

Draft for Costa Rica Trip Itinerary April 13-24, 2011

TUESDAY NIGHT: Meet at MDI High School at 8 pm to do a final weighing of luggage, load the bus, and drive overnight to Boston for an early morning flight.

DAY 1: Arrival day. After clearing immigration and customs, we will have a boxed lunch while traveling to the La Milagrosa Home to deliver presents and to also visit the prospective job sites for the Habitat crew. Our guides will collect passports to be locked in the Down To Earth safe during our trip. After meeting the sponsored children and visiting La Milagrosa slum area, we will drive to the San Jose hotel and have a buffet Costa Rican dinner and enjoy the hotel pool before calling it a night. (10 pm in your rooms)

DAY 2: We will have an early buffet breakfast at the hotel before departing for Fortuna; breakfast is organized in two seatings of 23 people each. At approximately 11:30 am, right after driving through the Los Angeles Cloud Forest, we will join the Desafio Adventures Río Balsa Rafting trip. We will have a quick fresh fruit snack before getting into the rafts to hold us until the end of the trip where we will have an outdoor lunch with a BBQ and swimming pool time.

During the time the group is at the river, the buses and tour guides will continue to the Fortuna hotel in order to drop off the luggage at each room. The buses will meet us after the outdoor lunch to drive us to the hotel. After checking in and checking out the hotel facilities and pool, we will drive to Baldi Hotsprings for a fun time at the pools. Dinner will follow.

DAY 3: After an early breakfast, we will go to meet the Desafio Adventures Mountain Bike Team for a custom-made trip. Riding on gravel country roads, we will visit the area surrounding Arenal Volcano, the eco-center butterfly garden and a waterfall with a swimming hole. Lunch is included. The mountain bike trip is designed for people of all ages and physical conditions. But in case the need arises, Desafio Adventures will have a support vehicle with us at all times to assist the participants.

After lunch, we will have shopping time in the town of Fortuna.

At 3:30 pm, we will depart for a guided walk to the Arenal Volcano Lava flows where we will sense the brute force of mighty Arenal Volcano. If it is not misted in, we will have a great view of the flows in the dusk.

Buffet dinner is at leisure at the hotel and we will have swim time until 10 pm.

DAY4- 5-6-7: we will depart Fortuna right after breakfast. Science Program or Habitat Program details

DAY 8: The science group will join the Habitat crew at the Ochomogo mountain passage to continue traveling together to the highlands. The convoy will start to slowly climb up the southern mountain range to reach the Tarrazu coffee region and the Down to Earth Estate in the Dota micro-climate (5,800 feet). There, you will see the system to dispose of the coffee peels from the previous harvest. The system turns the peels into organic fertilizer by using California Red Worms in six week cycles. Also, we will see how the water used in the process is cleaned by the action of a bacteria complex that eats the organic matter.

We will have a quick lunch in the town of Santa Maria before heading out to the Southern lowlands. To reach the lowlands, we first have to negotiate the Cerro de la Muerte passage where we will experience a Paramus forest, characteristic of high altitude regions (8,000 feet). On the other side of the mountain, the scenery will be completely different. We will go from 9,000 feet of altitude to 2,000 and everything changes. The temperature in the General Valley lowlands will be scorching hot and the use of the land is mostly for pineapple plantations and cattle ranching. We will stop in Buenos Aires at the Dole plantation and processing plant for a quick tour of the facilities and a delicious fresh snack.

We will arrive in the Boruca Reservation in late afternoon and will go to the assigned homes to get settled and have dinner after an introductory talk.

DAY 9: after breakfast, we will go to the home of Ismael Gonzalez Sr, a revered mask maker and the most famous representative of the Boruca culture. Along with his sons, don Ismael will show us the art of mask making. The morning will be divided in two sessions: carving and painting.

After the presentation, we will go back to the assigned homes for lunch and then meet again for a presentation on the art of back strap looming. This is the ancient art of the Boruca women and we will learn how to weave and then how to dye the cotton with natural means. Shopping at the Weaver's Coop Center will follow.

The event of the Day will be the Farewell Boruca dinner. We will eat a delicacy made with fresh roasted pork and vegetables. The pig will be prepared throughout the afternoon and roasted for us in an open pit.

DAY 10: early in the morning, after breakfast with our host families, we depart for the Pacific coast. We will stop at Ballena beach to spend the morning there, water bottles and ice tea will be provided by Down to Earth.

At noon, we will depart Ballena Beach and head out to the hotel in Dominical Beach, 20 min away. We will have lunch and hang out by the pool while the rooms are ready. After settling in our rooms, we will take the buses to the surfer's beach which is 5 minutes away. We will spend the rest of the day between the beach and the hotel pool. A shuttle will run between the two points every half hour. Dinner will be at the hotel.

Day 11: buffet breakfast at the hotel starts at 6:30 am. As the previous afternoon, we will spend the morning between the hotel and the beach. We will have an early lunch then check out of the hotel and head out to the Baru Private Rainforest reserve where we will have the option of doing the ZIP line or a Naturalist Walk in the Central Pacific rainforest. Led by our naturalist guides in groups of a maximum of ten students per each guide, the Nature walk will be an intense two-hour biological experience where we will pinpoint the differences between the four types of forests we have seen and the exact differences between the Caribbean lowland rainforest of Tirimbina and the South Pacific rainforest of Baru.

We will depart the Baru Private Reserve and head out to the Central Pacific where we will have dinner before we arrive at the airport hotel. We will spend the night 1.5 miles away from the airport for a very convenient ride the next morning. Breakfast and transportation to the airport will be provided by the hotel shuttle.

NOTE: Your payment covers all transportation, guides, airport exit tax, activities except the optional Zipline, and food while in Costa Rica. You should budget some tip money (\$10 for your naturalist guide, \$5 for the bus driver, \$1 per room per night in hotels), money for fruit drinks at the hot springs and the beach (yum!), \$35 for the Zipline if you want to do this. Plan with your Boruca roommate to bring some small hostess gifts- postcards of MDI (anything with snow is especially exotic), a calendar, crayons and coloring books for children, maybe a soccer ball.

Payment schedule:

June 1	\$300
September 15	\$1800
Jan 15	\$700

Payment may be made in credit card monthly payments of \$350 each, June through January.

Please talk with Ms. Gould with any questions or to set up a differently paced payment plan if needed (room 202, or, 244-3837 H or 288-5011 ext 202 W). In case of cancellation before the trip, money paid directly by the student/their family will be reimbursed as much as possible minus deposits already paid and the student's shares of group costs (bus, naturalist, etc). Money raised through fundraising will remain with the Costa Rica program.