

Costa Rica

Summer 2009 - ~May 11 – June 1

Why should I go to Costa Rica with the MC Biology Department?

- Costa Rica is located at the interface between North and South American biological diversity.
- Costa Rica is half the size of Ohio, but has ecosystems ranging from low land tropical rain forest to desert to mountains.
- Costa Ricans have recognized the importance of biological diversity and are working to protect it.
- You can gain experience in field research in various tropical ecosystems.
- Learn or polish up your ability to speak Spanish.
- Earn 3 credits for Biology 253, which at Marietta College can be used to meet part of the Global Issues requirement or the Scientific Inquiry-no lab requirement. For majors Biology 253 can also count as a biology elective.
- Experience cultural diversity first hand at street markets, local restaurants or maybe a soccer game.
- Visit tropical cloud forests in Monte Verde, the “jungle” at La Suerte, mangroves along the coast in Cahuita and observe monkeys and other wildlife at all of these locations and snorkel and possibly see nesting turtles at Tortuguero on the northeast coast of Costa Rica.
- Make contacts that could lead to an exciting summer internship.

Interested?

Contact: Dr. David Brown 740-376-4916 (office)
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Marietta College
Marietta, OH 45750

Tentative Itinerary (with web sites that describe the different areas)

Biology web site: http://www.marietta.edu/~biol/costa_rica/costa_rica.htm

Arrive in San Jose, Costa Rica – afternoon

San Jose – visit museum, market

Santa Rosa National Park – Tropical Dry Forest

<http://www.acguanacaste.ac.cr/1997/principaling.html>

Transects comparing diversity in primary and secondary forests. Mangroves and northern beach

Monte Verde – Cloud Forest Preserve

<http://www.cloudforestalive.org/>

<http://www.monteverdeinfo.com>

la Fortuna

<http://www.lafortunacostarica.com/>

Boat trip on Caño Negro and guided hike to Arenal volcano

Field station at La Suerte– low land tropical rainforest

<http://lasuerte.org/lasuerte.html>

Side trips to pineapple plantation, etc.

Tortuguero – lowland tropical rainforest and 22 km of national seashore

http://www.tortugueroinfo.com/usa/sea_turtles_tortuguero.htm

Trails in the national park and guided tour to look for nesting turtles one of the nights

Cahuita National Park – Lowland tropical rainforest and coral reefs offshore

We will stay in the town of Cahuita which has a distinctly Caribbean culture.

It is a short walk from the hotel to the national park and there will also be an organized snorkeling trip out to the coral reef

Return to San Jose

Depart San Jose – Arrive in US in evening

Costs to Students

Program Cost of \$2000 includes round trip airfare from Columbus (or Cleveland or Pittsburg if that turns out to be the cheapest way to go), ground transportation in Costa Rica, room and board (3 meals a day), excursions within Costa Rica, entrance fees and departure taxes. The only thing not covered by the program costs is the 3 credit hours of Marietta College tuition (\$795).

STUDENTS MUST MAKE A \$500 DEPOSIT (PAYABLE TO MARIETTA COLLEGE) DURING THE FALL SEMESTER (~ DEC. 1). THIS DEPOSIT WILL BE REFUNDED ONLY IN THE EVENT THAT THE PROGRAM IS CANCELLED.

The deposit will be used to make airline and lodging reservations and will be the basis of determining the number of individuals participating in the course. Please talk to Dr. Brown if you have any concerns about the deposit or when it is due.

Additional costs: If students do not have a passport, they will need to obtain one and there are costs involved in this process. Generally the earlier you start the process the less expensive it will be – at the very least you should start the application process at least two months before the date of departure. You will need to submit a copy of the front page of your passport along with the last payment for the trip. If you need to obtain a passport, contact Dr. Brown for information on how to apply. (http://travel.state.gov/passport/forms/ds11/ds11_842.html)

Although Costa Rica is generally a safe place to travel in regards to health concerns, all travelers should be current on their tetanus booster. You might also consider getting vaccinated for Hepatitis A (at least one month prior to traveling). Further information can be obtained from your physician or county health department. If your physician has questions about recommended preventative health concerns you can direct them to the Center for Disease Control's web site (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>). The county health department is usually the cheapest route to obtain these vaccinations if they are not covered under your health insurance plan.

Learning Goals for BIOL 253 Field Study in Costa Rica:

Conservation of natural resources, including biological diversity, is a topic that has great importance for our society. As human populations continue to grow and human impacts on ecosystems increase, the importance of conservation will also grow. In order to develop effective conservation plans it is necessary to consider the culture, history and economics of the region as well as the biology. In this course, and by traveling to Costa Rica, students will be given an opportunity to examine these different aspects of conservation first hand. Towards this major goal there are several areas that this course will address:

1. Students will learn about the importance of field data and will gain experience collecting data in a field setting. Scientific data collection is integral to the success of conservation efforts. Data provides information that can be used to make decisions on where to focus conservation efforts. Field studies also provide a baseline that can be used to evaluate the success or failure of conservation efforts.
2. Students will examine different biomes through hands on experiments and observation. Tropical ecosystems often include complex interactions between species. For example, mutualistic relationships are more common in tropical areas and often can have a large impact on the biological community that is present. When trying to understand or make decisions about how to manage conservation efforts it is important to take into account these interrelationships between different species in an ecosystem.
3. Integrate learning through experimentation and reading. Throughout this course students will be called upon to build knowledge and understanding through readings, direct observation and experimentation.
4. Integrate information from various fields of study. When addressing a question it is important to consider all of the information available that may have bearing on the problem. This is especially important when addressing conservation issues where the human aspects may be critical and are often as important if not more important to the success or failure of the conservation effort.
5. Develop written communication skills. Part of learning the “language” of science includes being able to communicate ideas in a concise and accurate written form. This goal was in mind when designing the student research projects which will include both oral and written presentations of the results of the research conducted prior to and during the course trip.