



Green Life Volunteers

Puerto Jimenez, Costa Rica

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National Park - Project Handbook
Location: Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica

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1. Project overview



The Ministry of Environment (MINAET), who is the entity behind the national parks in Costa Rica, is looking for enthusiastic people who love nature and like to help out at the Ranger Stations. Green Life Volunteers want to help the two conservation sites in Caño Island, which is a protected marine area and prime dive and snorkel, and Corcovado National Park of Costa Rica. The Ranger station of Caño Island is presented on the picture on the left.

Tourists visit Caño Island Ranger Station and San Pedrillo Ranger Station daily! Everyone entering the island or the park has to sign in at the ranger station. Hence you will be dealing with tourists and guides on a daily basis. On Caño Island tourists go diving or snorkeling and sometimes they do not even get off the boat to the ranger station – the guides usually do this for them. However, around lunch time there is usually a break for all tourists and they will come to the Ranger Station beach to relax a bit and get off the boat for a while. At San Pedrillo there is more tourist contact, since tourists will get off the boat and “hang out” at the ranger station. They usually have lunch there.

Your help is necessary because there is not enough staff supply to cover all shifts and to have always 2-3 people on the site. Often staff or rangers are alone on the island / ranger station which can potentially be very dangerous if something happens. There are not enough resources from MINAET to cover the costs for extra rangers.

2. Volunteer duties

As a volunteer on this project you will help the rangers of Caño Island or Corcovado National Park. Your help is necessary since there is not enough staff supply to cover all shifts. The minimum time commitment on this project is 15 days.

You'll be working for around 6 days a week. The daily working time is around 6 hours. Your usual workday schedule is a bit more flexible, you can choose to work in the morning and get free time in the afternoon. Normally breakfast is around 7 am, then lunchtime is around 12 o'clock and around 6 pm it is dinnertime. You will help with preparing meals and cleaning up which is part of your tasks at this project. The rangers are not there to “cook for you”. The San Pedrillo Ranger Station in Corcovado National Park is presented on the picture above.



Volunteer duties during your stay will be:

- 🌿 Beach clean-ups Patrol on the beach and station
- 🌿 Volunteer has to help with maintenance work, for example, painting, housekeeping
- 🌿 Help with tourists arriving at the station (sign up process)
- 🌿 Help with constructing building
- 🌿 Help with cooking meals, cleaning, daily tasks at the station
- 🌿 Teaching English to Ranger Station staff (they usually speak very little English)

3. Project location



The two location of our project 'National Park Volunteer' are the two conservation sites in Caño Island and Corcovado National Park on the Osa Peninsula in Costa Rica. The Osa Peninsula boasts 2.5% of the world's biodiversity, and is the most biodiversity place in Costa Rica. The communities are still quite poor, more so than in other parts of Costa Rica. The area around Puerto Jimenez is unique and beautiful.

Puerto Jimenez is the bigger town in the area and that is also where Green Life Volunteer's main office is located. We have grown to be one of the largest towns on the Osa Peninsula. Located in the southern part of the Puntarenas province, our laidback town is one of the main gateways to the beautiful Corcovado National Park. The last town before one can enter the park premises; a main ranger station is situated here with many tourists using this town to stock up on supplies before they trek their way through the gorgeous and diverse wildlife that the Corcovado National Park has to offer.

Caño Island is located north of the Osa Peninsula in the Pacific Ocean. The nature on the island contains evergreen trees which can reach heights of 164 feet. Diving and snorkeling are popular activities on Caño Island because of the caves, cliffs and reefs surround the island. Caño Island is also very famous for the largest concentration of coral-building organism in the Pacific Ocean. Tourist activity is only allowed on the north side of the island to protect the biodiversity of the island.

4. How to get to Puerto Jimenez

You will first have to arrive in the largest town on the Osa Peninsula, in Puerto Jimenez. You'll receive your orientation in Puerto Jimenez. You'll then be taken by the MINAET to your project location.

First however, you'll fly into San Jose, at the Santa Juan Maria International Airport (SJO) from your home. There are two options to travel from San Jose to Puerto Jimenez. The first option is to book a flight from San Jose to Puerto Jimenez. Often you can connect your flights directly in SJO (Juan Santamaria - San Jose International Airport) to the airport in Puerto Jimenez. The major airlines flying into Puerto Jimenez are Nature Air (www.natureair.com) and Sansa Air (<http://cr.flysansa.com/en/home>).

The second option is to get by bus to Puerto Jimenez from San Jose – which is also the cheapest method. There are two public buses a day, one leaves San Jose at 8am and another leaves at 12pm. Both buses take 8 hours and go directly to Puerto Jimenez (that is the last stop). You will see lots of beautiful landscapes, mountains, and views on the way! It is a long drive, but it will show you a lot of Costa Rica's beauty.

We will help you during your sign up process to arrange your transport and arrival in San Jose! We will help you book your hostel, arrange airport shuttle pick-ups to the hostel, and guide you on how to get to your project location. However, all of those costs are not included in our project fee, since it is things we cannot easily pre-pay and book for you in advance. Hence your transportation costs up until arrival to Puerto Jimenez, will have to be carried by you, the volunteer. Once you arrive in Puerto Jimenez, we will pick you up from the bus station and bring you to your accommodation / host family and project.

5. Accommodation

All 'National Park Volunteers' project participants will be accommodated at Caño Island Ranger Station or San Pedrillo Ranger Station. The accommodation is basic bunk beds in a dormitory type of room as presented on the picture on the right. It is very basic, and there are only mattresses provided, now pillows. If you need a cushion you need to bring your own. There is also no mosquito net, nor bedding. Those items need to be brought by the volunteer as well. Furthermore, you will cook all dinners with the other rangers.



You will be spending time with rangers from Costa Rican, who not may speak English that well. Because of this, the basic to intermediate level of Spanish is needed. If you would like to improve your Spanish, you will have the opportunity to learn Spanish from the rangers who you work with. In return you can teach them English, which they will appreciate a lot!

If you would like to polish up your Spanish please consider doing a Spanish school before heading to your project! We offer the cheapest rates in Costa Rica for a 4 hour a day Spanish immersion school in San Isidro del General! Click [here](#) to go to our Spanish project.

6. Costs

The first week of volunteering fee is 499 USD, for each additional week the fee is 179 USD per week. Most of your payment goes into the Ranger Stations for the accommodation and food. A small part goes to Green Life Volunteers' support and services.

Not included in our costs:

- National and International flights
- Travel insurance
- Visa costs
- First and last night in a Hostel in San Jose
- Travel to and from the project site from San Jose
- Airport shuttles and taxis in San Jose
- Additional travel in country
- Any additional food or snacks besides the host family meals
- Other personal expenses

7. Project supervisor and staff

Your direct supervisor will be the park ranger on duty at the station. Your co-workers will be the staff, / the rangers, at the station.

Keep in mind that there is no internet or phone connection at the two project collection. Be aware you are in a very remote location and cut off from society. If you have further questions or need help before you start your volunteer time, you can contact Green Life Volunteers any time.

For emergency and urgent matters you can always call the following contact number, or contact us via email when you are still abroad!

Contact: Janina Schan - Coordinator and Green Life Volunteers Program Manager

Cell: +506 8570 0710

E-mail: info@glvolunteers.com

8. Emergency contacts- volunteer coordinator

Please bring with you the phone number below just in case something happens (you miss a connecting flight, lose luggage, etc.) and need to contact the project.

Contact: Janina Schan - Coordinator and Green Life Volunteers Program Manager

Cell: +506 8570 0710

E-mail: info@glvolunteers.com

9. Orientation and Introduction

On every Green Life Volunteers project you will receive an introduction or orientation before you begin your project. For the 'National Park Volunteer' project, you will arrive in Puerto Jimenez the day before your project begins. You will meet up with a Green Life Volunteers staff member (most likely Janina Schan, owner and manager of GLV) in Puerto Jimenez and receive your orientation and introduction. Often this happens over lunch or dinner, or just for a coffee ☺ ! We will also show you around town, so you know where all the important amenities are, banks, supermarkets, and pharmacies etc.

During the orientation / introduction you will receive information about your project, and Green Life Volunteers staff will talk about general Costa Rican information, the Osa Peninsula, transportation, banks, food, and any other questions you may have before you begin at the project. There will be always someone from Green Life Volunteers assisting you before your project, and we are also available if you have any issues or need any help during your project. We take good customer service very seriously, and we want you to feel comfortable from the beginning till the end of your time in Costa Rica.

To get to your project site/ ranger station you'll most likely be brought there by MINAET staff themselves. They'll assist with the travel and arrange all details for you. You just have to get to Puerto Jimenez, and we take care of the rest from there.

10. General Info about the Osa Peninsula and Puerto Jimenez

The local community of Puerto Jimenez is a largely rural, agricultural society with publicly funded basic education, comprising a workforce of moderately educated people. While the local service economy provides some employment opportunities, the majority of employment in this area is the tourist industry.



*Volunteer at National Park
Project – Isla de Cano*

The social fabric of the community is based on the extended family, where members often live and work together. Low wages and the seasonal nature of many jobs in this area require that families multi-generationally work to economically survive . Many local people are forced to live with their futures dimmed by the lack of high quality education and limited employment opportunities.

The state of public education on the Osa is an atmosphere of learning by memorization, leaving future generations of children ill prepared for the future, much of this due to poor government funding and lack of proper training for state teachers. Children are not given the opportunity to thrive, nor explore in a supported environment.

11. Volunteer extra-curricular activities and excursions

There is plenty to do around the Osa Peninsula, and we can help you organize activities around Puerto Jimenez during your project time. Unfortunately, any extra-curricular activities are not covered by the Green Life Volunteers project fee. Activities may be surfing, paddle boarding, Corcovado National Park hikes, Bird watching, Mangrove and Sunset kayaking, Dolphin Tours, Zip lining and much more. During your volunteering time you can do amazing outdoor activities on your project site. On Caño Island you can snorkel and even go on a dive tour. You can organize this together with the help of the park rangers. You have to bring your own snorkel mask though! There is plenty of hiking trails that you can use, and you can go on hikes. Keep in mind that if anything happens while you are hiking by yourself, it is your responsibility/ liability. If there are several volunteers in Puerto Jimenez or Osa Peninsula at the same time, often they form groups to do some weekend activities together. Or you may decide that you would like to venture off on your own – either way, we will be there to help you to get things set up! Just ask us during or before your volunteer time!

12. General Information

Emergency Number, Cell Phone, Internet- and Phone connection

Throughout your placement you will have the support and guidance of our experienced volunteer coordinators. You will be provided with a 24-hour emergency number that you can call from your project site in case you need to speak to a Green Life Volunteers staff. The host families where you will be staying are very happy to lend you their phone to make quick local phone calls to Green Life Volunteer staff. Also Green Life Volunteers staff will call and “check in” on you throughout your stay – and we will make sure there are no miscommunications errors happening between you and your family. We will also be in contact with you continuously throughout your project, to make sure you are doing ok at your job and to answer any questions you may have!

Keep in mind that there is no internet or phone connection at either of two locations. Please be aware that you are in a very remote location and cut off from society.

We advise you to BUY a local SIM card, if you stay for a long period in Costa Rica and have an unlocked phone. Cheap SIM cards for prepaid usage are available from 1000 Colones or 2USD. The same amount is already on the card as credit. You can use it in any unlocked phone for international SIM cards. That way you can keep in touch and be reachable. If you do not have an unlocked phone or do not want to purchase one, you can always ask your project supervisors (teachers, directors) to use their phone to contact us!

Accommodation

You will be living and eating with the rangers of San Pedrillo Ranger Station at Corcovado National Park or at the rangers of Caño Island Ranger Station in Caño Island. The accommodations are very basic and provide only mattresses for the bunk beds. You will have to bring your own pillow, mosquito

nets and beddings. At the host family you will be provided with a clean bed, bed-linens, and a shared bathroom.

Meals

Food in Costa Rica is simple but delicious, and you will have access to a great variety of fruits, veggies, and dairy products in Costa Rica. Meals at the ranger stations often include rice and beans; other common items include tortillas, salads, chicken, fish, pork, beef, pastas, soups, cereals, sandwiches, cheese, fruits, veggies and fresh- squeezed juices. You will help prepare meals with the other rangers, and you will experience a whole new way of cooking and preparing food. Also, you will help the rangers with cleaning up because they are not there to “cook for you”. The pictures on the right present typical Costa Rican food and the kitchen at San Pedrillo Ranger Station.



Nonetheless, it is important to let us know about any dietary needs in advance so the ranger station is notified and they can prepare accordingly and purchase food for you. Those who follow a vegan diet should note that tofu is not readily available in Costa Rica, especially on the Osa Peninsula. You will be offered three meals a day usually breakfast is early around 7am, lunch around 12 o'clock; and dinner is around 6 p.m.



Laundry/cleaning

You will have access to a place where you can wash your own laundry. Most ranger stations do not have washing machines or dryers. Normally laundry is done by hand and hung to dry.

Weather/clothing

It usually rains at least once each day during the rainy season (May-November) even if it is just for 10-30 minutes (but it can rain for hours at a time too). The project locations are next to the sea and in the jungle. Therefore, rain is pretty common during your project time.

Daytime temperatures range from the mid 70's (Fahrenheit) when overcast and low-90's when the sun is out. The weather can change very quickly, storms can develop and rain may fall even though it was just sunny five minutes ago. However, it is mostly SUNNY all throughout the morning. So outdoor work will mainly be happening in the morning hours.

Humidity is very high and cotton clothes should be avoided because they never dry completely. During the summer months the humidity is a lot lower, the skies are clear and blue and it might be breeze and a bit dusty since the roads are gravel. We recommend quick-dry clothes and light breathable fabric. You will need some sandals for light day work, and stronger hiking boots or gum boots for working at the farm. Check our 'Packing List' at the end of this document for more details.

Spending money



There are two banks located in the center of Puerto Jimenez – they both have ATMs and access to USD and Colones. You should not have to spend too much money while you are on the project, since the project fee covers your accommodation and meals, but we recommend bringing some money for your own personal items, snacks, drinks, or anything else you may want to buy.

There is really no need for you to change money into Colones before you come to Costa Rica. Once you are in Costa Rica, and pay with your dollars, you will usually receive change back in Colones. You can take money of the ATMs with your credit card or debit

card, so you do not need to carry a lot of cash with you. Please contact your bank and clear your card for international usage. Some banks have restrictions as to the amount of cash you can withdraw in a day. Find out what those limits are prior to departing. **You should bring enough cash to carry you for at least the first week until you have a chance to go to an ATM (sometimes you have to try a few ATMs before you get money).** If you are bringing US Dollars you have to make sure that the bills are in good conditions, otherwise the bank would not accept them. You will need your passport (not a photocopy) in order to exchange dollars. Most places in Costa Rica would not take fifty or hundred dollar bills (with the exception of some hotels). If you carry fifties and hundreds, you will have to go to the bank to exchange them.

Volunteer expectations

While you are working on your project, the ranger stations will provide you with accommodation, meals, and support. We will provide you with guidance and support in case you become ill, or need any other medical attention. **You can contact our Green Life Volunteers Manager 24/7 on an emergency cell phone number (+506 8570 0710).**

The project supervisors and staff members of Green Life Volunteers expect you to attend the program regularly, be on time, and behave consistently in ways that reflect well upon Green Life Volunteers and the other volunteers. You are expected to dress according to local norms while in public and to treat people with kindness and respect appropriate to their age and social standing.

The same goes for your stay at the ranger station. In addition, Green Life Volunteers insist that volunteers avoid any contact with drugs and any culturally inappropriate activities relating to alcohol, especially in your host homes. Remember that the culture of the families can be rather conservative. In case that a volunteer repeatedly behaved in ways that contradict the codes and conducts, we reserve the right to remove volunteers from a program.

We view the volunteer experience as a commitment that includes a willingness to overcome challenges of all kinds. In cases where volunteers are experiencing difficulties, we strongly encourage creative, collaborative solutions that allow the volunteer commitments to be completed. At the same

time, we respect the ability and freedom of our volunteers to use their own judgments and understand that volunteer work only functions well when volunteers retain the will to participate fully and energetically.

Rule and guidelines

Please be aware of all the Green Life Volunteers rules in our Terms and Conditions. Green Life Volunteers expects volunteers to respect the areas in which you are working as well as your project leaders, rangers from the project, members of the community and other volunteers. In case you are experiences troubles or conflicts, we rather know sooner than later if there is anything that is not working for you and we want to make you as comfortable as possible. Having said that, we cannot stress enough that flexibility and being positive and open-minded will go a long way in ensuring an enjoyable volunteer experience.

Remember that you are in a Spanish speaking country. It is up to you to accommodate the new language and not impose your language on the locals. We always recommend to volunteers that the more Spanish they speak, the better their experience will be. If you do not speak any Spanish or if you are a beginner, you have a perfect opportunity to improve your language skills while you are on your project with the other ranger. On most of our projects the project coordinators and rangers speak very little to no English. Ask us for options to take Spanish Classes before your volunteer stay – we offer very affordable and a great Spanish school program.

Important rules that you should be aware of are

- 🌱 Drinking is permitted ONLY while NOT on duty. Keep in mind that alcohol can negatively affect a volunteer's performance at the project and you will be doing tasks that may be dangerous to do when under the influence of alcohol. Drinking after hours is left to your discretion but be sensitive to the drinking habits of your host family. It is unacceptable to show up at your host family home intoxicated and sloppy!
- 🌱 Volunteers are permitted to smoke cigarettes but not inside the project's buildings or your host homes. You will have to agree on a place for you to smoke cigarettes where it does not molest anyone.
- 🌱 Please respect the facilities and the environment.
- 🌱 Conserve water and electricity as it is expensive and you do not want to burden your host family.
- 🌱 Respect the culture of the local community and ask for permission if you want to do things in their home that they do not normally do. Use common sense and treat people and their home with respect.
- 🌱 Be aware of mosquitoes, scorpions, spiders and other insects. Keep your bed clean and your bag zipped. Use your mosquitoes net if you brought one.
- 🌱 ALWAYS clean your feet from sand before you enter the house and specially the shower.
- 🌱 Since you are right on the beach, drains can easily clog due to sand being tracked to showers and drains.
- 🌱 Due to the heat and humidity, it is recommend that all volunteers shower and use deodorant every day. Personal hygiene is a must in this type of climate. Please do not put yourself in the situation that you have to be told to practice personal hygiene. The families are usually very polite, and they would feel terrible to have to tell you that you "smell". Please be considerate!

- 🌱 Normally, toilet paper is deposited in baskets right next to the toilet. Do not flush toilet paper after using the bathroom! Again, drains in these rural areas and especially on the beach can clog easily and do not have the power to deal with toilet paper, female slips or tampons!! Always throw those items in the bin next to the toilet.
- 🌱 If you use, abuse or even come in contact with drugs, drug users, drug pushers or anyone remotely connected with drugs illegal or otherwise (other than for medical reasons), your placement will be terminated immediately, your visa will be withdrawn, and you will be deported from the country with no compensation. Never bring drugs into the project or host families (other than prescription drugs). THERE ARE NO EXEPTIONS TO THIS RULE, REGARDLESS OF THE REASONS. Please accept that while you are working on your project you do not consume illegal drugs.

Safety and precautions

Tourists are sometimes targets for pickpockets and thieves. The Osa Peninsula is a very safe place but places like San Jose or even smaller towns like Puerto Jimenez are not as safe. Please do not put yourself in a dangerous situation. Be cautious and use common sense. As a general rule, volunteers should not go off alone at nights, especially in large cities like San Jose.

The best way to store valuables is not to bring them with you if you go out but to leave them with your host family. Make sure whatever valuable you bring are in your bag and that you keep your bag close to you at all times. Money belts are a good investment before you travel to Costa Rica. Make sure if you get one that it is big enough that you can also fit your passport in it.

If you travel on public buses please ALWAYS stay close to your bag, or bring your valuables with you when you go to the bathroom. Do not even leave your valuables alone for a few minutes – it has happened to many volunteers before that they lost items on the bus.

Tips:

- 🌱 Travel in pairs if you can (one can stay with the bags, the other goes to the bathroom)
- 🌱 Use caution in unfamiliar locations
- 🌱 Be very careful when traveling in San Jose. You are target for thieves. Keep your valuables in a safe place. Always keep an eye on your bag. Never leave your bag unattended when you go to the beach.
- 🌱 Photocopy your passport and important documents. Do not carry your original passport on you.
- 🌱 Carry your money and passport (or copy) inside a money belt on your body. It is the safest place.
- 🌱 Avoid flashy dresses. Never wear expensive jewelry, etc. while traveling. Do not carry all your credit cards and all cash with you. If there is not a safety box where you are, use a money belt or make several trips to the bank
- 🌱 In a lot of areas in Costa Rica swimming can be dangerous because of rip tides. Please inquire FIRST before swimming at a deserted beach. Do not go swimming alone, have someone watch you at the beach.

Medical facilities

The closest medical facility is a clinic on the Osa Peninsula in Puerto Jimenez. The doctors in Costa Rica are well educated, often speak English, and are able to take care of most of your medical needs. In case of a more serious medical situation, there is a bigger hospital in Golfito, where patients can be transferred, or if a more serious situation occurs, participants can fly to San Jose.

Recommended packing list

- ✦ Passport and passport photocopy
- ✦ Your own towels
- ✦ Pillow and beddings
- ✦ Debit card and credit card for any emergency
- ✦ Camera and batteries (you can find batteries here but they are more expensive)
- ✦ Small notebook and pen
- ✦ Headlamp or Torch (we have power outages, and streets are often not well lit)
- ✦ Alarm clock and batteries
- ✦ Personal medical first aid (Or medication you may need – it is remote in your location and you may not be able to buy what you need, so bring it from your home country).
- ✦ Clothing for a warm tropical climate, preferably non-cotton, that you are not worried about ruining
- ✦ Sturdy shoes for working and hiking - gum boots are great for work great for working, or good /sturdy hiking boots
- ✦ Waterproof sunscreen (the sun rays are powerful)
- ✦ Sunglasses
- ✦ Forms of entertainment: books, games, music, guitar, paints, surfing equipment, etc.
- ✦ Sandals and comfortable walking shoes (that dry fast)
- ✦ Lightweight disposable rain poncho
- ✦ Sweater for colder rainy weather and when in San Jose
- ✦ Swimwear
- ✦ BUG Repellent
- ✦ Water proof & secure bag for documents
- ✦ Money belt
- ✦ Binoculars for wildlife watching?
- ✦ Positive attitude
- ✦ Mosquito Netting

To apply to the project NOW please click on [THIS link](#) and apply now! After applying we will be in touch with you shortly!

Thank you and we are looking forward to working with you!

Your Green Life Volunteers Team

