



Edu-Culture International

Costa Rica - 2011



Costa Rica is a beautiful country filled with exotic wonders! Small, democratic, and on the Central American isthmus, it's often referred to as the "Central American Switzerland" because of its long-standing political neutrality and dedication to peace in the region. Costa Rica, translating to the "rich coast," features incredibly diverse rainforests, active volcanoes, pristine beaches, an incredible array of wildlife, cascading waterfalls, a cloud forest, and so much more. Travel with ECI to this country that will delight your imagination!

Natural Wonders
July 9 – July 26
Program Fee: \$3695
Scientific Exploration & Spanish Language Adventure
Ages 13 – 15
No language prerequisite

Components of ECI Costa Rica Program – Summer 2011

❖ **Natural Wonders** (ages 13 – 15)

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Dear Parents and Students,

Edu-Culture International's primary goal is a true language and cultural immersion experience for each participant. Our programs provide the students with a truly intercultural perspective, as well as the best possible environment in which to strengthen their language skills. In Costa Rica, our young teens enjoy a safe and fun opportunity to experience one of the world's most peaceful and hard-working cultures.

We take great professional and personal pride in making ECI programs the absolute best of their kind. From our global coordinators to our local leaders, you will find ECI staff to be experienced, dedicated, and qualified educational professionals who provide guidance and support throughout the program. We offer a comprehensive program that includes study at an excellent language school, living in fully chaperoned dorm-style casitas, and fascinating morning and weekend excursions.

The Natural Wonders program includes excursions to some of the most ecologically diverse areas in this majestic country. We also incorporate Language Partners (generally, local high school students) into our programs. Language Partners work to enrich language and cultural immersion by providing community integration opportunities and additional practice in conversational Spanish. Small groups of our students explore the town with their Language Partners, participating in various activities while discussing (in Spanish as much as possible) an assortment of topics such as: local culture, entertainment, school, politics, travel, vacations and sports.

Designed to be fun as well as challenging, ECI's programs provide students with an unforgettable and exhilarating once-in-a-lifetime experience. Participants gain a global perspective, strengthen their future college applications, and create lasting global friendships through this individualized and unique international adventure.

We encourage you to explore our Natural Wonders program guide. In the following pages you will find descriptions of various components of this small group experience. For more information, frequently asked questions, pictures, video, and student experiences, please visit us at ***www.educulture.org***. Also feel free to contact us at any time; we welcome talking with you and *we thank you for choosing ECI!*

Program Overview

Natural Wonders

Dates: July 9 – July 26

Ages: 13 – 15

Accommodations: Fully chaperoned dorm style casitas

Prerequisite: No language prerequisite

Group size limited to 24 students

ECI students on the **Natural Wonders** program immerse themselves in the Spanish language through cultural immersion in beautiful, safe, and family-oriented town of Grecia. While studying at the Academia Centroamericana de Español (ACCE) Language School each weekday afternoon, **Natural Wonders** participants also have the opportunity to explore the wonders of Costa Rica with bilingual naturalist guides.

Natural Wonders is a custom-designed summer Spanish study program geared toward middle school students and high school freshman seeking an introductory immersion experience fused with adventurous scientific exploration. Participants enjoy fully chaperoned morning and full-day weekend excursions, and come back with stronger Spanish skills and newfound scientific knowledge and environmental awareness.

During our Costa Rica Natural Wonders summer program you will:

- ❖ ***Study*** at a prestigious language school for a two-week Spanish language course.
- ❖ ***Discover*** the exciting destinations of:
 - Majestic Arenal Volcano, ecologically rich Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve, and Manuel Antonio National Park.
- ❖ ***Stay*** in fully chaperoned *casitas* (small dorm-style bungalows).
- ❖ ***Choose*** from a variety of excursions such as: waterfall visits, zip-lining, horseback riding, swimming, cultural events and a local school visit.
- ❖ ***Help*** hands-on in a one-day community service project.
- ❖ ***Interact*** with local students during Language Partner sessions.
- ❖ ***Meet*** other students from around the country.
- ❖ ***Be Encouraged*** by your chaperones & guides to exceed your language goals.
- ❖ ***Immerse*** yourself in the language, culture, and daily life of Costa Rica.
- ❖ ***Enjoy*** free time to explore Costa Rican wonders.

ECI Chaperones

ECI carefully selects chaperones on the basis of language ability, maturity, patience, judgment, professionalism, and their ability to earn the respect and trust of our teenage participants. Most chaperones are middle or high school Spanish teachers with extensive travel abroad experience; some are full-time ECI staff with educational backgrounds, and all are enthusiastic leaders, fully trained by ECI, and highly dedicated to promoting intercultural understanding on the global level.

The Natural Wonders program limits group size to 24 students. To maintain an ideal adult/student ratio in terms of personal attention, organization, and safety, the Natural Wonders program includes up to three full-time adults: one trip leader and two additional chaperones, one of whom is also a bilingual naturalist guide.

Price includes:

- ❖ All Spanish classes
- ❖ All accommodations
- ❖ All meals
- ❖ All transportation in Costa Rica
- ❖ All group activities, excursions, admissions
- ❖ Medical Expense / Emergency Assistance Insurance
- ❖ Travel Delay Protection / Baggage Delay or Loss Coverage

Price does not include:

- ❖ Airline tickets (Students can purchase airline tickets on the designated chaperoned flights via our travel partner, STA Travel: www.statravel.com)
- ❖ Application fee of \$125
- ❖ Costa Rica departure tax of \$26
- ❖ Spending money
- ❖ Optional activities
- ❖ Optional Cancellation / Interruption Travel Insurance Plan

Student Eligibility for Costa Rica Programs

Natural Wonders:

- Be between the ages of 13 and 15
- No language prerequisite

Participants on all ECI programs must:

- Complete all sections of ECI's Individualized Application Form
Registration includes: basic contact information for students & families, student interests, any pertinent medical information, and special requests.
- Have a valid passport
- Receive a positive teacher recommendation (ECI provides the form)
- Be committed to speaking and improving their Spanish
- Be open to new experiences and unfamiliar cultures
- Sign and abide by ECI's Personal Responsibility Contract
- Be able to make responsible choices and act in a mature manner

ECI leaders chaperone conscientiously. However, participants cannot be supervised 24 hours a day, and we therefore request that any student needing constant supervision refrain from registering for our life-changing programs.

For additional information, please contact our main office:

510.845.2230 or 866.343.8990 (toll free)

info@educulture.org

or visit our website at:

www.educulture.org

Spanish Classes

The principal objective of ECI's **Natural Wonders** program is to provide students with quality language instruction while giving them a fantastic taste of Costa Rican natural wonders. The Academia Centroamericana de Español (ACCE) shares ECI's vision of providing students with much more than a textbook-only Spanish course. ECI works closely with the Academic Director at ACCE to ensure that students have many immersion experiences throughout the program, providing unique opportunities to develop language skills through daily practical application.

Academia Centroamericana de Español (ACCE)

ECI's directors selected ACCE for its dedication to quality language instruction. All of ACCE's instructors are native Spanish speakers who have been carefully selected to teach at ACCE. They emphasize the logical study of language structure and place emphasis on conversation.



ACCE Features:

- ❖ Three different macro levels of Spanish classes, further divided into three micro levels, ensuring that every student receives instruction tailored to his or her individual language ability and learning style.
- ❖ Class size restricted to three students.
- ❖ Each class starts with a discussion of the previous and present day's activities. Following introductory conversation, a daily language topic is introduced and developed through practice and conversation.
- ❖ Classes are held in the afternoons Monday – Friday from 1:30 – 5:00 with breaks in between for stretching and relaxing.
- ❖ Students receive a short homework assignment daily to reinforce learning.

“The activities were very cool and I got to do things that I’ve never done before. Going to school, horseback riding, the hot springs and soccer games were some of my favorites. I had a very fun time and was happy that I went.”

Griffin Stein / baronow@optonline.net

Program Town Description:

Grecia

Grecia, a market town famous for its rust red, twin-spired metal church, is an ideal place for studying Spanish in Costa Rica. One of many communities nestled around the fertile slopes of the Poás volcano, Grecia principally produces coffee and sugarcane, and its markets make for a fabulous immersion experience. At almost 4000 feet above sea level, Grecia enjoys a year-round temperate climate.



A beautiful Costa Rican town park lies in front of the famous metal church and the ACCE language school is only two blocks away. The *casitas* (where **Natural Wonders** students stay) are located just a few short blocks outside the center of town.

“The local leaders and chaperones were so nice and friendly. My trip to Costa Rica was one of the most fun things I’ve ever done. I loved feeding the monkeys and the beaches were like paradise.”

Miranda Arnett / miranda_arnett@yahoo.com

Accommodations for Natural Wonders Program

ACCE student *casitas*

During the study component of the **Natural Wonders** program, students live in ACCE's gated *casitas* complex. The *casitas*, located just three blocks from the language school, are cabana style bungalows, where students share rooms and enjoy a variety of activities. The *casitas* are fully chaperoned; ECI chaperones live on site. During **Natural Wonders**, the ECI program participants have the *casitas* complex to themselves.



The complex is set back from the road, affording the students a peaceful environment. From the complex, the students enjoy a variety of activities throughout the week such as volleyball, swimming, movie night and soccer games, to name just a few. Laundry service is also provided.

During the weekend excursions, the students stay at carefully selected hotels and lodges.

“I liked staying in the casitas and thought the chaperones were nice, funny, and helped us a lot. The ziplining and horseback riding on the weekends were great!”

Jorge Garcia, Natural Wonders student / ham_bro@comcast.net

Activities for Natural Wonders Program

ECI chaperones supervise a variety of exciting activities...



Some of our student's favorite activities include:

- ❖ Ziplining through the forest canopy
- ❖ Explorations of Arenal Volcano
- ❖ Adventures & Conversations with Language Partners
- ❖ Waterfall visits
- ❖ The quest to see the Quetzal
- ❖ Horseback riding and hiking surrounded by dynamic views
- ❖ Dinner and theater highlighting Costa Rican culture
- ❖ Indoor soccer
- ❖ Beach Activities
- ❖ One day community service project & local school visit
- ❖ Excursions to nearby towns & villages

“This was a great trip with great guides & chaperones. The zipline and hot springs were amazing, and I felt like living with other people my age in the casitas was a good learning experience!”

Andrew Olson, Natural Wonders student / andrex333@gmail.com

“Griffin’s enthusiasm was evident every time he called home. He loved Costa Rica, the activities, the people he met, and he gained confidence with his Spanish speaking. He said, “the bungalows were nice, we got to eat what we wanted, and we traveled to fun places on the weekends.” This wasn’t like a summer camp, it was vacation! He’s ready to move to Costa Rica.”

Brett Aronow, Natural Wonders parent / baronow@optonline.net

Excursions for Natural Wonders Program



Arenal Volcano and La Fortuna

La Fortuna lies at the base of the Arenal Volcano, one of the twelve most active volcanoes in the world (and certainly the most active in Costa Rica). After lunch, hike through the rainforest on the El Silencio Trail to a fantastic aerial view from across the base of the volcano, gaining an amazingly up-close look at the natural environment surrounding Arenal (time and weather permitting).

Baldi Hot Springs

With Arenal Volcano looming above you, relax at Baldi Hot Springs. Enjoy a luxurious dip (or two or three or four!) in therapeutic, naturally heated waters while being awed by Arenal's glowing pyroclastic show. Relax in different sized pools hidden among lush gardens.



Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve

While hiking through Monteverde, you just might think you've walked into Jurassic Park...

Surrounded by lush forest with giant ferns and enormous trees, you will have the opportunity to see some of the 100 species of mammals (including jaguar, puma, and howler monkeys), thousands of species of flowers and vegetation (including over 450 kinds of orchids), and 400 types of birds (including hummingbirds and toucans).



Canopy Tour

Zip through the canopy suspended from a series of secured cables as the sights and sounds of the rainforest enliven your spirit. Approximately two-thirds of the rainforest's population makes its home in the canopy; prepare to come face to face with animals, vegetation, and exotic flowers.



Manuel Antonio National Park & Beach

Located on the Central Pacific coast, Manuel Antonio is a lush beachside community with breathtaking ocean views. One of the few places in the world where the rainforest comes right up to the beach, you might receive a few unexpected visits from animal life while sunning yourself! A morning hike to the protected beaches might turn up sloths, monkeys, iguanas, agoutis and is sure to provide a magnificent view from *Punta Catedral*, a one-time island now connected to the mainland by a thin land bridge.



Sarchí – Taller Eloy Alfaro

Oxcarts, formerly a means of transportation, have become a colorful tradition in Costa Rica. Visit the Taller Eloy Alfaro, an oxcart factory more than 80 years old, where oxcarts still operate the same way they did when the factory was founded – almost entirely powered by water! Behind the factory is a painting area where the wagons are turned into radiant works of art. You'll also get to paint your own mini-oxcart wheel as a souvenir!

“I loved going to Monteverde and seeing the cloudforest. I liked the ziplining, hot springs, beach and horseback riding. I enjoyed the school too. Everything was so fun and exciting.”

Sydney Carroll / sydneyaustralia28@gmail.com

Meet & Greet Service

ECl program participants have the choice of traveling roundtrip on one of our chaperoned flights or making their own separate flight plans.

Participants who make their own separate flight plans are also responsible for making their own arrangements to meet up with the chaperones and group, unless they choose our **Meet and Greet** service, which carries an additional fee of \$125 minimum per direction.

With the **Meet and Greet** service, an ECl representative will meet your son or daughter at the airport or any other designated arrival place. Prior to your child's departure, ECl will provide you with all necessary contact information, phone numbers, and a detailed meeting place and time. Once we have met your child, we will take him/her to meet the main group. The **Meet and Greet** service is also available for the return trip, and we highly recommend it in either direction if your child is not traveling with the group. Remember that airline schedules are always subject to change. *Please contact ECl to discuss this option*