



COSTA RICA: SURF, SPORTS & SUSTAINABILITY ADVENTURE

12-DAY PROGRAM



HIGHLIGHTS

- Surf waves, join pick-up games, practice yoga, and stay active with daily wellness activities
- Learn about sustainable farming and explore local environmental initiatives in action
- Help run a community sports day with local children and families
- Contribute to ecological restoration and other community-driven projects
- Zipline through the treetops and tube down a river along lush canyons
- Explore the coast by catamaran and snorkel among diverse marine life



ACTIVITY LEVEL

- Heavy



2026 PROGRAM DATES

- July 15 - July 26



GET IN TOUCH!

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Experience Costa Rica's Pura Vida as you surf world-class waves, support local environmental stewardship efforts and build connections through sports.



OVERVIEW

On this program, you'll explore Costa Rica's Guanacaste Province, home to beautiful beaches, mangrove forests and lush jungles. As part of your service project, you'll take part in initiatives that respond to the community's needs. You might help on a sustainable farm, support a community sports day for local children, clean up mangroves and beaches, or design educational signage to raise environmental awareness. You'll also learn about sustainable farming practices and engage with local environmental initiatives. Stay active every day by learning to surf, practicing yoga, playing pick-up sports and enjoying various fitness and wellness activities. Immerse yourself in the ocean-minded "Pura Vida" lifestyle as you experience the beauty of the Pacific Ocean and Costa Rica's rich biodiversity.

Your Home Base on this program is an ecolodge with many green areas and a pool. Live surrounded by beautiful flora & fauna—including monkeys! Students will share well-ventilated cabins or dorm-style rooms with fans, but no air conditioning, and have access to shared bathroom and shower facilities. Meals feature a healthy blend of Western-style favorites and delicious local cuisine, with a focus on fresh, plant-based dishes paired with proteins, rice, beans, vegetables, and plenty of tropical fruit.





ITINERARY

Actual schedule of activities will vary by program session. The information detailed here is typical for what you can expect to experience; however, service work and activities vary depending upon the needs of our local community partners, various celebrations and customs, as well as the weather and specific needs of the student group.

DAY 1: WELCOME TO COSTA RICA!

Fly into Liberia (LIR), where GLA staff will be ready to welcome you and bring you to our Home Base, a rustic ecolodge and yoga retreat center surrounded by tropical forest. You'll get to know your fellow travelers and staff, along with an overview of the adventure ahead. Then, settle in and enjoy your first Costa Rican dinner at Home Base.

DAY 2: ORIENTATION, SURFING & PURA VIDA

Our first full day begins with orientation and group team-building activities in the gardens, by the pool, on the sports fields and along the nearby beaches. You'll also get to know the local ecological organizations and the sustainable farm where you'll be volunteering, learning about the impact of the projects and community initiatives you'll support during your stay.

In the afternoon, immerse yourself in Costa Rican culture and the spirit of Pura Vida with your first surf lesson at Playa Avellanas. Certified local instructors will guide you through the basics of surfing, your equipment and ocean safety. Whether you're a first-timer or looking to improve your skills, you'll catch plenty of waves and enjoy the ride. Afterward, share a traditional Tico meal as you reflect on your first taste of one of the country's favorite pastimes.

In the evening, we'll come together for our first Mentor sessions and a leadership activity designed to help us connect more deeply as a group.

DAY 3: SURF & MANGROVE RESTORATION

This morning we'll head back to the beach for our second surf session and start building on what we learned yesterday. Whether it's standing up for the first time or catching longer rides, today's about finding your rhythm in the waves.

In the afternoon we'll visit the mangroves of Playa Avellanas and Junquillal. These tangled coastal forests are home to seven different species of mangroves that shelter marine life and birds while protecting the shoreline from erosion and rising seas. We'll do our part by helping clear waste from the area, a hands-on way to support this fragile ecosystem.

Tonight, kick back in a hammock and relax with friends after a rewarding day.

DAY 4: COMMUNITY SERVICE - SUSTAINABILITY

Today we'll visit a family-owned sustainable farm to learn about organic practices and artisan cheese making. You'll get to sample the farm's products and see how growing food locally can benefit both personal health and the wider community. By raising animals on organic feed produced on-site, this family has built a thriving business that supports the environment, provides nutritious food and ensures the animals are well cared for.

After service, join a village cooking class with a local chef and learn some of her most-loved recipes. Once the meal settles, we'll wrap up the day with a friendly game of soccer.



DAY 5: SURF & COMMUNITY SERVICE – FARM TO TABLE

It's time to get back in the waves and feel the adrenaline again. In today's surf lesson you'll learn about different types of waves, how to read the ocean to spot safe entry and exit points and how to take your skills to the next level.

In the afternoon we'll continue with service projects, this time focusing on the land. Help harvest crops for the animals, work in the garden and see the process from seed to harvest.

In the evening we'll come together for a leadership activity on responsible tourism and what it means to be a good steward of the environment. Reflect on sustainable practices and the role of organic farming in Costa Rica.

DAY 6: SPORTS DAY & COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Today is all about teamwork, skill-building and the joy of sports. We'll kick off with field games and soccer alongside local children. You might practice passes, work on shots or run simple drills, all while playing together and sharing the game. This cultural exchange is a chance to connect through the universal language of sports while learning more about Costa Rican life.

As the sun sets we'll wrap up with a beach volleyball match and take in the vibrant energy of Guanacaste's coastline.

DAY 7: ADVENTURE DAY!

Get ready for a rush of adventure as we zipline through the jungle canopy and hike the tropical dry forest. With the help of professional guides (weather permitting) we'll tube down the river, riding fast-moving sections and drifting through quiet pools where we can take in the scenery and look for wildlife.

We'll pause for a buffet lunch of traditional Costa Rican food before heading back to Home Base. As the day winds down, relax by the pool or in a hammock, connect with friends or simply enjoy the peaceful atmosphere to recharge after a full day outdoors.

DAY 8: SURFING, LEADERSHIP & SALSA

Head back to the ocean again to catch more waves and perfect your surf form with the help of your expert instructors. By now you'll be feeling the progress and all the excitement that comes with it.

Later, take part in leadership activities designed to build teamwork, strengthen communication and encourage personal growth. You'll reflect with your group on how these lessons connect to your future goals.

As the sun sets, heat things up with some dance moves! Join a salsa class led by a local instructor, who will introduce you to the basics of salsa along with other traditional Costa Rican dances.

DAY 9: YOGA & SERVICE – ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

Today we'll visit a local non-profit focused on environmental awareness in the community. You'll take part in a clean-up, revisit the mangroves and help create signs to identify native plants and streams while supporting local conservation efforts.

In the afternoon we'll slow down with a yoga class to stretch tired muscles and reset after the busy days behind us. Yoga connects body and mind through movement and breath, helping reduce stress and improving flexibility. These



DAY 9: YOGA & SERVICE - ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION - CONTINUED

benefits are useful both for surfing and for staying active throughout the program.

That evening we'll gather back at Home Base for dinner, then reflect under the stars on the impact of the day's work before resting up for tomorrow's adventures.

DAY 10: ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP & FINAL SURF LESSON

Today we'll focus on giving back to the ocean that has given us so much. Partner with a local organization for a meaningful beach cleanup, removing debris and helping to protect this beautiful coastline. Learn about the connection between clean beaches and healthy marine ecosystems, an effort that benefits surfers and ocean lovers everywhere. Reflect on the role we play as environmental stewards and how these natural spaces can be preserved for future generations.

After a rewarding morning of service, we'll paddle out for our final surf session. Surfing carries lessons that go beyond the water, from getting back up after a wipeout to staying present in the moment and enjoying the ride.

Later in the day we'll close with leadership activities that explore how to take what you've learned about surfing, sustainability and conservation and apply it to your life back home, creating an impact that lasts well beyond the program.

DAY 11: SNORKELING & CATAMARAN SAIL

Get ready for a day of adventure on the water! We'll cruise along the Guanacaste coast by catamaran to a beautiful snorkeling spot where, conditions permitting, you can spot tropical fish, manta rays and maybe even sea turtles or dolphins.

After lunch, if the wind allows, we'll raise the sails and cut the motors so you can soak in the sounds of the Pacific on the way back to port.

DAY 12: DEPARTURE

¡Adiós y Pura Vida! Our Costa Rican adventure comes to a close. After breakfast and final goodbyes, we'll head to the airport where GLA staff will help students with check-in for their journeys home.

NOTICE ON PROGRAM UPDATES

While this program is being planned for this season, some activities or details may change between now and the program start date. Please note that references from past participants and previously published information may not accurately reflect every aspect of this program. Refer to the sample itinerary above or to the GLA website for the most up-to-date version of program activities, and please note that further updates may be made between now and the program start date.

PROGRAM SPECIFICS

- **Tuition:** \$4,999
- **Service Hours:** 20
- **Ages:** 14 - 18
- **Student-to-Staff Ratio:** 6-to-1
- **Accommodations:** Ecolodge
- **Arrival and Departure Airport**
 - Liberia (LIR)



GLA HOME BASE

Home Base is located in a coastal region of Costa Rica that's known for its beautiful beaches and protected ecological areas. Students will have access to a pool, large outdoor spaces, tables and chairs in covered areas. The group will stay in gender-segregated rooms with anywhere from 2-7 roommates depending on the cabin size, and have gender-segregated bathrooms. Each cabin has screened windows and fans. The Home Base is a rustic ecolodge with basic, yet comfortable amenities.

GLA HOME BASE OVERVIEW

- Pool
 - GLA Home Base 1: Playa Negra - Yes
- Air conditioning
 - GLA Home Base 1: Playa Negra - No
- Remote
 - GLA Home Base 1: Playa Negra - Yes



FOOD

Costa Rica is known for its simple diet of rice, beans and a side of meat. The food at Home Base will reflect the traditional dietary staples of the people in Costa Rica, with Western-style meals 3-4 times a week. It will be simple, but fresh and healthy and include delicious, locally-grown fruits.



CLIMATE

Although summer is the middle of the rainy season, Costa Rica typically experiences a mini dry season in July. Rainfall decreases significantly for three or four weeks, especially in the northern Pacific. This makes for hot sunny days, with occasional cooling rain showers.



LEADERSHIP

Global Leadership Adventures started as an educational institute, so we continue to think and act like educators—not tour operators—as we deliver life-changing programs. We intentionally weave a leadership curriculum into the daily experience on our programs. Through group discussion, meaningful service, workshops, speakers and excursions, staff guide students to reflect on program events through the lens of leadership, and celebrate outstanding examples of leaders they encounter in the local community. Lending this context to the experience creates opportunities for students to dig deep into their vision, purpose and knowledge of themselves and the world.



ABOUT GLOBAL LEADERSHIP ADVENTURES

Global Leadership Adventures was founded in 2003 by Fred Swaniker, a native of Ghana, TED Fellow and educational entrepreneur whose work has been praised by Barack Obama. Born as a global extension of the revolutionary African Leadership Academy, Global Leadership Adventures now operates programs centered around leadership, sustainable community service projects, and meaningful travel across Africa, Asia, Europe or the Americas. Through life-changing adventures, we strive to inspire the next generation to realize their potential to transform the world and their role in it.

GLA HAS BEEN FEATURED IN:

The New York Times



USA TODAY



NBC NEWS

The Boston Globe

seventeen





OUR EXPECTATIONS

BE PRESENT | Our mission at GLA is “to inspire the next generation to realize their potential to transform the world and their role in it.” To that end, we expect GLA students to maintain high standards of personal behavior and to be open-minded. The culture may be different, sometimes shockingly so. GLA will challenge students as they are expected to work hard and be present physically and mentally for all activities. We also ask students to take a step back from regular use of technology - particularly their smartphones - so as to maximize their engagement with the program and their fellow participants. Students may get hot, dirty and bug-bitten along the way, but their contribution can transform the community. The goal is for each student to return home having had a life-changing experience.

NO TOLERANCE | GLA has a no-tolerance policy towards drugs, alcohol, tobacco and disruptive behavior. Those who violate or are suspected of violating this policy will be immediately dismissed from the program at the sole discretion of GLA staff.

COMMUNITY-LED EXPERIENCES | GLA makes every effort to offer thoughtfully crafted programs for teens and young adults. Detailed planning and exhaustive communications with partners are indispensable parts of our program development process. However, occasionally service and activities are adjusted from session to session, due to weather, changing needs of our local community partners and/or various cultural celebrations and customs. We expect participants to be open-minded and flexible, willing to embrace the experience when plans change. GLA makes every effort to communicate adjustments to students and families with advance notice. We expect you to be open-minded and flexible.

MENTORSHIP | GLA is not a therapy program. Our staff are highly skilled, professional, caring and fun, but they are not licensed therapists. GLA programs can be physically and emotionally demanding, and applicants should be in good physical and mental health.



ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

At Global Leadership Adventures, we welcome age-eligible teens who are excited about the opportunity to travel to apply for our programs. To ensure a safe and meaningful experience for everyone in the group, we follow essential eligibility criteria. While our intent is not to be exclusionary, it's important to note that GLA programs are not therapeutic programs and are not able to support struggling teens seeking behavior or mental health outcomes.

Applications are carefully considered and screened to align with these criteria. It is not uncommon for GLA to require supporting documentation or information in the application screening process to confirm eligibility or suitability for program participation. Failure to disclose full medical history may also result in the application not being accepted, additional fees, and/or removal from the program. Please discuss with our team for any further clarification or concerns and visit <https://www.experiencegla.com/policies/essential-eligibility-criteria/> to view the full essential eligibility criteria list.



WE'RE HERE TO HELP

CONTACT US | Want to learn more about Global Leadership Adventures and our available programs? Our Admissions Team has expertise and insights into our slate of program offerings, and we're happy to answer any questions you might have. We have collectively visited or staffed many of our GLA programs around the world, and we have advice to share on everything from getting your travel documents together to what a typical day on a program is like. Call us at 1-858-771-0645 any time during office hours for assistance.

ENROLL NOW | We encourage you to enroll on your 1st choice program as early as you can! In fact, our most popular programs fill up early every year, and many students end up putting off the quick and easy application process only to end up on the waiting list. The best way to ensure that you save your spot is to place your deposit and apply early. You can easily enroll online at www.experiencegla.com/enroll.

