

COSTA RICA

Tropical Biology and Conservation, Monteverde



Fall 2012–Spring 2013 Program Guide



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*Pregnancy includes pregnancy, childbirth, and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth.



▶ Scan to get this guide on your Smartphone.

YOUR UCEAP NETWORK

Local UCEAP Support

Campus EAP Office

The Campus EAP Office coordinates recruitment, student selection, orientations, and academic advising; and serves as your primary contact during the application process.

UCEAP Systemwide Office

The UCEAP Systemwide Office establishes and operates programs and coordinates UCEAP administration for all UC campuses from its headquarters in Goleta, California. You will work closely with the following Systemwide Office staff:

Program Advisors provide academic and operational program information to you and your campus as well as administrative support for all aspects of your participation.

Operations Specialists manage the logistics of the program. They coordinate document requirements, visa application instructions, health and safety precautions, acceptance and placement by host institutions, arrival and on-site orientation, and housing arrangements.

Academic Specialists advise on academic policies, review courses taken abroad for UC credit, and document your registration, grades, petitions and academic records.

Student Finance Accountants assist primarily with UCEAP statements, program fee collection, and financial aid disbursements (in conjunction with your campus Financial Aid Office).

Contact Information

Program Advisor

Aysin Berkmen

Phone: (805) 893-4138; E-mail: aberkmen@eap.ucop.edu

Operations Specialist

Stacey Lydon

Phone: (805) 893-4268; E-mail: slydon@eap.ucop.edu

Academic Specialist

Monica Rocha

Phone: (805) 893-2712; E-mail: mrocha@eap.ucop.edu

Student Finance Accountant

Rachel Wilson

Phone: (805) 893-5927; E-mail: studentfinance@eap.ucop.edu

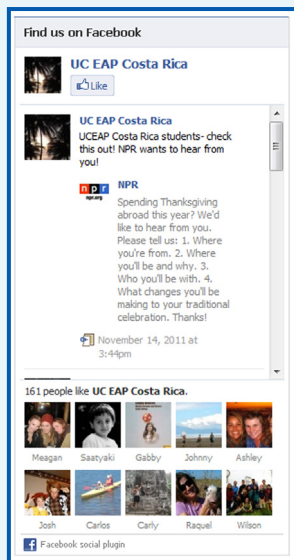
UCEAP Systemwide Office

6950 Hollister Avenue, Suite 200

Goleta, CA 93117-5823

Phone: (805) 893-4762; Fax: (805) 893-2583

► **Join the Conversation!**
Meet fellow UCEAP participants and alumni on Facebook.



UCEAP Online

Bookmark your **Participants** program page. This resource lists requirements and policies you need to know before you go abroad, including your Predeparture Checklist, *UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad*, Program Calendar, UCEAP Student Budgets, and payment instructions.

Connect with us! Join our Facebook network via the **UCEAP Costa Rica page**.

Study Center Abroad

- **When calling from the U.S., first dial 011 (international access) and then 506 (country code for Costa Rica).**

Dr. Frank Joyce, who serves as UCEAP Program Director, administers the Tropical Biology and Conservation Program in Monteverde. Dr. Joyce is a biologist and year-round resident of Monteverde who coordinates the program, teaches, advises on academic and research matters, coordinates logistics and housing, and provides information on cultural adjustment. He also works closely with the Monteverde Institute (MVI), which provides program support, infrastructure, and Spanish language instruction.

Dr. Frank Joyce
 Apdo. 32-5655
 Monteverde Puntarenas, Costa Rica
Office phone: 2645-5545
Home phone: 2645-5098
Cell phone: 8380-9899
E-mail: fjoyce@racsa.co.cr

Phone Number Codes

U.S. international code **011**
(dial this to call from the U.S.)
 Costa Rica country code **506**

Approximate Time Difference

March–October: add 1 hour
 October–March: add 2 hours

UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

“

Good academic standards for biology are the rule. The biology teachers and their assistants are some of the best that I've had, and they're always available for academic advising.

I never knew I could learn so much in just ten weeks. The atmosphere is relaxed but the pace and expectations are intense. Not only did I learn biology, I also found out what kind of person I am under pressure. I feel like I can face anything and come out a winner. I'm proud of myself.

Being in this program provided me with classes not offered at UC and allowed me to focus more on biology. I was able to gain insight into the complicated problems that conservation biology confronts.

My Spanish improved tremendously and I was able to make new friends and understand a different culture. The most important aspect is the experiential learning you do by meeting people and being in the rain forest.

”

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

Program Description

- ▶ There are recommended reading materials that you should review before departure and take with you (see [Cultural Awareness](#) in this guide for a list).

This program provides a hands-on field experience in biology and conservation in Costa Rica, one of the most biologically rich countries in the world. The program's goal is to understand the ecology, evolution, and conservation of tropical biodiversity.

The program is academically intensive, physically demanding, and unlike anything you have ever encountered at UC. Classes meet as often as six days a week, but the rewards are great.

The Monteverde program begins with an instructional field trip during which you explore a variety of habitats around Costa Rica. The itinerary for this trip differs from the fall to the spring programs because of seasonal rainfall variations. You will travel by bus and boat, and either camp or stay in field stations or hotels.

The program later continues at Monteverde, where you will participate in a sequence of classroom instruction, lectures, nature orientation walks, and field projects. You will hike with a pack into the remote wilderness area of Peñas Blancas for several days of field study and organized projects.

You will also spend about two weeks living with a Spanish-speaking Costa Rican family. It is during this period that you conduct independent field research, become acquainted with your Costa Rican hosts, and enhance your Spanish language skills and your understanding of the local culture.

You will receive training in research methods and in the presentation of research papers. Before the program ends, you will present your project at a biology symposium. Final exams take place during the last week of the program in Monteverde.

From the first minute of the quarter to the last, the vigor of tropical life forms is mirrored in the intensity of your academic inquiry. Even during leisure time you are encouraged to think like a biologist about the sights and sounds of countless insects, birds, mammals, and plant species. Your instructors share your dedication and are readily available for all teaching opportunities—especially the intellectual demands of your field research project—whether you happen to be working at the field station or hiking to the Continental Divide. Along with the high expectations of the instructors and the local community comes unwavering support if you are willing to immerse yourself in this astonishing experience.

UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

“

All the instructors help you in every possible way to find resources for your project.

This program helped me focus on my career plans. Having worked with such excellent teachers who helped me focus on conservation, I know for certain I want to be a biologist.

No one had ever asked so much of my abilities or demanded that I was wholly responsible for what I was learning. My instructor treated me as if I were his colleague, not his student, building my confidence as an independent biologist and thinker.

Going into the field to see what we were studying was so much better than just reading about it in a classroom.

I've never worked so hard or learned so much in my entire academic life. This program definitely has its trials and triumphs. I'm proud of myself for what I learned in Monteverde. All the instructors were so excellent and made us feel we could do anything we set out to do.

”

Course Information

Course descriptions and transcript titles are available through the [MyEAP Course Catalog](#). Though these read like regular UC course descriptions, keep in mind that the structure of this program does not usually resemble a regular classroom schedule; lectures and discussions occur both during the day and the evening, and instruction for some courses may be more focused during particular portions of the program. Your particular research topic will determine other parts of your schedule, and your Spanish is likely to improve the quickest during the weeks that you are living with a Costa Rican family.

Semester Participants

In order to earn a full semester's worth of credit, you must supplement your studies prior to departure with a directed reading course worth 3 UC quarter units (equivalent to 2 UC semester units). This is a requirement for participants from both UC Berkeley and Merced. You pay semester fees and will receive a semester of UC credit. Additional details are available at the Campus EAP Office.

Independent Research

Independent research is an integral part of the Monteverde program. You will develop a research proposal on a particular aspect of tropical biology designed around direct field experience. After conducting the fieldwork, you analyze your results and write a report. Your first submission will be reviewed and edited by two instructors and a peer so that you can incorporate suggestions before submitting your final paper. You also share your findings in an oral presentation during the biology symposium at the end of the term. Past topics have included the effects of forest fragmentation on species richness, bioluminescence of beetles, and detection of anti-fungal agents by leaf-cutter ants. UCEAP participants report that this independent work has been instrumental in developing their research skills and strengthening their dedication to the field of biology.

UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

“

Don't fall behind in your school work. It's important to establish the pace early on so stress can be kept to a minimum at the end.

”

Registration & Requirements

The UCEAP Academic Specialist in California will contact you via e-mail in order to lead you through the UC registration process in MyEAP. Course information (subject area, course number, title, and units) will appear on your UC transcript exactly as it appears on your MyEAP Study List.

You are required to take five courses (minimum of 16 UC quarter units):

- A tropical diversity course covering species concepts, origin and maintenance of species diversity, conservation, and extinction, using examples from the local environment: 4 units
- A community ecology course emphasizing tropical ecosystems and conservation: 4 units
- A Spanish language class: 2 units
- An agroecology class: 2 units
- An independent research project on the topic of your choice related to tropical biology and conservation: 4 units
- Students participating in the semester program are required to complete an additional reading course before departure for 3 UC quarter units (see *Semester Participants* in the previous section)

The variable unit option is not available for this program. You may not reduce the number of units for any course.

You may take up to one-third (33.3%) of your total units as pass/no pass.

Because instructions are sent by e-mail, you must ensure that the e-mail address listed in MyEAP is one that you will check periodically. Also be aware that it is important that you adhere to the established deadlines for submitting your registration so that the Program Director and Academic Specialist have time to finalize your registration.

Grades

For detailed information about grades, see the [Academic Information](#) chapter of the *UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad*.

Graduating Seniors: UCEAP grades do not arrive in time to accommodate degree verification deadlines for the term of participation. If you are participating in the spring quarter program, you may be able to return to your UC campus to take part in the graduation ceremony, but your final grades may not reach the campus registrar until the following September.

EXTENDING UCEAP PARTICIPATION

Participating in Consecutive Programs

Although extension options are not built into this program, it may be possible for you to participate in two different UCEAP programs consecutively. For example, if you are a fall quarter Monteverde participant with two years of Spanish, you might choose to apply to continue on to a semester UCEAP program at the University of Barcelona, where you may continue studying biology along with other regular university coursework.

If you would like to participate in two programs, you must submit an application for each program by the campus deadline (before you leave the U.S.). You will go through the regular UCEAP selection process for each program, which may include an interview. You must meet all selection criteria for both programs and your UC campus must select you to participate. The Campus EAP Office may have other requirements as well.

UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

“

Start the recommended reading prior to the program.

Learn as much as you can about Costa Rican biology beforehand. Learn Spanish and get experience with an independent project.

”

CULTURAL AWARENESS

Educate Yourself

Get acquainted with Costa Rica and its culture before you leave California. Travel guides and travel-related websites such as [Lonely Planet](#) are good resources.

Before you go, think carefully about what you hope to accomplish, and what parts of the program may be a source of anxiety for you. This program is extremely challenging, both intellectually and physically. Be realistic in your expectations and know that some parts of the program may be especially difficult. Adopt a positive lifestyle and be sure to eat well, exercise regularly, and take care of yourself both before and during the program.

Instructors for the Monteverde program assume that you are familiar with the fundamentals of ecology and evolution. Before departure, consider reviewing your ecology books and the basics of plant biology, especially reproduction.

Highly Recommended Reading

Purchase and take these books to Costa Rica:

Ambrose, Harrison W. et al. *A Handbook of Biological Investigation*, 6th ed., Knoxville: Hunter Textbooks, 2002.

Borror, Donald Joyce *Dictionary of Word Roots and Combining Forms Compiled from the Greek, Latin, and Other Languages, with Special Reference to Biological Terms and Scientific Names*, 1st ed., Palo Alto: Mayfield, 1971.

Strunk, W. and E. B. White *The Elements of Style; With Revisions, an Introduction, and a New Chapter on Writing by E. B. White*, 4th ed., Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000.

Additional Reading

(Also available in Costa Rica):

Evans, Sterling *The Green Republic: A Conservation History of Costa Rica*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999.

Janzen, Daniel H., ed. *Costa Rican Natural History*, University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Nadkarni, N. M. and N. T. Wheelwright, eds. *Monteverde: Ecology and Conservation of a Tropical Cloud Forest*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

“ Before the program, take a good stats class, an introductory ecology class, and lots of Spanish.

”

Notes on Monteverde

UCEAP's Tropical Biology and Conservation Program is located in Monteverde, a rural community of Costa Ricans and North Americans who share a bicultural and bilingual lifestyle in a growing ecotourism area. Monteverde is located between seasonally dry Pacific slopes to the west and the tropical rain forest of the Atlantic slope to the east. This unique location of contrasting wet and dry forest presents an extraordinary opportunity to study plant-animal interactions, ecology, and natural history.

Because of Monteverde's rich biological attributes, the area is the target of strong conservation efforts. Several reserves have been established to protect the flora and fauna along the continental divide and at lower elevations. Two of the larger reserves include the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve and the Bosque Eterno de los Niños, which together cover a large expanse of cloud forest and mid-elevation forest. This reserve complex provides habitat and protection to thousands of species of plants and insects, and a variety of vertebrates including spider monkeys, quetzales, mountain lions, and tapirs. Monteverde attracts biologists from all over the world, some of whom serve as guest lecturers and resources for UCEAP.

Improve Your Language Skills

The more Spanish you know before you leave for Costa Rica, the more productive your time abroad will be. Even though there is no language requirement for this program, UCEAP encourages you to spend an hour a day working to improve your language skills. You may find the following tips helpful:

- Take a course in Spanish.
- Seek out native speakers for regular conversation.
- Watch television in Spanish regularly to improve your comprehension and accustom your ear to the rhythms of the language.
- Go to Spanish language movies.
- If you have access to a second-language option on your television or DVD player, watch and listen to popular movies in Spanish with English subtitles.
- Keep a journal of words, phrases, expressions, whole sentences, and structures.

► Additional information about passports, visas, and other required documents is provided in the [UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad](#) and in the UCEAP Predeparture Checklist.

ARRIVAL & ORIENTATION

Orientation

Both the fall and the spring programs begin on their respective start dates at the Hotel Cacts in San José. The first orientation is held at the hotel. The UCEAP Program Director reviews the program calendar, academics, local culture, health, safety and emergencies, money and banking, phone use, and mail. The orientation is essential for getting you through the program successfully, and for that reason it is mandatory.

Travel Documents

Since this program is fewer than 90 days long, U.S. citizens do not need a student visa.

If you are not a U.S. citizen, check with the Costa Rican consulate to find out if your citizenship requires a student visa for studying in Costa Rica. It is important you mention that the program is shorter than 90 days. There may be many steps to take well beforehand in order to enter the country legally. Notify the UCEAP Operations Specialist if you find that you need a student visa, as the procedure for securing the necessary documents for a visa application can be complicated.

Packing Tips

Identify each item of luggage on the inside and outside with your name, home address, and destination. To avoid theft, never leave luggage unattended.

Read about the Personal Property Benefit included in the [UCEAP Insurance Plan](#) and assess if the coverage is adequate. You may decide to protect your belongings with additional insurance.

Never put valuables in checked luggage. Check with your airline regarding the latest baggage allowance and other restrictions. It is best to take a large internal frame backpack and a midsized duffel bag. Check with your airline about the carry-on allowance. If you are able, you may want to carry a daypack and a laptop (in a standard computer case) onto the plane.

Climate

Costa Rica has two well-defined seasons: dry and wet. The country ranks among the rainiest in the world. The cloud forest of Monteverde tends to be cool, damp, and windy because of its cloud cover and high elevation. Past participants recommend traveling lightly and taking clothing for all climates, but not too much of any one thing.

Although it can get hot around midday in Monteverde, it is good to be able to protect your arms and legs. Take two or three lightweight, oversized shirts to wear when hiking; this type of shirt covers your arms and provides good protection from bug bites while maintaining comfort.

UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

“Pack old clothes and things that you won't mind losing. Label all your clothes and bring sturdy, waterproof bags; my bag was once dropped in the ocean.

Dress neatly in town. Dressy clothes are not necessary (unless you want to go to a fancy restaurant or the Teatro Nacional while in San José). Clean, neat pants or skirts and an attractive blouse or sport shirt with a sweater will be appropriate at times. Neatly trimmed beards and moderately long hair on men are acceptable.

As far as gifts go, anything imported is costly for Costa Ricans, including those inexpensive matching towel sets that you claim as your own possession upon entrance. Picture books in English are also valued gifts.

”

Essential Clothing & Personal Items

- ▶ The UCEAP Student Budget does not include funds for the purchase of clothing abroad.

The following items are essential:

- Prescription medication; take a copy of the prescription and a three-month supply
- Four or five loose-fitting shirts (long/short sleeve)
- Four or five lightweight long pants (loose cotton pants are preferable; jeans are fine but are uncomfortable when wet)
- Several pairs of shorts
- Light jacket for the hot, humid weather
- Seven to ten pairs of underwear (cotton or nylon) and socks (suitable for wearing with rubber boots or hiking boots)
- Swimsuit
- Warm and fleecy sweater, wool shirt, or sweatshirt with a hood (outside temperatures at night in Monteverde can drop below 60°F; some students have been happy to have a ski hat or cap)
- High-quality rain wear (poncho, rain jacket)
- Hat (for rain and sun)
- Shoes or boots with adequate ankle support that protect from insect and animal bites (take what you might wear on a backpacking trip; if you buy new boots, break them in before going to Costa Rica)
- Rubber boots; you will have several opportunities to buy inexpensive rubber boots once you are in Costa Rica
- Sturdy sandals, such as Chacos or Tevas
- Sneakers and tennis or running shoes
- Personal toiletries (soap, shampoo, etc.)
- Towel
- Extra eyeglasses, contact lenses (and a copy of the prescription), contact lens solution
- First aid and personal health supplies; an emergency first aid kit will be available, but you should take Band-Aids, Moleskin, Molefoam, antibiotic ointment (like Neosporin), pain relievers (aspirin, ibuprofen, or acetaminophen), contraceptives, feminine hygiene products, antiseptics, antidiarrhea medication, anti-fungus medication, your preferred cold and allergy medication, and Caladryl cream

UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...



Put a name on everything: camera, calculator, clipboard, notebook, boots, etc. Everything is easily misplaced in the confusion of 25 people living in close quarters.

It's cold in the fall and winter. Take a good sleeping bag.

**Essential Equipment**

UCEAP and the Monteverde Institute provide some field equipment and gear for camping on the field trip and for independent projects (scales, etc.), but you should take the following gear:

- Daypack (essential for field trips)
- Good quality backpack
- Flash drive and several writable CDs
- Blanket and sheet or lightweight sleeping bag
- Sheet or sari (sarong)
- Insect repellent (for mosquitoes during field trips)
- Spanish-English dictionary (pocket-sized is fine)
- Field notebook
- Writing materials
- Pencils
- Small pencil sharpener
- Sharpie felt-tip pens
- Headlamp and small flashlight (a MiniMag that uses two AA or two AAA batteries)
- Pocket knife (pack in checked luggage)
- Wrist watch (digital with stopwatch is especially useful)
- Two water bottles/canteens with combined capacity of two to four liters (a necessity for hikes)
- Waterproof pens and pencils
- Compact sleeping pad (like a Thermarest)
- 10x hand magnifying lens (on lanyard)

Highly Recommended Equipment & Items

The following items are optional:

- Mask, snorkel, fins
- Field guides of your favorite taxon (e.g., *Field Guide to Birds of Costa Rica*)
- Laptop (see *Computer Access and Use* in [Communications Abroad](#) chapter)
- Favorite statistical computer software
- Camera, flash or strobe, and film if you do not bring a digital camera (film is expensive in Costa Rica)
- Binoculars
- Extra batteries (general and camera); camera batteries are difficult to get outside of San José, but regular batteries (Alkaline AA, AAA, C, D, etc.) are readily available
- Rechargeable batteries and charger (past participants have been happy to have these, especially for use at the field station in Monteverde)
- Hip/waist pack
- Watertight bag (useful for protecting equipment during frequent rain and at the beach; available at outdoor stores and through catalogs)
- Slides/slideshow (if you have worked in a national park or participated in some research project and would like to give an informal talk about it, come prepared; fellow students, staff, and local people will be happy to hear it)
- Written works; if you have written a paper on some topic that might be of interest to others, bring it along
- A few lightweight, American gifts for foreign hosts and new friends (suggestions include T-shirts with city, state, or campus logos; postcards, posters, or scenic calendars; children's books—especially bilingual ones—and toy dinosaurs have also been popular gifts)
- Water filter (you will not need one during the program; consider bringing one if you plan to travel before or after the program to remote locations)
- Dental floss
- Nail clippers
- Bottle/can opener and corkscrew (pack in checked luggage only)
- Sunglasses
- Portable radio
- Battery-operated alarm clock
- Musical instrument (guitars, etc.)
- Pictures of family, friends, and home

- ▶ You should purchase a round-trip ticket that allows changes to the return date.

Travel to Costa Rica

There is no group flight for the Monteverde program. Even if you are on full financial aid, you are responsible for reserving and purchasing your ticket; the Financial Aid Office will not do it for you. Purchase a changeable airline ticket; standby tickets are not appropriate.

Flights are routinely changed or canceled. Confirm your flight schedule about two weeks before departure.

When traveling, carry your passport, ticket, prescription medications, money, and credit cards on your person. Once in Costa Rica, carry only what is necessary for each day and leave other items secure in your dorm or homestay.

Where to Meet

Be at the Hotel Cacts in San José by 9 a.m. on the Official UCEAP Start Date.

Hotel Cacts in San José
Avenida 3 Bis #2845
Between Calle 28 and 30

Taxi directions: 300 m/norte del Pizza Hut de Paseo Colon

Phone: (506) 2221-2928 or 2221-6546

E-mail: hcacts@racsa.co.cr

A taxi ride from the airport takes about 30 minutes. **If you are delayed, call Frank Joyce** at one of the numbers listed in the first chapter of this guide: **Your UCEAP Network**.

Financial Aid Students

Your financial aid package is based partly on the UCEAP Student Budget for the program. The estimated round-trip airfare is based on the cost of a changeable student fare to Costa Rica. If your independent travel costs are greater than the airfare estimate in the UCEAP Student Budget, notify your financial aid counselor. Neither UCEAP nor the Financial Aid Office can guarantee that the additional cost will be funded by financial aid.

► It is important that you carefully read all of the information available in the [UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad](#) and discuss it with the person who will assist you with your finances while you are abroad.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Understanding Your Finances

Understanding your finances before, during, and after your program is crucial to having a successful time abroad. The following list outlines just a few of the many things you will need to know before departure.

Detailed information on the following topics can be found in the [Money Matters](#) chapter of the *UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad*:

- Contact information for finance questions
- How to estimate the cost of your program
- Budget instructions and information
- How to and who can make payments to UCEAP
- UCEAP student account information
- Banking before and after arrival
- Fees and penalties
- Loan information
- How financial aid works while abroad (how do I get my financial aid from my home campus and how are my fees paid?)
- Various forms (e.g., direct deposit, etc.)

MyEAP Student Account

Your MyEAP Student Account is similar to your UC campus financial account. It will be available as soon as you are selected for your program in MyEAP. You can make payments through this account using e-checks or credit cards (MasterCard or Discover). The fees that you owe UCEAP will be applied to your account after your program predeparture withdrawal date, which is listed in MyEAP. For the amount due to UCEAP prior to fees being posted on your account, refer to the UCEAP Student Budget Payment Vouchers. Program fees are subject to change.

UCEAP Student Budget

Carefully review your [UCEAP Student Budget](#).

Your UCEAP Student Budget lists the fees you will pay to UCEAP and an estimate of the personal expenses you will need to plan for. It does not include the cost of recreational travel or personal entertainment. Review your UCEAP Student Budget frequently. The Payment Vouchers are on the second page of the UCEAP Student Budget.

Instructions

- **Download** and **print** your UCEAP Student Budget and Payment Vouchers.
- Note the deadlines on the Payment Vouchers.
- Give the UCEAP Student Budget and Payment Vouchers to the person responsible for paying your UCEAP bills. Sign this person up for Third Party Authorization so they can make payments online.

For further information see the [Money Matters](#) chapter of the *UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad* and the Money Matters tab of your Participants Portal. If you will be receiving financial aid, see also the [UCEAP Financial Assistance](#) web page.

- ▶ The official currency unit in Costa Rica is the *colón* (abbreviated C or CRC).

Handling Money Abroad

Due to the short duration of the program, all business mail, including financial aid and other checks, should be sent to an address in the U.S.

Plan to have enough money to cover personal expenses in Costa Rica. Since all room and board costs have been included in UCEAP fees, \$500 should be a sufficient amount. It is not necessary to exchange U.S. dollars for *colones* before departure. Many stores and businesses accept dollars.

If you stay after the program to travel you must budget accordingly. ATMs are the easiest way to access cash. Another way to access funds is with a credit card, though interest rates can be high and foreign currency adjustment charges can be very expensive. Large hotels, restaurants, and shops in San José and other major cities, as well as many Monteverde establishments accept major credit cards. Travelers checks are also acceptable but can take a while to get changed into cash.

- Approximate time difference: March–October: add 1 hour; October–March: add 2 hours

COMMUNICATIONS ABROAD

Important Note for You and Your Parents

You will be on a field trip for the first two weeks of the program. Tell friends and family not to worry if you are out of contact during this time. You will not be able to e-mail or phone home during the field trip; however, staff members carry cell phones and try to check for messages once a day. In case of an emergency, parents can call Frank Joyce's cell phone: **(011-506) 8380-9899**.

- See also **Emergency Contacts** in this guide for additional emergency contact phone numbers.

Mail

Mail from the U.S. to Costa Rica usually takes from seven to ten business days. Monteverde Institute staff members bring the UCEAP mail to the field station. In December, mail is much slower due to the holiday mail overload.

Student mail should be addressed as follows:

[Student's Name]
Instituto Monteverde
Apdo. 69-5655
Monteverde
Puntarenas, Costa Rica

Do not send packages or boxes through the mail. Any piece of mail that is larger than a 9" x 12" envelope will be routed through customs. Customs sends a notice to the addressee stating that he or she has a package in San José. Getting things from customs can be cumbersome and time-consuming, and during the program you will not have the time or the opportunity to go to San José.

Do not send checks or cash to Costa Rica through the mail, as mail is occasionally lost or stolen.

Computer Access & Use

You will have access to a limited number of computers. Take a laptop if you have one, but keep in mind that the program cannot be responsible for the safety of your personal computer. Pack flash drives as well as your favorite statistical computer software. The computers at the field station and the Monteverde Institute have 24-hour Internet access. If you take a laptop, it can be configured to connect to the Internet from both places. The program will make arrangements to have personal computers taken to Monteverde for storage during the program's initial two-week field trip.

- Read about the **Personal Property Benefit** included in the **UCEAP Insurance Plan** and assess if the coverage is adequate for your computer before leaving for Costa Rica. If you decide to purchase additional insurance, you might also ask about insuring your camera and other valuables.

UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...



Most accommodations are rustic but beautiful and exciting. Be prepared to use outhouses and tromp through the mud to get to them. You should have camping experience or at least be tolerant of such conditions.

The station was claustrophobic, noise was sometimes a problem late at night, and privacy was nonexistent. However, on the whole it was a good accommodation with nice classroom arrangements.



HOUSING & MEALS

- ▶ Dependents cannot be accommodated because of the nature of the program, its limited accommodations, need for student mobility, and stringent curricular demands.

Where Will I Live?

Housing for the Monteverde program changes according to program activities. It combines homestays, residence at the dormitory-style Monteverde Biological Station, and stays at other field stations. Field trip locations vary from year to year and between fall and spring terms (due to the rainy season), but the basic structure is explained in this chapter.

Arrival in San José

For the first two nights in Costa Rica, the group stays in the Hotel Cacts with the UCEAP Program Director and instructional staff for initial orientation before the field trips.

If you arrive in San José before the program start date, you must find your own accommodations and you will be responsible for all costs. If you choose to stay at the Hotel Cacts, you must make your own reservation.

Hotel Cacts

Phone (506) 2221-2928

Fax (506) 2221-8616

E-mail hcacts@racsa.co.cr

Field Trip Housing

(Weeks 1–2)

During the two-week field trip you will explore the various ecosystems of Costa Rica. Accommodations include camping, field station dorms, and local hotels.

Monteverde Biological Station Housing

(Weeks 3–5 and 9–10)

The Estación Biológica Monteverde (EBM) is located on the edge of a forest preserve. From the front porch you can view the Continental Divide in one direction and the Pacific Ocean in the other. Its location enables immediate access to the forest, which is used as a local laboratory.

The station contains classroom space, a library, computer labs, lab space and equipment, reference rooms and materials, a kitchen and dining area, a phone cubicle, and living accommodations. Bedrooms are shared (two bunk beds/four students per room). Each bedroom has its own attached bath. Hot water and electricity are included.

Homestays and Peñas Blancas Housing

(Weeks 6–8)

UCEAP participants are divided into two groups. Each group spends one week trekking to and conducting research at the Peñas Blancas Reserve in the cloud forest (accompanied by program instructors) and two weeks in a homestay in the Monteverde area.

UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...



You really experience how special Costa Rica is when you're living with a Costa Rican family.

Try as hard as possible to balance time between getting to know other UC students and interacting with people in the community. At your homestay, be outgoing but not overbearing. If your family is shy, be persistent and ask questions so that you get to know one another. Take pictures to share—Ticos love them.

**Peñas Blancas Housing**

You will stay at El Refugio Eladio, a rustic cabin and field station. One building provides sleeping quarters consisting of two large rooms, each equipped with approximately six bunk beds with foam mattresses. Another building provides kitchen and dining facilities and serves as a central meeting room for lectures. Outbuildings provide two separate toilets and two separate showers. The lodge is equipped with cold running water. A long porch connects the structures and provides additional meeting/study space for use during your week's work at the Refugio.

Homestays

The primary purpose of being with a host family is to interact socially and culturally and to improve foreign language proficiency. It is expected that everyone, including other guests in the home, will speak Spanish whenever possible.

In most cases, students are matched to a family located within a ten-kilometer radius of Monteverde. Students are generally able to walk between the homestay and the EBM, though the distance may require up to an hour of walking each way. The location of the homestay is related to your research project; under special circumstances, you may be housed at a greater distance from Monteverde if your research requires it (e.g., a marine-related research project). In all cases, the homestay households are carefully selected and screened by staff of the Monteverde Institute. Matching a family with a student is carefully done, but a perfect match is virtually impossible. Although usually modest, the homes provide a bed, bathroom, study location, and meals; phones are usually available in the homes.

The homestay households exhibit a range of lifestyles. Families will likely not speak English, but in most cases you will be treated as a member of the family. Meals will be provided by the family. If possible, bring small gifts for your host family. Many of the families have small children and value picture books, bilingual children's books, small toys, T-shirts with California or UC logos, etc.

There is probably no better way to get immersed in the host culture than to share everyday life in a Costa Rican household. However, you need to be flexible. The responsibility of adapting is on you, not the host family. The home is intended to be more than just a place to stay. While in the family setting, take local customs into account as the family gets to know you personally. Ideally, you can become part of the family, but to do so requires time, patience, sensitivity, negotiation, and understanding. Past participants often say the homestay was their favorite part of the program, and that they felt like part of the community because they lived with *Ticos* for a time. Families can become long-standing friends; students who return to Monteverde in later years often stay with their former host family.

Do not hesitate to report difficulties to the UCEAP Program Director or staff. Concerns should be aired immediately so that a minor incident will not become a major problem. Something that causes upset or even rage may be the result of a cultural misunderstanding that the Program Director and staff may be able to help explain and resolve.

It is not possible to have guests visit you during the time of the homestay. The host family will only accommodate UCEAP students.

Meals

Meals will be provided during the entire program. During program-related travel, meals will be prepared for the group or you will receive a cash allotment to cover basic meals at restaurants. The food served at the field station is basic, with dishes consisting of rice and beans, vegetables, chicken, fish, and occasionally beef. Vegetarians and vegans will be accommodated. You may also buy snacks from shops in Monteverde, Santa Elena, and surrounding areas, including locally made dairy products. Many vegetarians have participated in this program. Be sure to let UCEAP know of your nutrition preferences or requirements well in advance; most requests can be accommodated.

UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...



Meeting and spending time with Ticos is the most important thing you can do, and your Spanish will improve as you talk to people. The faster you make friends, explore, and make yourself at home, the less homesick you'll feel.

Be outgoing; making friends and study partners in classes is a great way to feel comfortable and to manage the workload.

I wish I'd pursued my friendships with Ticos more strongly outside of school time. If you let your less-than-complete mastery of Spanish become a barrier to meeting locals, it will be. Promise yourself to get together with a non-English speaking Tico friend regularly. Build your friendships outside of the UCEAP group.

Traveling around and seeing the national parks and going to the beautiful beaches was a highlight.



EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Rewarding Challenges

The program may be a completely different experience, both academically and socially, from anything you have previously encountered. While in Costa Rica, you will be living and working in a group situation under conditions that can, at times, be challenging. You will be tired, hot, thirsty, muddy, and mosquito-bitten, and will undoubtedly experience at least one bout of intestinal disorder or turmoil. On the other hand, you will be learning from noted researchers and interacting with students from other UC campuses, all of whom share an interest in a wide range of ecological areas. In addition, you will be doing fieldwork in an incredibly beautiful and ecologically rich location.

The format of the program is designed to enhance group interaction. You will exchange ideas, laughter, criticism, and excitement. Each person brings to the program his or her individual expertise, style, and values, which together help to make the group experience as well as the individual experience a rewarding one.

This will require adaptability and a willingness to modify or exchange ideas (academic or otherwise) in an open, friendly, and cooperative manner. If you mentally prepare for the experience, you will find that the complexity, diversity, and sheer excitement of working in the field will far outweigh the discomforts.

Program participants have consistently commented that making lifelong friends is one of the greatest benefits of the Monteverde program. They have observed that being around fellow students who are all studying biology and participating in the lively conversations surrounding common research activities lead to a renewed focus on career goals. In addition, participants have been happy to know that over the years their paths would cross again.

Costa Ricans (AKA *Ticos*) tend to be charming, delightful, and tolerant people; it truly is *el país de la amistad* (the country of friendship). *Ticos* will be delighted if you try to speak Spanish and will compliment the effort. As a guest in the country, demonstrate respect for Costa Rican values and morals.

Travel Resources

Refer on your own to some travel resources about Costa Rica and Central and South America. These might include [Lonely Planet](#), [Fodor's](#), and [Frommer guides](#).

- ▶ The UCEAP Student Budget does not include funds for recreational travel.

- ▶ In addition to the following sections, read the [Health](#) chapter of the *UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad*.
- ▶ Before departure, review the [CDC Travelers' Health Information](#) website to learn how to protect your health while in Monteverde.

HEALTH

Medical Facilities

You will be living in a rural tropical environment. There is a clinic in Santa Elena about four kilometers (2.5 miles) from Monteverde that can handle minor medical problems, but the nearest hospital is two hours from Monteverde in Puntarenas.

If you feel sick or have a medical emergency, contact the UCEAP Program Director or program staff immediately to get medical attention. The Program Director and staff can assist with the UCEAP insurance claim process, and help make arrangements if extended absence from classes or lectures is expected.

Insurance

Review the [UCEAP Insurance Plan](#) before departure. You will need to pay for medical services and file a claim to be reimbursed. Submit fully itemized bills with the claim form. Medical claims processing time is about four to six weeks after receipt of the claim. Keep photocopies of all documents you submit in case the claim gets lost.

Prescription Medications

- If you have any preexisting medical conditions, carry a letter from your attending physician describing the medical condition, treatment, and prescription medications, including the generic names of the prescribed drugs. Transport any medications carried from the U.S. in their original containers, *make sure that they are labeled clearly*, and that you pack them in your carry-on.
- Do not have medications shipped to Costa Rica; Costa Rican customs authorities will not accept them. Plan to take enough prescription medication to last the length of your stay.
- The UCEAP assistance provider, Europ Assistance, can provide information about whether a specific prescription medication is legal and available in Costa Rica. Call them before your trip (1-866-451-7606) with the name of the medicine.

Allergies

Some students have experienced mild reactions to dust and fungus. There are first aid kits available for emergencies both at the housing and on all field trips.

If you are allergic to insect bites, check with a physician before leaving for Costa Rica to have proper treatment with you (i.e., EpiPen or another allergy kit). Relay this information to the UCEAP Program Director upon arrival.

Students with Disabilities

Although access is improving and there is now a law mandating equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities, there is still a long way to go. The Monteverde Cloud Forest is not accessible. There are no roads going into the park and the most accessible hiking trail has 1-inch boards sticking up out the ground every 5 meters or so to prevent erosion.

► In addition to the following sections, read the [Safety](#) chapter of the *UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad*.

SAFETY

Crime has been steadily rising in Costa Rica in recent years, affecting both locals and foreigners. Street crime is particularly prevalent in cities. The most dangerous locations are in downtown areas of San José and Limón, the largest Caribbean coastal city. Costa Rica, however, is still one of Central America's most peaceful countries.

Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put your safety at risk. Many students and their families have concerns about safety and security abroad. Study abroad, like most other things in life, involves risk. No one can guarantee your security either in the U.S. or abroad, but UCEAP makes reasonable efforts to provide a safe environment abroad and to provide counsel on potential risks and necessary precautions.

Maximizing your health and safety while abroad requires your partnership with UCEAP. We take your health and safety abroad seriously; most instructors and coordinators in the program are trained and certified as Wilderness First Responders to make critical medical and evacuation decisions in remote locations. However, UCEAP expects you to actively participate in minimizing your risks while abroad.

Precautions

While Costa Rica is generally safe, take precautions to stay safe:

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Be aware of certain unsafe areas (program staff will identify areas to avoid).
- Never walk alone at night.
- Exercise a high degree of caution because of the crime risk in some areas; petty crimes, such as pick-pocketing and bag-snatching, are common in certain areas.
- Always carry a flashlight when walking in the rain forest at night. A flashlight is a key tool for hiking safety.
- Leave your original passport in a safe location. A recent change in Costa Rican Immigration regulations allows you to carry a photocopy of your passport, with the biographical and entry stamp page, as identification while in Costa Rica.

During most of the biology program, you will be with other students and instructors and should follow the buddy system. The buddy system ensures that you and a partner look out for each other. During the homestay portion of the program, you may have to walk long distances to work on your research project; be sure to guard your personal safety and always tell your host family where you will be going.

Carefully read all predeparture materials and pay attention to information presented at UCEAP predeparture and on-site orientations. Pay particular attention to safety presentations; ask questions, keep abreast of local developments in Costa Rica, and behave responsibly. Laptop computers are an attractive target for thieves in any location in Costa Rica. You should not carry a laptop in public. Most electronic items—including laptops, PDAs, and digital cameras—are more expensive in Costa Rica than in the U.S., and are thus targets for theft.

► Do not take with you, buy, or use any illegal drugs while in Costa Rica. A single conviction in Costa Rica could mean spending 6 to 12 years in a Costa Rican jail.

Drugs & Alcohol

Costa Rica is among the many countries that have instituted programs to reduce the toll taken by alcohol abuse by using a variety of measures. Costa Rican laws ban alcohol consumption in most places. UCEAP is committed to providing an environment free of alcohol abuse and use of illegal substances. To enhance this commitment, UCEAP enforces a substance abuse policy that seeks to prevent the use of illicit drugs and the abuse of alcohol by UCEAP participants.

Read the [UCEAP Substance Abuse Policy](#). It is important to know that during field trips on the Monteverde program, alcohol is **not** allowed. Possessing illegal drugs can result in dire consequences for you, the program, the Monteverde Institute, and for the other students in the program. Violation of UCEAP policies may lead to dismissal from the program.

Transportation & Road Safety

Road conditions in Costa Rica are often poor and road travel can be hazardous. Driving at night is very dangerous, due in large part to difficult road conditions, a high incidence of drunk driving, and animals and pedestrians on the road. Expect drivers to drive irresponsibly. Even though you will not be personally driving, it is important to keep the following road safety points in mind while traveling with the group or on your own:

- Road crashes are the third leading cause of death in Costa Rica.
- Drivers may tailgate or fail to signal, and often make turns from across one or two lanes of traffic or attempt to pass on blind turns.
- Drivers do not always respect right of way.
- Red lights are treated as stop signs; drivers stop on red and proceed if no traffic is coming.
- Stop signs often are treated as yield signs; drivers slow down without stopping.
- Less than 25 percent of roads are paved. Only 10 percent of the road network is in good condition. Large potholes are common.
- Road markings generally are poor. Shoulder and center stripes are rare.
- Traffic signs frequently are inadequate, even on main highways, and are often poorly placed or obscured.
- Road conditions can change rapidly due to extreme weather and heavy rains. Check with residents or local authorities regarding current road conditions on planned routes.
- Most bridges are one-lane. Many bridges are wooden and some have no railings. Others are unstable and may cause cars to go off the road into the water.
- A branch or boulder placed on the road may indicate a road crash or a stalled car around the next curve.
- Use extra caution on mountain roads due to fog, landslides, or flooded road sections.
- Flash floods, mudslides, and washouts may occur during the rainy season. In some areas, entire concrete bridges collapse and are swept away.

Environmental Hazards

Costa Rica lies within an active earthquake zone and periodically experiences significant tremors. Costa Rica has several active and dormant volcanoes that are part of the geographic Pacific Ring of Fire that spreads throughout the Pacific Coast of America.

Health & Safety Tips

Be Proactive, Prepared, and Protected to Stay Healthy and Safe in Costa Rica:

- Use insect repellent spray or lotion with 30–50 percent DEET concentration and take personal protective measures (protective clothing, mosquito nets to prevent diseases, etc.). Insect-borne diseases in Costa Rica include dengue, leishmaniasis, chagas disease, and malaria. Instructors will brief you on this at each field site.
- Treat all exposed skin with sunscreen.
- Do not touch or feed any animals, including dogs and cats. Even animals that look healthy may have rabies or other diseases.
- Wear shoes and use a flashlight at night so you can see where you are stepping. Dangers range from ant and scorpion stings to snake bites.
- Exercise caution in and around water. Swim with a partner and use a life jacket, as rip tides are common on both coasts. Few beaches are supervised and most lack warning signs for dangerous undertow conditions.
- Inform program staff of sickness or injuries. For example, diarrhea, vomiting, and fever are much easier to treat if caught sooner rather than later. Report any stomach problems or diarrhea lasting more than two days.
- Be aware of the message that style of dress, body language, etc. might convey to people of a different culture. A tank top might keep you cool, but it may also attract unwanted attention.
- Avoid taking risks that would expose you to pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, or sexually transmitted diseases. Condoms can be purchased at many stores and pharmacies.
- Always walk accompanied at night and when in the forest.
- Always let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Leave any illegal drug habits behind. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking of illegal drugs are strict, and convicted offenders can expect lengthy jail sentences and fines.
- If you choose to drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation. Public drunkenness is against the law, can jeopardize your safety, and will damage your reputation among locals.
- As highly visible guests in the Monteverde community, UCEAP students must behave responsibly. One student's poor behavior could diminish opportunities for all program participants.
- Report all injuries to program staff; even the smallest scratch or blister can quickly become dangerously infected. Promptly treat any wound, no matter how minor.
- Do not grab plants when you're walking through the forest (many plants have spines).
- Check clothes and boots for scorpions.
- Use a life jacket when on boats or rafts.
- As instructed by program staff, wear long-sleeve shirts and long pants tucked into socks to protect from dengue, leishmaniasis, malaria, chiggers, ticks, etc.
- Watch where you step!
- Wear a hat to protect against sunburn and sun stroke.
- Use a head lamp or flashlight at night (watch for snakes). Carry a working flashlight with you at all times.
- Carry water on all short and long treks. Drink enough water to prevent dehydration. Tap water in Costa Rica is potable, but you may still get sick from drinking untreated water.
- Use mosquito netting when in Peñas Blancas.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water to help prevent disease transmission. In the absence of soap and water use alcohol-based hand gels (at least 60 percent alcohol).
- Be careful when crossing rivers; rain in some areas can cause flash flooding.

Emergency Contacts

What Is an Emergency?

An emergency is a serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action. The following are considered emergencies:

- Any life/death situation
- A traumatic event requiring immediate assistance
- An arrest
- Civil unrest or natural disaster in the host country

In an Emergency

Contact local emergency services first and then contact the following:

If you are in the U.S.

- During office hours (8 a.m.–5 p.m. Pacific Time): Contact your Operations Specialist at the UCEAP Systemwide Office
- After office hours: Call the 24-hour emergency phone number at (805) 893-4762

If you are abroad

In a health or safety emergency, call Frank Joyce on his cell phone and carry local emergency contact information at all times. If you do not have access to local emergency contact information, call Europ Assistance.

Emergency Phone Numbers:

Frank Joyce cell phone	506-8380-9899
Frank Joyce home phone	506-2645-5098
Frank Joyce office phone	506-2645-5545
Biology Field Station	506-2645-5248
Monteverde Institute main	506-2645-5053
Alternate line at MVI	505-2645-5365
Fax at MVI	506-2645-5219
Europ Assistance	1+202-828-5896

U.S. Embassy in San José:

Located at the intersection of Avenida Central and Calle 120 in the Pavas Section of San José, Costa Rica.

E-mail: ConsularSanJose@State.gov

Phone: (506) 2519-2000

After-Hour Emergencies: (506) 2519-2280 or 2279
(To dial from the U.S., first dial 011)

Address: 920-1200 San José, Costa Rica

Office Hours:

Walk-in Service: Monday–Friday, 8–11:30 a.m.; Mondays only: 1–3 p.m.

Phone Inquiries: (506) 2519-2188 (Monday–Friday, 1–4 p.m.)