osa is a spectacular region where you can plan on seeing all sorts of wildlife and unique tropical flora. Our Biological Station and Greg Gund Conservation Center are conveniently located amongst primary and secondary forest, and coastal and freshwater ecosystems that provide habitat for an abundance of birds, terrestrial and marine mammals, reptiles, amphibians and lots more. In 2014, we added Finca Osa Verde, a farm that emphasizes sustainable practices and provides our station with fresh, local food. Please consult the following information before your visit and should you have any further questions feel free to contact us at: info@osaconservation.org

Whether coming for birding, as part of a class, fieldwork, or to volunteer, we’re glad that you decided to visit us in the Osa!

WHO WE ARE

Osa Conservation is a nonprofit conservation organization committed to the preservation of the Osa Peninsula’s globally significant biodiversity, by ensuring the maintenance, restoration and long-term viability of the ecosystems on and around the Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica.

GETTING TO COSTA RICA

You can get to our facilities in the Osa from Costa Rica’s capital city, San Jose, by car, bus, or plane. There are two in-country airlines that fly from San Jose to the nearby town of Puerto Jimenez in under an hour.

When arriving in San Jose and filling in your customs information, be sure to indicate that the purpose of your journey is “tourism.” You can use the following information for your foreseen destination: Osa Conservation Biological Station, Puerto Jimenez, Osa Peninsula, Puntarenas. It is a good idea to bring a proof of return ticket with you when you arrive. You will be
OSA CONSERVATION
HOSTS VISITORS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD WHO HAVE A STRONG PASSION FOR NATURE AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

HOW TO GET HERE

By Bus

There are two buses daily from San José to Puerto Jimenez. The bus is operated by Blanco-Lobo Transport. The journey takes about 8 hours and costs approximately $13 including taxes. Tickets are purchased at the bus station. If you are taking a taxi to the bus terminal, tell the taxi driver: “El bus para Puerto Jimenez. La parada de San Carlos 75 metros al norte a mano izquierda.”

Be aware that you will not be able to catch the Colectivo (bus from Puerto Jimenez to the Biological Station or GGCC) on the same day if you travel by bus from San Jose. You can either take a taxi ($60) or spend the night in Puerto Jimenez and take the morning Colectivo the next day at 6:30 am.

TRANSPORTES BLANCO
Tel: (506) 2257.4121
San José - Puerto Jiménez:
Departing from: San José, Calle 14, Ave. 9-11
Time: 8.00 am & 12 noon

Puerto Jiménez - San José
Departing from: Puerto Jiménez bus station
Time: 5 am & 9 am

By Air

There are two main airline operators that fly from Juan Santamaria International (LJO), the main airport in Costa Rica, to Puerto Jimenez: Sansa and Nature Air.

SANSA (OPERATED BY TACA)
The Sansa terminal is located right next to the Juan Santamaria International Airport (SJO). To connect to your Sansa flight, walk outside of the international terminal and proceed left along the sidewalk. You will see the parking lot for the Sansa terminal on your left-hand side. Enter through the parking area and the office will be on your left-hand side. Tel: Local (506) 2290.4100, USA 1.887.767.2672

NATURE AIR
Nature Air is located in San José at the Juan Santamaría International Airport (SJO). If you are flying into SJO, you will have to clear customs, exit the airport via the arrivals door, and travel back upstairs through the departure entrance. Tel: Toll Free (800) 235.9272

Note: You are responsible for planning ahead and coordinating your flights with your ground transportation.
BY CAR

There are two major routes to get to Puerto Jimenez from San Jose by car (around 7 hours): Pan-American Highway Route and the Coastal Route.

COASTAL ROUTE

The coastal route leaves west from San Jose and goes via Quepos, and then south down the coast until it meets the Pan-American Highway in Palmar Norte, then on to the Osa Peninsula. The coastal route is the faster route, as the road is newer and in better shape.

Approximately 30 kilometers past Palmar Norte is the turn off for the Osa Peninsula, at Chacarita. There is a large gas station on the right hand side of the road, where you will find a sign that gives the mileage to Puerto Jimenez (77 kilometers). From here, the road can be in bad condition and it will probably take 1 1/2 hours to reach Puerto Jimenez.

At the end of the main road through town (at the gas station), you will see a sign to Corcovado. Turn right and follow the gravel road for about one hour to arrive at our facilities.

The Pan-American Route

The Pan-American Highway leaves south from San Jose through Cartago and over the mountains of Cerro de la Muerte, through San Isidro and on to the Osa Peninsula.

FROM PUERTO JIMENEZ

TO OUR FACILITIES

Our facilities are located about one hour from Puerto Jimenez. If you arrive to Puerto Jimenez by plane or bus, you will need to rent a car to visit the Osa Verde Retreat Center or take either a taxi or the ‘colectivo’ if going only to our Biological Station.

TO CERRO OSA RETREAT CENTER

Driving: From Puerto Jimenez it takes 45 minutes to an hour. Take the main road (gravel road) from Puerto Jimenez towards the town of Carate. After 45 min-1 hour, you will see on the right-hand side a brown wooden sign with yellow writing that reads “Greg Gund Conservation Center.” Turn here and follow the road up the hill for about 4km and pass 2 gates. You will arrive at the cabins on the top of the hill.

TO THE BIOLOGICAL STATION

The ‘colectivo’ (local bus) leaves daily from Puerto Jimenez at 6 AM and 1:30 PM. The cost is $6-7 (3,000 Colones). To get to the colectivo stop, you can use the map of Puerto Jimenez. Tell the driver that you would like to get off at ‘Conservación Osa.’ Walk past the school, cross the river and continue along the road until you reach the research center clearing (5 minute walk). We will be happy meet you and the colectivo at the road and welcome you into our station if you let us know in advance.

Taxi: Alternatively, a taxi can drop you directly at your destination. The cost is $60 one-way. You can find a taxi right out of the airstrip in Puerto Jimenez, as they often wait for incoming tourists to take them to their destination.
WHERE TO STAY ALONG THE WAY

HOTELS NEAR THE AIRPORT (SAN JOSÉ)

Villa Dolce- Hotel Villa Dolce is located in Alajuela, Costa Rica, just 5 minutes away from the International Airport.
http://www.villadolce.com/

Hotel Aeropuerto- Located 4 km west from the Juan Santamaria International Airport through the Pan American highway.
http://www.hotelaeropuerto.co.cr/

Hotel Puerta del Sol- Located 3 miles away from the international Airport, and 5 miles away from San Jose downtown.
http://www.bbpuertadelsol.com/

Hotel El Peñol- Located just 5 minutes from the Juan Santa Maria International Airport.
http://www.hotelelpenol.com/

Hotel Brilla Sol- Located close to the Airport.
http://www.hotelbrillasol.com/

Hotel Pacande-
http://www.villapacande.com/

Pura Vida Hotel- Small hotel located 3 km from the airport, in a former Coffee Finca.
http://www.puravidahotel.com/

Hotel Villa Bonita- Located 5 minutes from the airport.
http://www.hotelvillabonita.com/

Hotel Villas Colibri- Located 5 minutes away from the International Airport.
http://www.villascolibri.com/indexb.php

HOTELS IN PUERTO JIMENEZ

Cabinas Jimenez
http://www.cabinasjimenez.com/

Cabinas Agua Luna
http://www.jimenezhotels.com/cabinasagua-luna/

Cabinas Tropicales
http://www.cabinas-tropicales.com/

Cabinas The Corner
http://www.jimenezhotels.com/cabinasthe-corner/

Cabinas Marcelina
http://www.soldeosa.com/cabinasmarcelina/index.htm

Cabinas La Carolina
http://www.soldeosa.com/cabinascarolina/index.htm
The Osa Verde Retreat Center is a vacation rental that is available by the week and is self-catered. The entire site – including the cabins and the Greg Gund Conservation Center - is the perfect escape for any size group.

There are two cabins at the Retreat Center. La Casona has capacity for 7 people and features a full outdoor kitchen and BBQ, 2 double rooms and 1 triple, 3 bathrooms and a front porch with sweeping views. The other cabin, Casa Mango, offers capacity for up to 4 people (2 couples). It has 2 double rooms, 1 bathroom, 1 kitchen, and a front porch with a similarly amazing view as La Casona. There is option to book a daily housekeeper and a cook to prepare the food that you purchase in town.

Visitors at the Retreat Center have access to several platforms designed for wildlife viewing, yoga, or relaxation. Several trails lead from this area into the restored forests, providing easy wildlife and bird viewing. The Retreat Center overlooks the Pacific Ocean with a stunning view of Corcovado National Park. Watching the sunsets from this vantage point is an unforgettable experience.

The Greg Gund Conservation Center (GGCC) is an open-air meeting space, ideal for workshops, conferences, and retreats. It is equipped with tables and chairs, electricity, wifi, a projector screen, and offers an amazing view. A kitchen and dining area below are available for use.
BIOLOGICAL STATION

This is an ideal location for researchers, students and volunteer groups to become immersed in tropical forest ecosystems.

Staying at our Biological Station gives you quick access to mature rainforest as well as to the coastal habitat along the Pacific. Equipped with cabins, a dining area and laboratory, there is able space to hold classes, discussions, workshops, and give presentations.

The Biological Station is powered by solar and microhydro renewable energy systems. This means that we are mindful of reducing consumption, as sometimes power is intermittently available.

FINCA OSA VERDE

Finca Osa Verde is a working farm that supplies our dining hall with fresh food and serves as a demonstrations of sustainable, integrated farming practices that can be easily adopted by local farmers, improving livelihoods and positively impacting the environment. This is an ideal location for student groups and volunteers interested in tropical agro-ecology and sustainable agriculture practices.

Amenities:
• Three cabins, each with 3 shared rooms and 2 shared baths (36 person capacity)
• Laboratory and Classroom area
• Dining Hall and Common Area
• Internet access and electricity

Each cabin is situated with 3 spacious, rustic bedrooms with capacity for four individuals in each room. Bedrooms are furnished with 2 bunk-beds, dressers, shelves, outlet and mosquito nets. We provide towels and sheets, but you are welcome to bring your own set.

Cabins also include an indoor shower and bathroom, a gorgeous tropical outdoor shower, a bar and sink combination in the common area, chairs and hammocks, and a clothes-line for hanging clothes out to dry.
• No smoking or shoes inside buildings and platforms.
• Do not eat or leave wrappers in the rooms/platforms. This is the tropics, so if one ant finds your food, so will hundreds!
• Keep electronics and other valuables away from windows.
• Toilet paper goes in the provided bins. Never in toilets!
• Quiet hours are from 10pm to 6am (some visitors must rise very early).
• Please conserve water by limiting showers to 5 minutes.
• Conserve energy by turning off lights when not in use. Charging electronics during the day is more effective for the renewable energy systems.
• Please recycle in the provided bins.
• Wear closed-toed shoes after sundown and always use a flashlight.
• Always dress appropriately for the research station. Everyone must wear a shirt at all times and never bathing suits. Remember there other scientists and locals who work in this professional environment.
• Researchers must obtain permits from MINAET in advance of arrival.
• Drugs are strictly prohibited at our facilities.
• Alcohol consumption is managed by group leaders - no minors, no overconsumption.
EXPERIENCE OUR TRAILS

Our network of trails offer naturalists, scientists, and recreationalists access to a vast array of ecosystems and tropical plant and animal species. Made up of varying lengths and difficulties, the trails explore several microhabitats providing days of enjoyment and learning.

ALWAYS

• Sign out on the white board and tell somebody what trails you will be on and when to expect you back
• Carry a flashlight and trail map
• Wear rubber boots; they provide greater protection against snakebites
• Stay on marked trails
• Report issues or maintenance needs to the station

NEVER

• Go out alone on the trails
• Handle snakes or other wild animals
• Leave trash on the trails
• Swim in the ocean (extremely dangerous rip tides)

Whether on the Piro Trail with bare throated tiger herons or the Ocelote Trail under enormous ajo and fig trees where spider monkeys take residence, each path is easy to navigate and use.

EXPERIENCE THE CULTURE

LANGUAGE

A mixture of Spanish and English is spoken at our facilities. English speakers will have ample opportunity to practice and develop their Spanish language skills. Interested visitors may also have the opportunity to get involved in local environmental education by working with students at the Osa’s elementary schools.

FOOD

Our staff and visitors enjoy a diet that blends local Costa Rican cuisine with a wide variety of international dishes. Please advise us in advance of your arrival of any and all dietary restrictions. During your stay, tell us of any days you will need to take packed meals or will be late to a meal so that we can plan accordingly. We practice the “farm-to-table” philosophy, emphasizing fresh, local foods right from our farm and minimizing the consumption of meat.
COSTA RICA AND THE OSA PENINSULA

Costa Rica is a country in Central America bordered by Panama to the Southeast and Nicaragua to the North. The capital of the country is San Jose. Costa Rica has long been a tourist destination for many. The beautiful beaches, breathtaking waterfalls, and expanses of lush rainforest provide ample opportunity for adventure. Costa Rica has 5% of the world’s biodiversity and supports a plethora of terrestrial and marine species.

The Osa Peninsula is one of the most biologically diverse places on Earth. The Osa harbours 50% of Costa Rica’s biodiversity, which equates to 2.5% of the world’s biodiversity. The Osa is often referred to as a place where the rainforest meets the sea, and it’s true!

The variety of ecosystems support thousands of plant and animal species including many species endemic to the Osa.

The unique coastline helps support nesting beaches for four species of endangered sea turtles. The coastal waters are also frequented by dolphins and migrating humpback whales. There truly is no other place like it! Deep within the canopy of large primary forest trees you can find squirrel monkeys swinging from branches, scarlet macaws flying overhead, and the most powerful feline of all, the jaguar. The variety of ecosystems and unique fauna and flora make the Osa a natural wonder and paradise begging to be enjoyed.

Average Temperature: 26°C/79°F Annual
Precipitation: 5000-6000mm /197-236 inches
Humidity: 90%
Wet Season: June-Nov (rains most days, generally in the late afternoon and evening)
Dry Season: Dec-May (it still rains but much less)

CLIMATE

Temperatures on the Osa Peninsula are pleasant year around. The sunniest and warmest months are from January through April with temperatures dropping slightly but steadily with the onset of the rains in May. October and November mark the height of the wet season on the Osa; during this period it is possible to get more than one meter of rain in a month!

With the Greg Gund Conservation Center sitting atop a hill at 250 meters above sea level and the Biological Station at only 30 meters above sea level, we see marked differences in temperature, rainfall, humidity and wind at each location,
HEALTH & SAFETY

The health and safety of our visitors is our primary concern. In general, Costa Rica is an extremely safe country for visitors. That said, we strongly encourage all visitors and staff to be vigilant and aware of the potential hazards associated with traveling and living outside of their resident country. In addition, there are certain hazards associated with life in a remote field station. The majority of these pertain to the natural environment.

The most common discomforts are mosquitoes, sand flies, and other biting insects; sunburn; and dehydration. Sunblock and consumption of an adequate amount of water are absolutely essential.

INSECTS

While you will encounter mosquitoes, sand flies, and other biting insects on the Osa, their presence is not excessive. There are usually fewer than you would find in many areas of Europe and North America. A good insect repellent will protect you well.

SNakes

The Osa, like other tropical regions, has its fair share of snakes, some of which are poisonous. We require the use of rubber boots on forest trails and it is absolutely necessary to use a head-lamp or flashlight at night and to always pay attention to your surroundings.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

We have a complete first aid kit and can handle most medical concerns on site. In case of an emergency, the nearest town on the peninsula, Puerto Jiménez, is 45 minutes by vehicle and has a commercial airstrip serviced by a charter company that provides 24-hour emergency service. Puerto Jiménez has a medical clinic that can help with anything from a twisted ankle to a snakebite.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We require that all visitors have travel and medical insurance to cover them while in Costa Rica in case of an emergency. Check with your insurance company to see what coverage you have and consult the internet to find the travel insurance that best suits your needs.

INOCULATIONS & VACCINES

You are responsible for your own inoculations and should consult with a travel clinic in your home country. Our staff doesn’t take malaria medication and there have been no reported cases in the country for several years.

HAZARDOUS SWIMMING CONDITIONS

The Pacific Ocean off Piro beach has strong currents and rip tides, powerful waves, and the occasional shark. We consider it too dangerous for swimming and do not allow visitors to do so. There are safe swimming beaches nearby; please talk to our staff before going swimming.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

INTERNET & ELECTRONICS
During your stay, you will have limited access to the internet. Laptops and other electronics can be used and charged, however, we do remind our visitors that these are susceptible to damage caused by high humidity and curious insects, and that Osa Conservation takes no responsibility for their loss or damage.

STORAGE
We discourage visitors from bringing valuables or items of high personal value with them. Although we consider the facilities to be safe, we cannot guarantee the safety of valuables and have no facility for storing them. Osa Conservation is not responsible for guaranteeing the security of such items.

TRANSPORTATION
You are responsible for your transportation costs, including international and domestic flights, all domestic travel including arrival to the Biological Station or Greg Gund Conservation Center from Puerto Jiménez and back, and any optional excursions.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION
If someone needs to contact you urgently, there is phone access at our office in Puerto Jiménez.

Puerto Jiménez Office: +011 (506) 2735.5756
Washington, DC Office: +1 (202) 765.2266

We have radio communication between the Biological Station, the Greg Gund Conservation Center, and our Puerto Jiménez office. In case of an emergency on the Osa, our staff will inform your designated contact immediately.

HOW LONG ARE THE TURTLE PATROLS?
Turtle patrols are in between 2 and 6 hours. The length of the turtle patrol depends largely on which beach we are patrolling and how many nesting turtles we encounter on the beach.

WILL I HAVE ANY FREE TIME?
Volunteers have several hours each day to relax, read, play games, sit and enjoy the surrounding natural beauty or other optional activities.

WHAT OTHER KIND OF VOLUNTEER PROJECTS WILL I BE PARTICIPATING IN?
You will have the option of participating in monkey observational hikes, reforestation activities, a guided night hike, attending presentations by biologists currently doing research at our facilities, and helping to clean up our beautiful beaches.

WHAT ARE THE SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS LIKE?
At Biological Station, we have three cabins that can house 12 people each. You may be staying with up to three other people when the station is full. We host university and research groups as well as volunteers.

HOW OLD DO I HAVE TO BE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM?
There are no age restrictions. You are required to be in good physical health if you want to get fully involved in our sea turtle patrols on the beach.

DOES THE PROGRAM OFFER A STUDENT DISCOUNT?
Yes. The Student Rate that we offer is considerably lower than the one offered for our regular Conservation Visitors.

DO I NEED A SCIENCE-RELATED BACKGROUND TO PARTICIPATE?
Any scientific experience is desirable, but you don't need to have a scientific background to participate in our volunteering program.

WHAT TIME OF THE YEAR AM I MOST LIKELY TO SEE NESTING MOTHERS/HATCHLINGS?
The peak of the sea turtle nesting season is around August to October, so anytime during these months is a great opportunity to see the hatchlings and turtles.

HOW MANY SPECIES OF TURTLES CAN YOU FIND ON OSA SHORES?
Two species of sea turtles are most commonly found on our beaches: the Olive Ridley (Lepidochelys olivacea) and the Green Turtle (Chelonia mydas). The Hawksbill Turtle (Eretmochelys imbricata) and the Leatherback Turtle (Dermochelys coriacea).
RECOMMEND-

DOCUMENTS:
- Photocopy of passport
- Traveling/medical insurance

CLOTHING:
- Pack for hot weather, rain and dirt. Lightweight and fast-drying articles are best. Don’t bring denim; it NEVER dries in tropical humidity.
- Field clothes
- Camp clothes
- Dark clothes (required for night patrols)
- Tall socks (for wearing with rubber boots)
- Swim suit
- Sunglasses/hat
- Lightweight rain jacket
- Footwear
- Rubber boots (required for trails—remember these offer great snake protection. If you don’t want to lug these home, we gladly accept donations).
- Sandals AND sneakers for station grounds (crocs or flip flops are great).

PERSONAL:
- Toiletries (BIODEGRADABLE)
- Small personal first aid kit (Tylenol, Cortisone, any necessary medications)
- Garbage bag or tote for dirty laundry
- Ziplock bag for camera or phone

FINANCES:
- $28 Costa Rica departure tax
- Spending money (dollars are accepted almost anywhere or you can take local colones out of ATM’S Puerto Jimenez or San Jose).
- Debit/credit Card (widely accepted)

OPTIONAL:
- Binoculars
- Leatherman/Swiss Army Knife
- Field Guide of interest
- Book for lazy afternoons
- Laptop (only if necessary, use is limited at station)

GEAR:
- Watch
- Headlamp (must have red light when working with turtles)
- Sunblock
- Insect repellent (preferably natural)
- Water bottle
- Day pack for hiking/beach patrols

PLEASE
DO NOT BRING
Personal items that require an AC power supplies (hairdryers, electric razors) these draw too much on our renewable energy system.

Please beware that storage and security are not guaranteed. We have never had an issue but are unable to guarantee the safety of your valuables.
WE HOPE TO SEE YOU SOON!

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

Costa Rica Information

Sea Turtles Information
http://www.ioseaturtles.org/Education/seaturtlebooklet.pdf
http://www.widecast.org/Biology/
http://www.seaturtles.org/