



INTERCULTURALIDAD &
SERVICIO VOLUNTARIO



SHORT TERM PROGRAM GUIDE (PART I – General Information)

¡Bienvenid@!

Welcome to the ACI Costa Rica National Profile. This document will provide you with important information before your arrival in Costa Rica, or help give you an idea of our country and the programs we offer to make the choice easier for you.

You are about to embark on a venture which is filled with exciting, challenging and engaging experiences! There are lots of things, which you would both like to know and really need to know about Costa Rica, before your arrival. Take some time to read through this profile, so that you can get an impression of Costa Rica – which is a highly diverse country in Central America with copious biodiversity, beaches, volcanoes and tropical jungles. It is one of the most economically stable countries in Latin American. Most of the country's gross income comes from tourism. Industry has shown fast growth, and the country still gets some revenue from agricultural activities (coffee, pineapple, and banana exports mostly).

We want to leave you with an idea of our beautifully diverse country from general information about day-to-day living and country facts to cultural information and recommendations about the programs that are offered and living in Costa Rica. We aim to give you an honest description of our country, our organization and the projects which are open to you, if you have any questions or would like more information contact our local partner in your country. In Finland it's Allianssin Nuorisovaihto (nuorisovaihto.fi, email vaihto@alli.fi).

¡Pura Vida!

ACI COSTA RICA / Who we are

AACI Costa Rica is a non-profit organization founded in 1967, whose main goal is to promote programs of intercultural learning and international volunteer service (IVS) for people from all around of the world, facilitating their experience in social and ecological projects, developing global citizens.

ACI wants to contribute to solidarity and friendship between the different societies of our globalized world, to sustainable human development, and personal growth of our participants.

Our organization is an active full member of the International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE), a federation of more than 40 intercultural and IVS organizations located in the five continents. ICYE Headquarters are placed in Berlin, Germany. The federation of ICYE has been recognized as International Peace Messenger by the United Nations. Around 600 volunteers take part in the programs of ACI-CR every year. ACI-CR is affiliated with National Registry of Associations of Costa Rica (identification number 3-002.078957-26).

VISION

To become a leader organization in the promotion of a global citizenship and recognized both at national and international level for its contributions and impact in the search for peace and sustainable development through intercultural programs and international voluntary service.



MISION

To promote and facilitate intercultural learning and international volunteering, as non formal educational processes that reinforces the development of values, knowledge and aptitudes necessary for the current and future society, the formation of global citizens and fraternity for for a more tolerant, peaceful and sustainable world.



SHORT TERM PROGRAM

More than 10 years ago, ACI-CR created the Short-Term Program, also called “WORK CAMPS PROGRAM” designed to receive volunteers from all over the world in Costa Rica for periods of 1 week up to 5 months.

The Short-Term Program was designed for participants older than 18 years old who:

- Participants who would like to volunteer for less than 6 months
- People who would like to choose by themselves when to start their volunteer program
- Participants who want to try more than one project while they are in Costa Rica



The Short-Term Program offers two types of volunteering projects:

<p style="text-align: center;">ECO CAMPS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Ecological Projects)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SOCIO CAMPS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Social Projects)</p>
<p>Volunteers who participate in ecological projects, called “Eco Camps,” work in conservation initiatives in direct contact with nature. For example, volunteers can work in national parks, wildlife refuges, community-managed reserves, environmental awareness programs, ecotourism, etc. There they help with a wide range of activities: from creating and maintaining trails to night walks on the beach searching for turtles.</p>	<p>Volunteers who enroll in our social projects work in direct contact with people. These projects include: daycare centers, elementary schools, children’s homes, elders’ homes, hospitals, cultural departments, people with disabilities, etc. There volunteers help with a wide range of activities such as: playing, taking care of the kids/patients/seniors; teaching a foreign language to the locals or helping the kids with their homework after school hours.</p>

ECO CAMPS (Ecological Projects)

Working hours are generally Monday to Saturday depending on the specific project, and accommodation could be with host-families or with other volunteers in dorms or cabins. Please note

that specific details such as work hours, type of volunteer work, living arrangements and others can only be determined by each project. For more details please read the description of the projects of your interest given below.

Participants applying for the Eco Camps should:

- Participate for a minimum of one week (maybe longer depending on project)
- Be able to live in simple conditions
- Enjoy being in direct contact and surrounded by nature
- Be prepared to work in extreme weather conditions with very hot or rainy days and high humidity
- Be willing to live in a rural area of Costa Rica, either with a host family or in a volunteer's dorm, where access to internet may be limited
- Spend a few nights in San José in a Hostel to attend the Orientation Meeting before traveling to the project
- Bring your own international health

Eco Camps Options:

- Conservation & Environmental Awareness
- Sea Turtles Conservation
- Wildlife Rescue Centers
- Rural Tourism
- Ecotourism
- Biological Reserves

Are you interested?

Requirements to participate

Be overage (be over 18 years of age) and fill out the “ACI Application Form” including the name(s) of the project(s) and starting date of your volunteering program and send it by email at least 2 weeks before the first day of your program. Also, send us the complete itinerary of the flight so we can pick you up at the airport.

Pay the full price of the program in cash on the day you will have the Orientation Meeting in the ACI office. Or pay the entire price of the program before arriving through a transfer to the ACI bank account. Note that for international transfers there is an additional fee imposed by Costa Rican banks that can range from \$20 to \$35.

Please note that the Orientation Meeting at the ACI office is MANDATORY.

SOCIO CAMPS (Social Projects)

Work days are generally Monday to Friday starting early in the morning depending on the specific projects. Accommodation will be always with host families located near to the project. Please note that specific details such as work hours, type of work, living arrangements, etc. can only be determined by each project. For more details please see the description of the projects of your interest bellow.

Participants applying for the Socio Camps should:

- Participate for a minimum of 4 weeks
- Have basic or intermediate Spanish level depending on the project
- Enjoy working and interacting with people
- Be aware that most of the projects are located in urban areas
- Be willing to live in a host family and adjust to their rules and house conditions

- As a complement of our Short-Term Program, **Spanish language classes** are offered by ACI-CR to the participants and can be arranged with our private teacher starting from one week or more. Whether the volunteer receives his/her Spanish classes with our private teacher depends on the availability of the private teacher.

Socio Camps Options:

- Childcare
- Teacher Assistant
- Elders' Homes
- Children's Homes

Are you interested?

Requirements to participate:

Be over 18 years of age and fill out the ACI application form with the name of the project and mandatory start date and send it at least 1 month before the start of the project. Also, send us the complete itinerary of the flight so we can pick you up at the airport.

Social projects require volunteers to either have a basic level of Spanish or to book classes upon arrival (Optional).

Pay the full price of the program in cash on the day you will have the Orientation Meeting in the ACI office. Or pay the entire price of the program before arriving through a transfer to the ACI bank account. Note that for international transfers there is an additional fee imposed by Costa Rican banks that can range from \$20 to \$35.

Some of the volunteering projects like the teacher assistant placement have a specific season during the year when they are available. For more information check the descriptions of the particular projects.

What the program includes

Airport Pick Up

ACI Costa Rica is responsible for picking up the volunteers at the airport and taking them to their first host situation (hostel or family). In order for this service to be possible and for you to receive your confirmation, it is essential that you give us all the information of the flight itinerary (date, arrival time, flight number, airline) at least 2 weeks before arriving. After receiving the information, ACI will send you the final confirmation of your program.

At the airport, a person with a banner with your name on it will be waiting for you. It is important that you look for that person and that you **do not leave the airport by your own**. That person will be the driver who is only in charge of picking you up and taking you to your place of lodging. That is why you will receive a Welcome Letter that contains essential information for your first day in Costa Rica.

The Welcome Letter includes an invitation to the orientation meeting, the accommodation address, the ACI-CR office and important telephone numbers.

It is important to mention that after the transfer to your host situation (Hostel or Family), you can pay for the service directly to the driver. The amount of money you pay to the driver will be deducted from the amount assigned to ACI Fee. You can pay the driver in cash or by card, since he has a Posnet, POS (Point of Sale) to receive debit or credit cards. The day of the Orientation Meeting will be made the discount for the transfer. In other words, the transfer service is included in the ACI Fee, it is not a separate payment.

Arrangements for lodging once you arrive

We are in charge of arranging your accommodation for the first days. In case your project is located in San José the driver will take you directly to your host family, while if your project is outside of San Jose,

the driver will take you to a hostel where you will spend at least two nights, so you can attend the orientation meeting. After your stay in San Jose you will travel to your project or to your host family outside of San Jose. We will guide you to make it easier.

Orientation Meeting

All participants in our program have an Orientation Meeting held in Spanish or English at the ACI-CR office. **Please note that the Orientation Meeting at the ACI office is mandatory.** It helps you to get an insight into your host country's culture and to have a positive experience in Costa Rica.

If volunteers arrive between Sunday and Thursday, the meeting usually takes place the following working day. Those who arrive on a Friday or Saturday will have the Orientation Meeting the following Monday.

Depending on the number of participants, the Orientation Meeting will last about 2 hours. It includes information about Costa Rica (the weather, culture, etc.) host families, the volunteers' project(s) and how to get there, ACI, etc. The volunteers will also receive documents with information about the country, San José, general recommendations and maps.

Your contact in Costa Rica

ACI-CR will be your contact for the whole duration of the program in case you need assistance. Our office is open from Monday to Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm. In case of any emergency, the participant can immediately contact the coordinator who will be helping him in the situation. Apart from the Short-Term Program ACI-Costa Rica also runs several other programs for individuals and groups of volunteers that come to Costa Rica for periods from one week up to one year.

ACI-Costa Rica also organizes different educational and recreational activities with current and former ACI participants, the "International Day" -our annual cultural fair-, visits to places of environmental or cultural interest, or sorties to local clubs where all our volunteers are invited. In addition to that, every Tuesday there is an activity called Language Café, a space in which volunteers can practice different languages while meeting locals and volunteers from other parts of the world.



Even though ACI-Costa Rica does not charge a participation fee for these activities, participants must pay for their own expenses.

Cost of the projects

Our Short-Term Program is divided into three categories:

- Spanish classes
- Eco Camps: Ecological Projects
- Socio Camps: Social Projects

Each category/project has a different cost, which includes lodging and 3 meals.

**** Note that the program does not include daily local transportation.**

Spanish Classes

In case you book Spanish lessons, they will take place at the ACI office before the volunteer work starts. We hire experienced teachers who will help our participants to develop the vocabulary, speaking and comprehension skills necessary for a successful experience at the volunteer project(s) of their choice. The prices include the stay with a host family and three meals a day.

Classes normally will take place during the morning, 4 hours a day, **Monday to Friday**.

Price for 1 week	Price for 2 weeks	Price for 3 weeks	Price for 4 weeks
\$300	\$600	\$900	\$1200



ECO CAMPS (Ecological Projects)

Project Name	Price for 1 week	Price for 4 weeks
Fudebiol Biological Reserve	\$87,50	\$350
Santa Elena Biological Reserve	\$87,50 + \$15* *Transportation to the project x week	\$350 + \$15* *Transportation to the project x week
Environmental Park Rio Loro	\$75	\$300
Botanical Garden Lankester	\$75	\$300
Spirogyra Butterfly Garden	\$75	\$300
Verdiazul Sea Turtle Conservation	\$175	\$700



(ASVO) Sea Turtle Conservation	\$175	\$700
ACOTPRO Sea Turtle Conservation	\$140	\$600
Toucan Rescue Ranch Wildlife Rescue Center	\$145	\$580
COOPESILENCIO Ecotourism	\$140	\$600

SOCIO CAMPS:

Someone from the ACI office or other volunteers will accompany the volunteer to the project on the first day in order to introduce the volunteer, assist him/her with translations if needed, support the people from the project, and ensure that the participant receives all the necessary information before starting to work. **This only applies for social projects.**



Project Name	Price for 1 week	Price for 4 weeks
Obras del Espíritu Santo Child Care	\$75 + \$100* *Monthly fee charged by the project	\$300 + \$100* *Monthly fee charged by the project
Centro Integral Infantil Manos Amigas Child Care	\$75 + Donation* *Donation economical/material given by the volunteer	\$300 + Donation* *Donation economical/material given by the volunteer
Carlos Maria Ulloa Elderly Home	\$75	\$300
Hospital de Niños Children Care	\$75 + \$22* *Uniform for the project	\$300 + \$22* *Uniform for the project
Hogar Sol Children Shelter	\$75	\$300
Escuela Peñas Blancas Teacher Assistant	\$75	\$300
Escuela Morazán Teacher Assistant	\$87,5	\$350
Centeno Güell Disabilities School	\$75	\$300

Fundación Maria Elderly Home	\$75	\$300
Cecudi Manitas y Sonrisas Child Care	\$75 + \$50* *One-time fee charged by the project	\$300 + \$50* *One-time fee charged by the project

ACI Fee

The ACI fee must be paid by all participants of our Eco and Socio Camps.

It is an administrative fee that will be paid to ACI-Costa Rica in addition to the prices of the project(s) for arranging your entire program. The ACI fee covers the following:

- Airport pick up
- Orientation Meeting (OM)
- Arrangement of Spanish classes if requested (not the cost of the actual classes)
- A written guide with general information about:
 - ◆ Costa Rica: history, landscape, climate, people, culture, customs, places of interest, San José city, travelling around the country, health, security tips, etc.
 - ◆ Contact information of the ACI office and phone numbers for emergencies
 - ◆ Information of how to get to your volunteer project(s) and host family,
 - ◆ Maps of Costa Rica
 - ◆ Costa Rican Spanish phrasebook
- Arrangements with your project(s) and host family(ies)
- A certificate of participation at the end of your program (for your curriculum vitae)
- Having ACI as your contact during your whole program in Costa Rica

- Invitations to the ACI activities with other volunteers and with former Costa Rican participants who volunteered in different countries (language café, presentations...)

IMPORTANT! The ACI fee is paid on top of the other costs of your project, the lodging, the food at your host family and the Spanish classes. **If you decide to participate in a mix of an ecological project(s) with a social project(s), the Socio Camp Fee will be the charged.**

Weeks	Eco Camps	Socio Camps
1 to 4	\$150	\$250
5 to 8	\$250	\$350
9 to 12	\$350	\$450
13 +	\$450	\$550

Costs of the program

The total cost of your volunteer program with ACI-CR will be:

The cost of your volunteer project(s) + Spanish Classes (if applicable) + the administrative ACI Fee depending on the total **amount of weeks** that you would like to participate.

If you have any questions about how to calculate the total cost of the program of your preference, please do not hesitate to email us to: short-term01@aci-cr.org or short-term@aci-cr.org.

Other details

Some of the volunteer projects, such as the ones with sea turtles or the elementary public schools, have a **specific season** during the year when they are available (for more info see general description of the particular projects).

It is important that the **Application form** is filled in as completely as possible. Details such as age, allergies and special diets (vegetarian, etc.) are relevant for us to find the right family / accommodation for you.

It is also very important to keep in mind that, as a participant of one of our programs, you will mainly be a volunteer as well as exchangee and a tourist only during your free time. Below, you find a section called **What We Expect from You**. Please read it carefully.

What the program does not include

(What volunteers will have to pay themselves during their program)

- **Local daily transportation to the project**, if needed (bus transportation is cheap in Costa Rica, and ACI will make an effort to place you as close to the project as possible according to the availability of host families for our social projects)
- The first few nights and the last nights in a Hostel in San José if the participant's project is located outside San José. Remember that we make all reservations and transfer from the airport to the Hostel that is located near the ACI office. Normal cost per night is \$12,50 including breakfast.

Refunds

If the volunteer wishes to make changes/cancellations we recommend making these changes at least two weeks in advance of the arrival.

If the volunteer does not make the changes/cancellations at least two weeks in advance then ACI-CR is no longer obligated to give any refunds to the participant. If this is the case, the refund will have to be negotiated directly with the project(s). If the participant applied for an ecological project, and directly with ACI if the participant applied for a social project.



If the volunteer decides not to participate in the program after arriving in Costa Rica during the Orientation Meeting, a cancellation fee of \$100 has to be paid. **If you want to cancel your participation once you are in the project, there will not be any refunds.**

Project Changes

If you wish to change the Project without reasonable cause (or to experience another project) during your stay in Costa Rica, you can do so. **But only if you are more than 4 weeks in the country**, and you will also be charged an administrative "change fee" of \$50. We have to talk with the Old Project or / and with the family, as well as find and organize everything with the new project and the new family and plan how to get there. (Of course we will not apply this when there are genuine problems with the family or the project!) To avoid this payment, we suggest you decide before arriving in the country in which projects you would like to volunteer.

PLEASE NOTE: If you do not arrive as planned in Costa Rica (major delay, different date, etc.) or choose to stay at a hostel not arranged by us, **please let us know 24 hours beforehand**. If you do not inform us, we cannot refund the price of the transfer from the airport to your accommodation, or the first night in the hostel (if applicable).

What we expect from you

We need you to be as **open-minded** as possible. Come prepared to learn about Costa Rica and ready to adapt to a new culture during your volunteer experience.

We need you to show **initiative** and **flexibility**. We know from experience that these are the key to becoming part of your host place and for fitting in at your work placement.

You are expected to work around **5-7 hours a day** (this may change depending on the project). Your best chance to learn is through the intensive contact with people at work and/or at your host place;

therefore, it is important that you try your best to learn Spanish. It is also a key for understanding our culture and having a richer overall experience.

During your time as a volunteer, **learning and giving will be reciprocal**. If you contribute to your project and the life of your host place with your specific skills and an open mind, you will receive the same in return. The capacity of giving, respect, friendliness, understanding and care for other people will give you and them a wide array of learning opportunities. Remember that you will also be presenting your own culture to the people you meet!

As a guest in Costa Rica, we expect **tolerance and respect** from you towards our traditions and way of living. We offer you our hospitality and invite you to share a cultural experience. Keep in mind that you are going to live in a different culture with different customs, food, weather, etc. It is your decision to come to Costa Rica; hence, you will have to accept the differences and adapt to them. Costa Rica will not change its ways because you arrived, you will be the person who changes accepting cultural differences.

We need our volunteers to understand the difficulty of finding host families and projects, and it is of great importance that the rules of the host placement and projects are respected.

At the end of your stay, you have to fill out an **Evaluation** of the program at the ACI office. That is also when you will receive your **Certificate of Participation**, which you can use in your curriculum vitae as a life experience.

Summary of what you can expect from the Short Term Program with ACI-CR:

1. Pick up and transfer from the airport to your first host situation
2. Orientation Meeting at our office in San José
3. Documents with general information about the country, project(s), security, etc.
4. To have ACI as your contact all the time during your program in Costa Rica
5. The arrangements with the project(s)/host families/Spanish school
6. To be invited to the ACI activities with other participants
7. Certificate of Participation