

VOLUNTEER BRIEF 2024/25

**COMUNIDAD PROTECTORA DE TORTUGAS
DE OSA**

SEA TURTLE PROJECT

ABOUT THE PROJECT

COPROT was initiated in the middle of the 2018 turtle season in response to a number of environmental and social issues in the rural town of Carate, Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica.

The nearby beaches of Carate, Pejeperro and Rio Oro are some of the most important sea turtle nesting beaches in the South Pacific of Costa Rica, with approximately 7,000 nests being laid there each year by Olive Ridley (classified Vulnerable by the IUCN) and Pacific Green (classified as Endangered by the IUCN) turtles. There are also much smaller numbers of Hawksbills and Leatherbacks on occasions.



There were high levels of poaching and predation recorded on turtle nests in the area, and losses of up to 20% of nests per annum have been seen because of this.

Development in Carate and the surrounding areas in the past 25 years has mainly been driven by eco-tourism and is limited to the construction of eco-lodges and improvements to the nearby Corcovado National Park in order to cater for tourism and research. The area has a lot to offer, being called one of the most biologically intense places on the planet. These developments, although beneficial for the area, have had minimal impact on the opportunities or quality of life for local people in Carate. A small percentage have been able to find work in nearby ecolodges or on private properties, but there are still a large number that need to carry out illegal or environmentally damaging activities in order to make a living; namely gold-mining, turtle nest poaching and hunting.

Seeing the desperate need for more conservation and education in the area to protect the nesting beaches, along with the low quality of life and continuation of ecologically damaging activities carried out by local people, made us realise that creating opportunities for local people to work in conservation, or benefit indirectly from having a successful community lead conservation project in the area, could solve a number of pertinent issues at the same time. We opened the idea up to the local people in September 2018, and we have been overwhelmed by the support for this initiative collaboration with the project over the years.

HIGHLIGHTS

COPROT has now been consistently collecting nesting population data on the sea turtles in Rio Oro for over 5 years, and has reached the point of being a stable and dependable project both in terms of conservation and community support. We have covered the greatest area of beach over the longest period of time than any other organisation that has worked in the area previously, giving us an excellent foundation from which we can look at long-term population trends.

In this 5-year period, it has become clear that we have not only one of the busiest beaches for solitary nesting Olive Ridley turtles, but also one of the strongest populations of Pacific green turtles on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. This provides lots of exciting research and practical conservation opportunities that we are looking forward to developing in the coming years with some exciting projects in the pipeline.

We have also been able to provide paid employment to a number of community members since we initiated the project, both directly in sea turtle conservation and also in other areas like construction, transport and food services.

In December 2022 we were thrilled to be able to open our second project site, further down the coast towards Corcovado National Park, in the village of Carate. Here at Camp Carate, in the heart of the community, we are able to work much closer with the community to protect the beaches and strive towards sustainability. Due to the number of families in the village with dogs, there is a problem on these beaches of the dogs eating the turtle eggs. In order to tackle this problem we have installed a hatchery at this site to relocate and protect the turtle nests from the roaming dogs.



FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Due to the successful development of our conservation camp, we are now focusing on recruiting assistants, interns and volunteers that will enable us to cover more of the beach than ever before (we are covering between 6-8km currently, and are hoping to cover 15km in total). We want to ensure that we are able to carry out night patrols regularly, nest relocations either on the beach or to a hatchery, morning census, and frequent educational activities to keep increasing the reach and impact of the project. We are also looking to continue developing our research program, which will focus more on Pacific green turtles and climate change effects.

In order to fulfill our aim of promoting sustainable development, we will be looking to continue developing our permaculture efforts on the properties, where we are able to grow/produce a considerable amount of our own food for people involved in the project and improve the productivity and sustainability of the land around us. We are also looking to improve our waste management and hopefully become a zero-waste organisation soon! A large part of reaching this goal will be our plastic upcycling project in partnership

with In Mocean, we are able to encourage community members to collect marine plastic from the beaches and bring it to the project. Here we can sort the plastic in our plastic center and upcycle the plastic in to useful products that community members can sell to support their work.

Due to the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic, the economy and consequently the tourism sector in Costa Rica has taken quite a hit. We are trying to revitalise the tourism industry in our region and increase awareness for sea turtle conservation. We have seen an increase in poaching in the last few years and we are hoping to mitigate that problem by reminding people about the importance of protecting the vulnerable sea turtle populations and the economic gains that can bring to communities.

OUR NEEDS

• *Volunteers*

Volunteers needed across the board! No experience necessary in any of the areas detailed below, but plenty of enthusiasm to get involved and learn as well as the ability to work hard without constant supervision. This is a completely grass roots project that is in its early stages of development, so we need positive people that are highly driven to initiate change in developing communities! This is a great opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people and make a real difference to the turtles and local community members. Of course we are always welcome to new ideas and enjoy learning new skills from our volunteers, so do not be shy to share and inspire during your stay!

• *Research Assistants*

Candidates should have prior experience with sea turtle conservation in the field, or a strong biological background and eager to learn. The role will involve morning and night patrol work (long hours during high season) , hatchery and hatchling management, training and/or supervising volunteers, carrying out environmental education activities, data input and analysis.



• *Communication Assistants*

Individuals that are able to assist us in spreading the word about our project, and encouraging other people to come out and help. Role will involve managing social media pages, searching for collaborators, sponsors and sources of funding, assisting in recruitment of volunteers to help with the project, coordinating any promotional activities or campaigns, website design/updating.

• *Permaculture Developers*

Permaculture is something new to us, therefore we will require volunteers that already

have a strong knowledge of permaculture practices and are willing to work hard to get this project going from scratch. Local staff and general volunteers will be there to support the manual side in their time outside of conservation activities. Role will involve designing a basic permaculture start-up project that will be easy to manage using the project's resources, teaching others about permaculture practices and their benefits for sustainable living, looking into ways we can improve the productivity of the area and making positive changes to our lifestyle, and waste management assistance (composting, recycling, upcycling etc.).

- ***Community Development Assistants***

The community is the driving force behind this project, and we will need assistants to help to develop the community support side of the project. Role will involve giving English or computation classes, searching for training schemes that the local staff could undertake (first aid, construction, management of tourists, working in a team etc.), support with any other areas that could help provide our local staff with more opportunities or a better quality of life.

ABOUT THE CAMPS

Both of our camps, Rio Oro and Carate, are very basic and open to our natural surroundings. Project members can expect to sleep in open air dormitories in bunkbeds fitted with mosquito nets. Both camps have bathrooms with western toilets and showers as well as lovely, large and open communal kitchens.

All of our buildings are made primarily with sustainable and/or upcycled materials in order to have the lowest possible impact on the environment. Both camps have simple solar systems to offer small amounts of power to light the camps and charge appliances. The use of this solar system for guests will depend on how many people are on camp and how much sun we have, as this affects how much power we will have available to the project sites. For those that are worried about collection, we recommend getting yourself a Kolbi sim card that has some signal in certain places.

We are very conscious about our waste, so everything needs to be reused, recycled or sent back to Puerto Jiménez as trash. One of our goals is to become a zero waste facility within the next 5 years, and have the least possible impact on the environment. Please consider this when planning your trip, and think about what you're bringing to the camp. It will be your responsibility to get rid of the big waste articles (like shoes, big containers, batteries...) before your arrival, or bring them back with you when you leave. During your stay, please reduce the use of plastic and bring biodegradable soaps and shampoo when possible.

The beach is very close to both of our camps, often you can hear the waves at night. The tides in this part of the Pacific are too strong to swim or surf, but it offers a stunning view (especially at sunrise/sunset). If you enjoy water sports, there is Matapalo, one hour away, which is a popular region among swimmers and surfers, and it's more suitable for these kinds of activities.

The food we received at camp is vegetarian. Meals are based on rice and legumes, such as lentils, beans, chickpeas... and also a variety of fruits and vegetables (some of them we bring from Puerto Jiménez, but others are from our own land and the surrounding fincas). We also have eggs, and it's rarely to eat meat or fish. These types of products can easily fit vegan/vegetarian diets, as well as gluten or lactose intolerance.

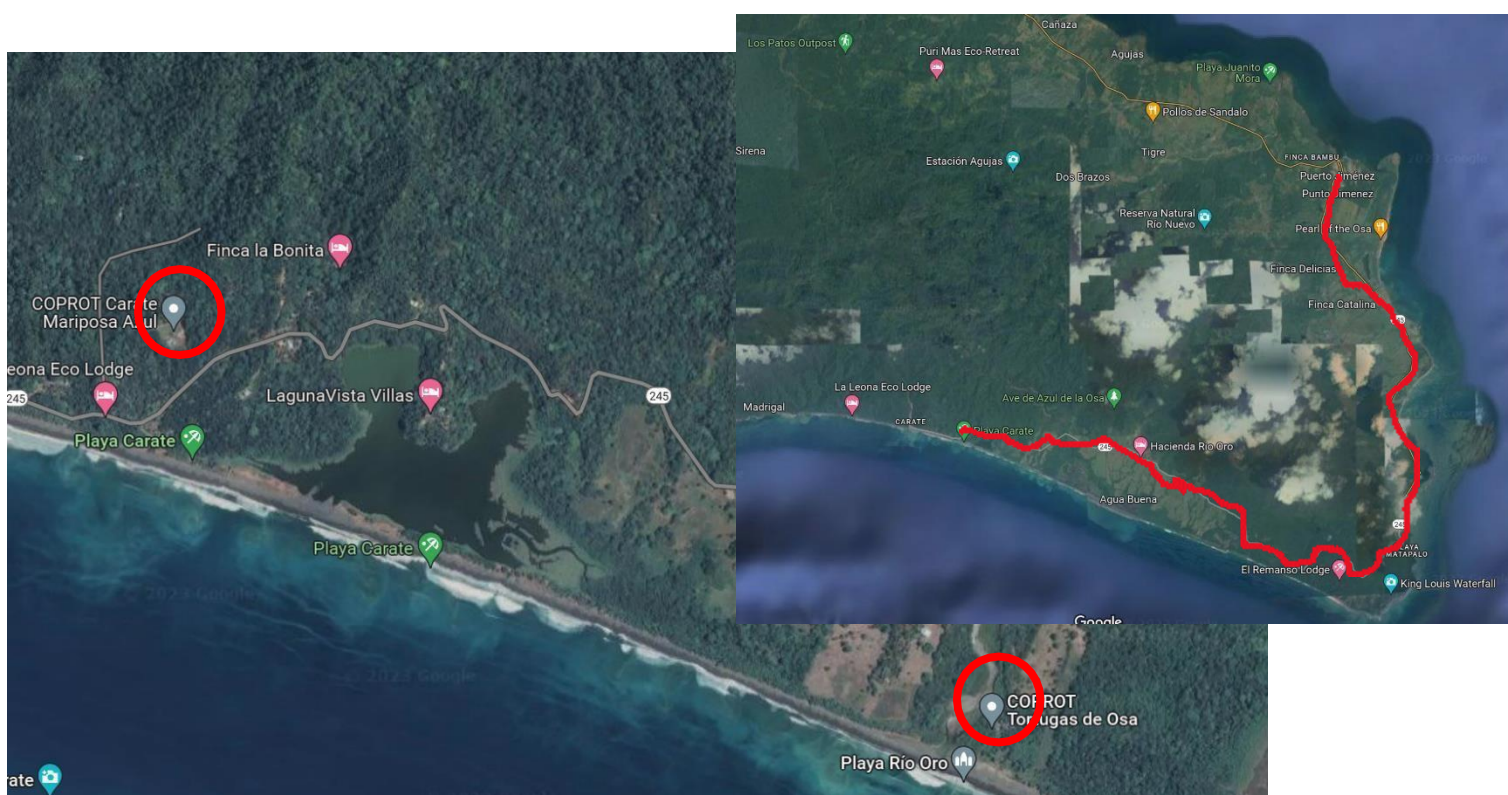


Volunteers and Assistants will share the responsibility of cleaning on a weekly schedule, and cook in the chef's day off. We normally have these meals together. Here is an example of a typical daily menu:

Breakfast: Pancakes, Gallo pinto (rice and beans), eggs and fried bananas, Oats and fruit

Lunch: Tortillas with refried beans and veggies, Vegetarian rice/pasta, Hummus with carrot sticks, Patacones, etc.

Dinner: Chickpeas with spinach, Tortillas with black beans, Vegetarian burgers and salad



This map shows the locations of both of our camps and the route the colectivo will take from Puerto Jimenez. Our Rio Oro camp is the first stop with our Carate camp, further along the road.

Google locations – Rio Oro <https://goo.gl/maps/ZbNNGgYA9H8HCYqF7> and Carate <https://goo.gl/maps/KbisuxDCKXXdM5Lm7>

You will be told via email before your booking which camp you will be going to so that you can tell the driver and prepare for that camp. Are operations are very similar on both camp and you will more or less be doing the same things, if you would like further clarity on the difference between the camps then you can get in touch with us.

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF VOLUNTEERING

As a volunteer, you will participate in daily turtle patrols, morning patrols (3-5 hrs) or night patrols (4-7 hrs). On the patrols you will protect new nests, record data on the nesting females, see flipper tagging, excavate hatched nests, assist in the tourism element and release hatchlings! During the day, we will also have beach clean-ups, plastic classification, English lessons for local people, presentations at our local schools, and tree planting and other maintenance projects around our camp!

We normally work very hard on the project and we do expect all visitors to get involved to the best of their ability to help us achieve our goals, but there's still always plenty of time to relax and explore. There are a lot of different activities around the Osa Península that can be arranged in advance and may have discounts for volunteers. Here you have a list of some of these activities (these prices are just for guidance and may be subject to change) and also an example of how your week could be in the last page:

- Corcovado National Park
- Surfing in Matapalo
- Horse-riding
- Chocolate tour
- Whale and dolphin tour
- Waterfall hike
- Guided gold-mining tour
- Plus a lot of free activities: night walks, jungle walks, beach cleans, game and movie night, pizza nights, etc.



A taste of what to expect!

HOW TO GET HERE

From San Jose

If you need to stay for one night in SJO we recommend staying at Costa Rica Backpackers, an affordable and safe hostel in the city center. To get there from the airport you can either take a local bus to the city or an easier option is to use Uber or an airport taxi to get straight to the hotel.

From SJO you need to get yourself to Puerto Jimenez. There are two options -

Option 1 - You can take a domestic flight with <https://www.flysansa.com/> . This is the quickest option but will cost \$100+, please look at the different times and prices.

Option 2 - You can take a bus from the city to Puerto Jimenez with the Grupo Blanco company <http://www.grupoblancocr.com/>. There is only one bus a day that leaves at 12pm, midday. The ticket costs C11,000. <https://goo.gl/maps/zaHvKjuQ43gsCtF4A> this is the location of the bus station in SJO. You will arrive in Puerto Jimenez at around 8pm.

From Puerto Jimenez

In order to arrive at the camp on Monday afternoon, you will need to stay in Puerto Jimenez on Sunday night. We recommend staying at La Palapa Hut Nature Hostel. In Puerto Jimenez you will be able to buy any supplies you may need for the camp.

There is a colectivo (white Toyota 4x4) that runs on Monday, Wednesday and Friday that passes by camp to take you in either direction towards Carate or Puerto Jimenez. This transport leaves from outside Soda El Colectivo. The price is C7,000. During the heavy rainy season (Oct/Nov) flooding can make transportation more difficult and occasionally the bus is suspended for the day. The bus schedule is as follows:

LEAVING PUERTO JIMENEZ	LEAVING CARATE
06:00	08:30
13:30	16:00

We request that all volunteers are in Puerto Jimenez on the Sunday before their arrival

in order to leave time to buy any supplies you may want for your stay and so that you are able to get the 1:30pm bus on Monday afternoon. This will mean you have the welcome the afternoon you arrive and the next day full of training.

Taxis are available in this region with advance notice, but for a price of roughly \$80 one way between Carate and Puerto Jimenez. It is also possible to walk to Carate from the base camp in Rio Oro, which takes about an hour along the beach (3km) or an hour and a half along the road (6km).

Communication

It is recommended that you buy a KOLBI SIM card for your phone for communicating while at camp (must be Kolbi as no other network providers reach to our area). There is very basic WiFi available at camp, but this can sometimes go down. There are a few eco lodges in the area that have WiFi access that can be used if purchases are made (a drink or something) that can be visited in free time.

Mail and packages take about 4-8 weeks to arrive. They can be received

at: - [Insert name]

- Correos de Costa Rica

- Puerto Jiménez, Golfito, Puntarenas, Costa Rica. 60702.

Once on camp COPROT agrees to cover food and lodging, as well as training during your stay. Volunteers must cover their transportation costs to reach and leave COPROT, and any extra activities that they want to do during their free time. The payment for your stay will be discussed with you before your arrival via email.

We have 6 weeks internships and Research Assistant positions available for those that have longer to dedicate to the project or have some prior field research experience.

You can find more information on these things on our website under Research Assistant www.tortugasdeosa.org

Important Points to Consider – Must read.

We are thrilled that you are interested to join our ever-growing project. We are always grateful to welcome people who are looking to come and help us and experience our conservation work. We live in an incredible part of the world, but due to our location and nature of work, there are some things that can be hard for some people, therefore we would like to highlight some key points about our project so that you know what to expect.

- We are a positive vibes project and approach all our work and play with positivity. We strive for inclusivity and want to make everyone on the project know that we appreciate their ideas and time. Therefore, we expect all members to follow our code of conduct.
- Both of our projects are in very isolated locations, with the nearest town being

Puerto Jimenez, sometimes a two-hour drive away with limited access on certain days. Therefore, once you are on the project there are no shops or facilities to get supplies. This is why we encourage you to stock up in Puerto Jimenez on the Sunday before your arrival. Please note that our camps do not have a fridge, so consider this when buying snacks. Sometimes we have local community members dropping in to the camps with delicious cakes and empanadas, so make sure you have some small cash to be able to pay for these.

- We live in a tropical environment, which means we can have extreme weather conditions. Of course, this means we can enjoy the sunshine and some beautiful sunrises and sunsets. However, it should be noted that things can get extremely hot in the middle of the day, and our camps don't have any fans or AC, so it can be draining at times with the heat. It is important to follow guidance of experienced team members who will do their best to make sure you're working in cooler times, and that you can rest in the heat of the day. The reverse can also be true, we can experience extreme and unexpected rains, please make sure that you bring the appropriate kit for both weather types.
- For those that do not know, most sea turtle nesting activity happens in the night or early in the morning. Because of this, our research work, namely our patrols, happen late at night or early in the morning. Depending on the turtle activity you could be on the beaches from 8pm – 2am or more and morning patrols will be from 5am – 8 am or later. Your weekly schedule will account for your patrol schedule and you will be given chance to rest, but it is up to you to take advantage of those moments.
- We are lucky enough to have solar energy on both of our camps, however the power and efficiency of these systems can change in different weather conditions and if there are any maintenance issues during your stay. Therefore, there is no guaranteed access to power. When there is power, which thankfully is most of the time, priority access will be given to our staff for health and safety reasons and to our research needs. Where possible you will have access to charge your appliances at your convenience, if not and in case of emergency you can speak to the staff who will endeavor to help solve your situation.
- Our weekly schedules must be flexible due to the nature of our environmental and community work and therefore if there are any changes to the schedule our staff will let you know as soon as possible. In terms of your work load, this will change depending on how many people are on camp, we may need you too help us out a little more than usual, but we will make sure you have time to rest. We will make sure that everyone has a minimum of one complete day off from required activities, however this will be designated by your camp leader and will fit around the weeks activities. If you would like to request a specific day off, please do so before the start of the week so it can be accounted for in the schedule.
- It should be noted that COPROT will not be covering the costs for any activities outside of the project or any transport to and from the project. We are more than happy to help you plan and organise these things, but we will not be able to cover any costs associated.
- Both of our camps are of course in close proximity to the beach and ocean, which means we can enjoy time on the beach playing games, looking for animals or taking in the awesome views. However, it should be noted that the beaches on both camps

are NOT swimming beaches, we have extremely dangerous currents and therefore swimming is not encouraged and will be at your own risk. There are however some great swimming beaches nearby that you can go to on your days off.

- On both camps we share our space with some awesome domestic animals. We have both cats and dogs on both of our camps, while many people love the company of our furry friends, we understand that not everyone shares this enthusiasm, so we want to make you aware of our four legged friends before arrival!
- Please be aware that both of our camps are bilingual, speaking both English and Spanish, however as we are in a Spanish speaking country a lot of communication will be in Spanish. If you do not have Spanish language skills we will make sure that you are explained everything in English, but please let us know during your stay if anything is not clear.
- Finally, it is mandatory for all project visitors to sign our disclaimer form on arrival. We have put a copy of this in our pre-arrival folder, so please make sure you have read through this document so that you can decide if you are happy to sign this document when you arrive. If you have any issues, please feel free to contact us.

Thank you for taking the time to read this document! We like to make sure that our guests know what to expect when they join our project so that you can be as comfortable as possible. You are going to have a great time with us here in our jungle home, helping to conserve our turtle population and work with our local communities. Don't just take our word for it, check out our google reviews to see what previous guests said about their stay!

If you have any questions before booking or before arrival then please do not hesitate to get in touch volunteer@tortugasdeosa.org.

We look forward to seeing you in the jungle soon!

www.tortugasdeosa.org



Example weekly schedule

	AM Patrol	Morning	Afternoon	PM Patrol
Mon		Arrival talks and orientation	Initial training and overview of week	Juan and Katy patrol beach 2
Tues	Alex and Jazmin patrol beach 1	Turtle biology talk	Garden workshop	Toby and Laura patrol beach 1
Weds	Juan and Katy patrol beach 2	Beach clean	Plastics workshop	Alex and Jazmin patrol beach 2
Thurs	Toby and Laura patrol beach 1	Jungle walk	Post Hatch Inspections	Juan and Katy patrol beach 1
Fri	Alex and Jazmin patrol beach 2	Topical ecology and conservation talk	Sunset games	Toby and Laura patrol 2
Sat	Juan and Katy patrol beach 1	Garden workshop	Jungle walk	Alex and Jazmin patrol 1
Sun	Toby and Laura patrol beach 2	Free	Day	