COSTA RICA
Tropical Ecosystems: Exploring Biodiversity
MAY 23 - 29, 2020

With 4% of the earth’s biodiversity packed onto just 0.03% of its surface, Costa Rica’s varied ecosystems represent a wealth of nature to preserve and protect. On this 7-day expedition, delve into the rainforests of Arenal and Sarapiquí to observe some of the country’s impressive biological footprint, and discover its remarkable conservation story since the 1980s. In Arenal, you’ll explore the geologic terrain of Arenal Volcano, hike along hanging bridges in the forest canopy, and visit a local farm to learn about rural life there. In Sarapiquí, search for birds, monkeys, sloths, alligators, iguanas, birds and other wildlife while floating along the Sarapiquí River by boat. Learn about Costa Rica’s geology and volcanic history at Arenal Volcano National Park and soak in the lodge’s natural hot springs pools. Observe the fascinating flora and fauna inhabiting the tropical rainforest at Selva Verde’s private rainforest reserve. Search for monkeys, sloths, alligators, iguanas, birds and other wildlife while floating along the Sarapiquí River by boat. Experience the thrill of whitewater rafting. Visit a farm in the Arenal region for lunch and see firsthand what rural Costa Rican life is like. Meet with community members and naturalists to learn about conservation issues and sustainability initiatives in the region. Join us for an unforgettable experience through Costa Rica’s verdant paradise with the Traveling Owls!

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
- Learn about Costa Rica’s geology and volcanic history at Arenal Volcano National Park and soak in the lodge’s natural hot springs pools.
- Observe the fascinating flora and fauna inhabiting the tropical rainforest at Selva Verde’s private rainforest reserve.
- Search for monkeys, sloths, alligators, iguanas, birds and other wildlife while floating along the Sarapiquí River by boat.
- Experience the thrill of whitewater rafting.
- Visit a farm in the Arenal region for lunch and see firsthand what rural Costa Rican life is like.
- Meet with community members and naturalists to learn about conservation issues and sustainability initiatives in the region.

For further information, please call the Traveling Owls at 713-34-TRIPS (87477) or email travelingowls@rice.edu. You may also contact the tour operator, Holbrook Travel, at 800-451-7111.
MAY 23 - SAN JOSÉ
Upon arrival in San José, after clearing immigration and customs, you will be met and transferred to your local hotel. The bustling capital city of San José is located in Costa Rica’s Central Valley and has daily temperatures that rarely dip below 68°F or rise above 78°F. This afternoon you will have an orientation to get to know your guide and the amazing country that will be your home for the next week. In the evening, enjoy a talk from naturalist Paulo Valerio on the abundant biodiversity of Costa Rica. Dinner at the hotel. Overnight at Hotel Balmoral. (D)

MAY 24 - ARENAL
After breakfast this morning transfer to the Arenal area. Visit La Fortuna, a bustling town with shops and restaurants that now serves as the “gateway” to Arenal Volcano National Park. Arenal is considered Costa Rica’s youngest and most active volcano, although it has been dormant since 2010. The national park also encompasses Cerro Chato, an inactive neighboring volcano. Head into the park and stop near the base of Arenal for an explorative hike. Learn more about the geology of the volcano as well as its influence on local flora and fauna as you hike through lava fields and tropical rainforest. This area is rich with opportunities for birdwatching, since more than half of Costa Rica’s approximately 900 bird species can be spotted within the park. Other wildlife that can be seen includes monkeys, deer, lizards, tapirs, and snakes. Continue to the hotel for check-in and admire the views of the volcano from the property. This evening enjoy dinner at the hotel and the opportunity to soak in the onsite hot spring pools. There are seven pools of varying temperature that provide 100% natural thermal mineral waters from the volcano, perfect for relaxation at the end of an active and rewarding day. Overnight at Arenal Paraiso. (BLD)

MAY 25 - ARENAL
This morning after breakfast, go for a hike along a treetop suspended bridge system situated in the rainforest canopy. This unique vantage point gives us a chance to be face-to-face with the wildlife living in the treetops, like howler monkeys and scarlet macaws. Continue the day with a visit to a local farm to gain a deeper understanding of rural life in the Arenal region. Because of the nutrient-rich soil

ITINERARY
B,L,D = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER
associated with volcanic terrain, this area has long been a center for farming and agriculture. Notable crops include pineapple, sugar cane, coffee, and cassava root. At the farm, learn about sustainable agriculture initiatives and enjoy a delicious homegrown lunch. Later, return to the hotel and have time at leisure to enjoy the hot springs. You may also wish to indulge in a visit to the onsite spa (at own cost). 

Overnight at Arenal Paraiso. (BLD)

MAY 26 - SARAPIQUI

This morning depart Arenal and transfer to the Chilamate region to Selva Verde Lodge & Rainforest Reserve. Conservation of the rainforest was a major reason for the establishment of the lodge, which was founded in 1985. Surrounded by 500 acres of primary and secondary premontane wet forest, the lodge is designed to have a minimum impact on the environment, and is certified by Costa Rica’s Sustainable Tourism program, which sets a standard for lodges in key aspects of sustainability including environmental impact, community impact, and environmental awareness building. Upon arrival at the lodge, receive an orientation to the grounds and an introduction to the important work of the Sarapiqui Conservation Learning Center (SCLC). The SCLC is an onsite community education center working to connect international travelers with the local community. The Center provides support to locals with programming like ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, an after-school program, and the scholarship program, and works with travelers on reforestation projects and community service opportunities. After getting to know the SCLC, gather around for a “charla,” a presentation on local culture given by a community member. After dinner at the lodge, enjoy a guided walk around the grounds in search of nocturnal creatures like tree frogs, leaf-mimicking insects, kinkajous, and bats. Overnight at Selva Verde Lodge & Rainforest Reserve. (BLD)

MAY 27 - SARAPIQUI

Early this morning, join your guide for an exciting birding hike to view some of the 300-plus species found on Selva Verde’s grounds. Some popular species you may see include the Great Tinamou, Violaceous Trogon, Keel-billed Toucan, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, and Red-lored Parrot, so be sure to bring binoculars! Following breakfast, set out on a hike through the reserve to discover the rich and diverse abundance of flora and fauna. As you study the forest your guide will discuss the complex details of the ecosystem and how it thrives. Life in a rainforest is stratified in three distinct horizontal layers: the upper canopy is a little-known world of beauty and biological diversity; the middle tier is filled with small trees, lianas, and epiphytes, and the ground surface layer is littered with branches, twigs, and undergrowth. Contrary to popular thought, ground cover is thick only where sunlight penetrates sufficiently. After lunch, enjoy an exciting whitewater rafting trip on the Rio Sarapiquí. All rafting trips include a professional river guide, the necessary safety equipment (helmet, life jackets, etc.), and a thorough lesson on rafting and safety procedures prior to your adventure. As you raft along the river, keep an eye out for the variety of wildlife in the surrounding forests. Enjoy a dip in the river along the way, with a snack of fresh fruit before returning to the lodge. This evening attend a presentation on the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor (MBC). Selva Verde is in the MBC, which is an international initiative that links critical habitats from southern Mexico to Panama in an effort to conserve biodiversity and promote sustainable development throughout this ecologically fragile region. Overnight at Selva Verde Lodge & Rainforest Reserve. (BLD)

MAY 28 - SARAPIQUI

After breakfast embark on a boat ride down the Rio Sarapiquí. While winding down the river bordered with forests and cultivated fields, search for aquatic animals, birds, and reptiles that are abundant in their natural habitat. Examples include herons, crocodiles, turtles, and monkeys. You can also view native residents going about their daily lives, plus witness the impact of local banana plantations on this watershed. This afternoon, you have the option (at added cost) to explore the natural and cultural history of chocolate at Tirimbina Biological Reserve. This additional excursion begins with a hike through the reserve followed by a demonstration of chocolate prepared the traditional way, complete with sampling. Return to Selva Verde for dinner. Overnight at Selva Verde Lodge & Rainforest Reserve. (BLD)

MAY 29 - DEPARTURE

Depart for the airport for your flight home. (B)
LAND PRICING

$1,695

Price is based on double occupancy with 10 participants. Single supplement is available for $200 per person.

Your price includes:
- 6 nights’ accommodation
- 17 meals (6 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 6 dinners)
- Non-alcoholic beverages with meals
- Sightseeing and activities as described, including entrance fees
- Holbrook Travel tour guide
- Private motorcoach or minibus transportation throughout your trip
- Luggage handling, one bag per person
- Bottled water on the bus
- Gratuities for local guides and drivers
- Carbon offset
- Departure tax

Price does not include: international airfare, trip cancellation insurance, gratuities for maids, gratuities for Holbrook Travel Director ($10 - $15 per person per day) drinks purchased on own, and items of a personal nature.

Holbrook Travel can assist with making your flight arrangements upon request (estimated at $725 from Houston to San José). Trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended (offered through the Association of Rice Alumni).

THE FINE PRINT

An initial deposit of $500 is required by participants to register and reserve a space on the program. Payment in full is required by participants no later than February 18, 2020. Reservations can be made online at holbrook.travel/ricealumni-cr20. Participants should register with deposit as soon as possible to ensure space. Reservations made less than 95 days prior to departure require full payment. See page 5 for full terms and conditions.

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ACTIVITY LEVEL

EASY-MODERATE: Participants should be able to walk at least 2-3 hours over some uneven and potential slippery surfaces without difficulty and should be able to ascend or descend 50 stairs consecutively. Physical activities typically last for at least 2-3 hours at a time.
GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Please read this information carefully, as payment of a deposit represents your acceptance of the following Terms and Conditions.

Not Included in Your Tour Price International airfare from your departure city; costs of passports and visas; personal expenses such as beverages, laundry, room service, and meals not specified; communications charges; gratuities to your Holbrook Travel Tour Guide which are at your discretion (suggested gratuities $10-$15 per guest, per day); and trip cancellation insurance. Additional baggage fees levied directly by the airline(s) may apply and are subject to change at any time. You should confirm directly with your airline(s) prior to departure.

International Air Transportation Estimated airfare: $725 from Houston to San José. Holbrook Travel offers group airfare and ticketing. Group transfers between the airport and hotel are included in your program cost. A note about online airfare: Occasionally, you may be able to find airfares online that are listed at a lower cost. In general, individual fares lack the flexibility of group airfare and often require immediate purchase. You will receive your preliminary air schedule approximately 2½ months prior to departure. Please note that seat assignments on your international flight are usually done at airport check-in. Holbrook Travel is unable to guarantee any seat assignments. Due to the nature of tour operator tickets, other restrictions apply, including but not limited to, frequent flyer mileage accrual, stopovers, alternate travel dates, upgrades, and airline taxes and departure fees. If you prefer to make your own travel arrangements, booking the tour “Land Only” is available. We recommend that if you choose to make your own airline reservations, you do not purchase non-refundable tickets or those with high penalties for changes. If you choose to make your own air arrangements, the Association of Rice Alumni (ARA) and Holbrook Travel, Inc. shall not have any liability for any loss resulting from cancellation of this tour or changes in this tour.

Cancellations, Changes and Refunds If you must cancel your tour, the effective date of cancellation will be upon our receipt of your notification. All cancellations need to be submitted in writing to ARA. Refunds for cancellations are subject to the following per person charges:

Cancel 95 days or more before departure: $200 charge; Cancel 95-0 days before departure: no refund. Please note that we will not refund the cost of any unused portion of your tour package. We will not charge a fee for any changes made to your reservation outside of 95 days before departure. From 94 to 30 days before departure, if you make any changes to your reservation, a $100 per person administrative fee will apply, in addition to any fees or penalties imposed by airlines, hotels, or other third parties. Changes are subject to availability and cannot be guaranteed. If your reservation changes from double occupancy to single occupancy for any reason, you will be charged the single supplement. No changes to your reservation can be made within 30 days of departure. If due to unforeseen circumstances Holbrook Travel cancels your tour, you will receive a complete refund of all payments you have made to us.

Health and Medical Issues We welcome all travelers, but request that you be in good health to participate on a Holbrook Travel tour. All of our tours involve a reasonable amount of walking (typically two to three miles per day). You must be able to get on and off motorcoaches on your own. We regret that we cannot provide individual assistance, in such cases you must be accompanied by a companion who will assist you. Please note that our itineraries cannot accommodate wheelchairs. We reserve the right to remove anyone whose physical condition or behavior, in our opinion, compromises the operation of the tour or detracts from the enjoyment or safety of the other tour members. In that event, ARA and Holbrook Travel assume no financial responsibility for any unused portion of the tour. For the convenience of the majority of our travelers, Holbrook Travel has a no smoking policy on all tour buses. We will arrange sufficient rest stops so those who wish to smoke may do so.

Required Information Upon reservation, you must provide your full name as it appears on your passport, date of birth, and gender (for details, please visit tsa.gov). In the event an airline ticket is issued with incorrect information you have provided, or if you use a different passport than originally cited, you will be responsible for charges associated with the ticket’s reissue. A passport valid for at least six months after the completion of your tour is required for U.S. citizens on this tour.

Responsibility The liability of ARA as sponsor, and Holbrook Travel Inc., as tour operator, is strictly limited. ARA and Holbrook Travel, Inc. purchase transportation, hotel accommodations, restaurant and other services from independent suppliers not under our control. We serve only as agents for these suppliers in securing tour arrangements, and therefore will not accept responsibility for wrongful, negligent, or arbitrary acts or omissions of these independent contractors, their employees, agents, servants or representatives. ARA and Holbrook Travel, Inc. are not liable for injury, damage, loss, accident, or delay that may be caused by events not within our control, including without limitation, acts of terrorism, war, strikes, the defect of any vehicle, or the negligence or default of any third party. All coupons, receipts, and tickets issued are subject to the terms and conditions specified by the air carriers, cruise line, and other independent suppliers. We will make every effort to operate our tours as planned, but we reserve the right to make itinerary changes as necessary. If unforeseen circumstances require us to change a hotel, we will select alternative accommodations of the same or better quality and may change due to factors such as government regulations, water levels, or weather conditions. The services of any IATA and ATC carrier may be used in connection with these tours. The participant understands that if he/she books special low cost airfares with penalties, and cancels the reservation, he/she is responsible for any penalties incurred from the airline.