

# Volunteering Profile

ACI – ICYE COSTA RICA





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# Introduction

## General

Hello and welcome to ACI Costa Rica's Volunteering Profile!

By now you have already decided on Costa Rica as your destination of choice or are in the process of making your decision. Whatever the case may be, this profile will provide you with important information before your arrival in Costa Rica or will help to give you an idea of our country and the programs we offer, to make the choice easier for you.

Thanks to its rich natural diversity, Costa Rica enables exchanges with projects and communities in a wide range of settings, including coastal regions, cloud forests, rural areas, and agricultural zones. The country offers a wide variety of projects across different categories, such as environmental and sea turtle conservation, rural tourism, work with children at social risk and in public schools, support for elderly people, people with special needs, and office-based support at the ACI Office.

You are about to embark on an adventure which is filled with exciting, challenging and engaging experiences! There are lots of things which you would like to know, and others you really need to know about Costa Rica, before arriving.

Take some time to read through this profile, so that you can get an impression of Costa Rica, and hopefully, we will meet you soon!

¡Pura vida!

Best regards,

Incoming Team  
Asociación Costarricense de Interculturalidad (ACI)  
ICYE Costa Rica

# Project categories

ACI offers a wide variety of work placements for international volunteers.

## List of general project categories



### PROJECTS WITH CHILDREN:

These projects include daycare centers for children from low-income families, rural and urban schools, and more. Volunteers may assist with classroom activities, play with the children, organize events, and sometimes help in the kitchen or with manual work. Office work may also be included.

#### General tasks:

1. Accompanying children in class activities and various other activities
2. Assisting teachers with organizing and preparing materials and lessons
3. Helping with cleaning and tidying up

Examples:

- Escuela Laboratorio Emma Gamboa
- Oratorio Don Bosco
- Centro Infantil Manos Amigas

Accommodation for these projects is mainly with host families.

### PROJECTS WITH ELDERLY PEOPLE:

Homes for the elderly provide accommodation and special attention. These are places full of life and energy! As with projects involving children, volunteers may also help in the kitchen or with other manual work.

#### General tasks:

1. Keeping company to the elderly and assisting in physical therapy.



2. Organizing activities and elaborating materials.
3. Helping with cleaning and tidying up

Examples:

- ASCATE
- Hogar María

Accommodation for these projects is mainly with host families.

## ECOLOGICAL PROJECTS:

These projects often focus on conservation, rural development, and sustainable tourism. Some of these projects include work with farm animals or endangered species, others are bioconstruction and farming. Please note, some ecological projects offer basic, rustic accommodation.



### General tasks:

1. Fieldwork (reforestation, species documentation, animal protection, bioconstruction).
2. Office work (e.g., translating materials or maintaining websites).
3. Environmental education for locals and tourists.

Examples:

- Natural Reserves
- SeaTurtle Conservation
- Spirogyra Butterfly Garden

Accommodation for these projects is usually at the project site



## ECOTOURISM PROJECTS AND RURAL ENVIRONMENTAL:

These projects combine environmental conservation with rural community tourism, providing volunteers with opportunities to engage with nature, integrate with local people, and participate in a variety of activities.

Other projects may involve farm work, including agriculture, animal care, and bioconstruction.

### General tasks:

1. Assistance in reception with tourists or local visitors
2. Gardening support in the herbal gardens and greenhouses.
3. Supporting activities.

Examples:

- Cedrela Ecolodge
- Coffee Farms
- Finca La Flor

Accommodation for this projects is usually at the project site

## CULTURAL PROJECTS:

Non-governmental organizations promoting Costa Rica's cultural life may require volunteers with good communication skills and an open mind. A solid understanding of Spanish (at least intermediate level) is important for successful participation. However, placements in cultural projects are limited.



### General tasks:

1. Office work (translations, elaboration of material)
2. Support incoming and outgoing volunteers.
3. Facilitating socio-cultural activities (Language café, Cultural City Tour).

Example:

- ACI

Accommodation for these projects is mainly with host families.

Volunteers in these roles can meet many people from all over the World and gain insights into how international volunteer work and intercultural learning are managed. Let us know if you're interested in joining us at our office! ☺

## OTHERS:

Less common volunteer opportunities may include working in universities, secondary schools, municipalities, or with drug/alcohol rehabilitation programs.

### PLEASE NOTE!

When applying, you are applying for a volunteer area rather than a specific project. ACI will do its best to match your preferences for a relevant project, but it is difficult to guarantee placement in your first-choice project.

Also, changing projects or host families is difficult (except in emergencies or very special circumstances). We encourage you to adapt and give it a try, as first impressions may be challenging, but they can improve with time!

## **Locations**

Projects are located all around the country, with an almost equal distribution between the city and the countryside.

Most of the projects have easy access to transportation, in Costa Rica you can easily get to other towns or San Jose (the capital) by bus. Please note that normally ecological projects are in rural areas where transportation is not as accessible as in the city or other areas.

## **Application Deadlines**

The application deadline is April 30<sup>th</sup>, however, we will continue to accept additional applications throughout May if space remains available.

# Some of our projects

Divided into the categories that were presented before, here you can find more information about the projects that we work on for Long-Term and Short-Term Volunteers:

## 1. Escuela Nueva Laboratorio Emma Gamboa UCR



The school is a public school founded in 1960. It cooperates with the University of Costa Rica (UCR) and it is financially supported by the Public Education Ministry of Costa Rica (MEP).

**Location:** San Pedro, San José      **Duration:** 2 – 12 months

**ICYE Category:** Education      **Accommodation:** Host family

**Sustainable Development Goals related to this project:**



### Aims of the project:

1. Learning for life (technology, individual learning based on each student's interests, intellectual formation by awakening the students' interest in reading books).
2. Responsibly realizing personal liberty (developing critical, analytical, creative and innovative thinking, working in teams, independence, open communication, conflict management, providing spaces for self-reflection).
3. **The students' relation with the environment** (developing conscience for the ecology, physical and emotional development in nature)

### Project activities:

Three different programs form the school:

1. Basic Program: 5-7 years old.
2. Intermediate Program: 8-10 years old.
3. Final Program: 11 and 12 years old.

In addition to the regular classes, they offer activities such as theatre classes, excursions, workshops for parents and families, multicultural festivals and games.

### Community context:

The school is situated in Vargas Araya, San Pedro, which is a community located in the east of San José, around 30 minutes away from the center, and provides all kinds of urban facilities. San José is the capital city of Costa Rica and its biggest city, which means volunteers will have access to all kinds of services and facilities.

### Volunteer requirements:

- Interest in working and interacting with children.
- Recommended: Basic Spanish level to interact with the students, but not mandatory.
- Proactivity, flexibility to use various methods of teaching.
- Responsibility, punctuality Respectful towards the rules of the school.
- Participation in the school's cultural activities.

### Volunteer tasks:

- Supporting the teachers in class in general.
- Playing games with the children.
- As soon as the volunteers get to know the school well, they can develop workshops for the children.
- Maintenance and cleaning of the place.
- Helping with the preparation of educational materials.
- In addition to English classes, the volunteers can give some classes of their mother tongue.



### Working days:

From Monday to Friday while the students are in the school: from 7:30 am to 2.00 pm. And any activities the school might request.

For lunchtime: lunch can be packed from home, or the volunteers also have the option to buy it from the school cafeteria. It cost 500 colones (approx.. 1 USD) per day and it can be paid for at the school reception.



## 2. ASCATE



The Asociación Cartaginesa de Atención a Ciudadanos de la Tercera Edad (ASCATE) is a private non-profit organisation contributing to the social wellbeing of elderly people. It is in the district Oriental in Cartago and has well maintained installations.

**Location:** Cartago Centre

**Duration:** 6 – 12 months

**ICYE Category:** Human rights

**Accommodation:** Host family

**Sustainable Development Goals related to this project:**



### Aims of the project:

ASCATE is a private non-profit organization contributing to the social wellbeing of elderly people. Works following gerontology principles that focus on the human being. They attend elderly people, considering their physical and social conditions. Offer them appropriate infrastructure and space for their development while we also consider their family situation and interpersonal relations. This is thanks to the support of professional staff members as well as volunteers.

### Project activities:

ASCATE consists of a daycare center, community work, domestic attention, prevention of violence and attention of dementia and Alzheimer.

### Community context:

The project is in Barrio Los Ángeles, Cartago, close to the Basílica de Los Ángeles. You can find schools and universities around there, as well as parks and sports fields. Moreover, it is close to the center of Cartago, the second biggest city of Costa Rica, which has all kinds of facilities.

### Volunteer requirements:

- Proactive, creative person interested in participating in the various activities that are organized by the organization.
- Willing to learn Spanish (considering that the residents usually do not speak English).
- Reliable and punctual.

Volunteer tasks:

- Supporting recreational activities (arts, entertainment, activities for festive days, etc.)
- Sharing with the residents.
- Supporting leisure activities.
- Assisting in physical activities (physiotherapy, psychology).

Working days:

Monday to Friday, from 8:00am to 3:00pm.



### 3. ASVO Tortuguero



The ASVO conservation program is a scientific based conservation activity in which the organizations involved work with Protected Areas of Costa Rica or with sea turtle conservation.

**Location:** Tortuguero, Limón

**Duration:** 1 - 12 months

**ICYE Category:** Ecological

**Accommodation:** Host project

Sustainable Development Goals related to this project:



#### Aims of the project:

The primary aims of volunteering with ASVO Tortuguero is collaborating with the national park to support conservation initiatives, maintaining local infrastructure, and preserving natural habitats through beach cleaning and reforestation. Volunteers also occasionally assist scientific research by helping collect data and patrolling for wildlife monitoring. These activities contribute to community engagement and environmental stewardship. Please note that most efforts are concentrated within the park rather than sea turtles.

#### Project activities:

- Collaboration work with the national park.
- Monitoring and maintaining the ASVO station.
- To patrol day and night in collaboration with the National park.
- To assist in collecting scientific data.
- To maintain infrastructure.
- To clean the beach and surrounding area of the town.
- Community work (schools and other educational centers).
- Reforestation of the beach

#### Community context:

Tortuguero is a village on the Northern Caribbean coast of Costa Rica in the Limón Province. The small village, which can be reached only by boat or airplane, is sustained almost entirely by eco-tourism.

The population is estimated at around 1200-1500 people. Tortuguero can be translated as “Land of Turtles” and gave its name to the neighboring Tortuguero National Park.

The village is situated on a sandbar island, separated from the mainland by Tortuguero River and bordering the Caribbean Sea. Tortuguero is renowned for its navigable canals that run through the rainforest in the national park, and has such earned the nickname of “Central America’s Amazon”.

#### Volunteer requirements:

- An organized, structured person (Very important).
- The volunteer needs to like it/needs to have the willingness to work in a natural tropical forest and beach and to work physically.
- Basic Spanish Level and basic English.
- To be respectful towards the internal rules the project.
- To love nature as the main goal of this project.
- To be in good physical condition as the patrols imply long walks along the beach at night and the jungle walks.
- Open to share accommodation and bedroom with other volunteers.
- To be very flexible and to do different tasks during the day which may involve cooking and cleaning as volunteers may be also responsible of taking care of the camp Interest in environmental issues.
- The volunteer should enjoy working with people and foster good human relations.
- Proactivity is a must.
- Volunteers must be ready to work independently even when the coordinator is not present.
- Honest, responsible, punctual, positive person.
- Leadership Skills.
- Good attitude.
- Open to flexibility of schedules.
- Optional skills: cooking, carpentry, electricity-skills, etc.



#### Volunteer tasks:

- Protect the flora and fauna of the jungle.
- Monitoring and maintaining the ASVO Tortuguero reservation.
- Day and Night patrols in collaboration with the National Park Tortuguero and other organizations for collection of information about the fauna.
- Boat/ATV rides into the wildlife refuge areas and the national park to assist the park rangers.
- Awareness on how to deal with the hatchlings, what to do and what not to do.
- Construction and repairing the trails for public use at Tortuguero beach.
- Maintenance of the infrastructure of the project Cleaning of the beach and surrounding area of the town Assisting the national park in his projects and his daily work (monitoring of animals, tramp-cameras, administration work, investigation work, social work etc.)
- Collecting seeds from the jungle for the greenhouse project.
- Reforestation of the beach to protect the hatchlings from the light of the town.
- Support in environmental education activities and communal protection.
- Community activities (schools, high school workshops, festivals “Day of the Jaguar” etc.).
- Night patrols (3-5 days a week, 3-6 hours per night, depending on the season)

### Working days:

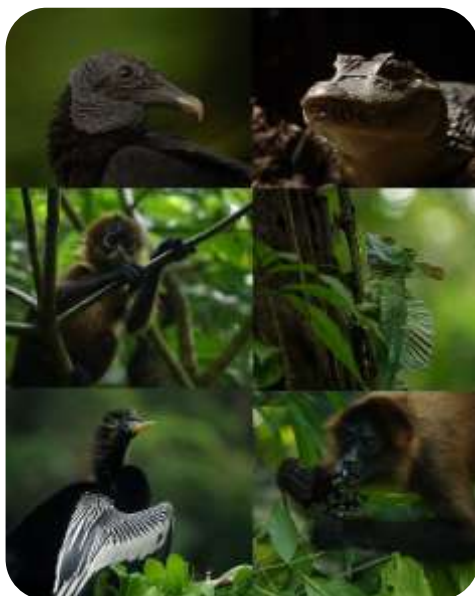
The work schedule is from 6 to 10 hours per day depending on the intensity of nesting activity and other types of jobs more focused on community support. It depends on the weather season, turtle season and on how many volunteers there are at the moment.

The work is done mostly during the night.

The daytime schedule will depend on the type of activity and on the time of the rain (depends partly on the season).

- Low season (February - June): general work, mainly maintenance
- High season (July – January): more work with night patrols in collaboration with the National Park staff.

Flexible schedules (strong work normally during the mornings, and in the afternoons the job will be a bit more relaxed, for example cleaning beaches) Examples: 9:00- 11:00, 15:00 17:00 and then the work at night (explained above).



## 4. Finca La Flor



Finca La Flor, managed through the Asociación para el Desarrollo de la Conciencia Ambiental y Humana (ASODECAH), a non-profit association that began in 1998. Today, Finca La Flor is understood as a project that integrates three interconnected areas: agropecuary and regenerative practices, environmental education, and culture & well-being.

**Location:** La Flor, Cartago

**Duration:** 1 - 12 months

**ICYE Category:** Ecological

**Accommodation:** Host project

**Sustainable Development Goals related to this project:**



### Aim of the project:

To conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the farm while developing activities that foster environmental awareness, social responsibility, and community well-being. These objectives align with the project's three guiding pillars:

1. Regenerative agricultural and animal care practices that seek healthier soils, responsible animal care, and steps toward local food sovereignty.
2. Environmental education, positioning the farm as a living example of continuous improvement and ecological awareness.
3. Cultural and well-being initiatives that support community connection, inclusion, and space for personal and collective growth.

### Project activities:

The project focuses on progressively rebuilding its regenerative and organic practices. This includes planting part of their own food without agrochemicals, composting and vermicomposting, waste separation, conscious use of resources, reforestation, protection of natural areas inside and around the farm, elaboration of natural products, caring for the farm animals, and collecting eggs.

They are also in the process of reactivating bamboo construction, creative reuse of materials, and other practices that support ecological cycles and sustainable living.

Finca La Flor is a space to share moments, knowledge, experiences, to deepen in the present moment and to live day by day in a simple way and in connection with nature.

### Community context:

La Flor de Santiago is a very small village located about 15 minutes away from Paraíso, Cartago and around 35 minutes by bus away from the city of Cartago in the province of Cartago.

In La Flor de Santiago you can find a little primary school, a small grocery store and the bus stop connecting the other towns around. Cervantes is the nearest town where volunteers can find cafeterias, supermarkets, and a cash point (ATM). Paraíso also has a variety of services available when needed.

### Volunteer requirements:

- Proactive.
- Basic knowledge of Spanish and / or English.
- Interest in regenerative practices, organic gardening, and responsible animal care.
- It is important that the person is open to share as there are always many visitors of all ages on the farm.
- We also ask our volunteers to be aware of the amount of waste they generate. At Finca we try to re-use everything and if it is not possible, we recycle it.
- It is very important to us that visitors do not leave any belongings on the farm that they no longer use (old clothes and/or shoes, old shoes, etc.).
- Working on the farm is physical, so it is important to be very careful when performing the tasks, for example not to hurt yourself, especially when handling tools.
- It is essential that volunteers have insurance.



### Volunteer tasks:

- The volunteer is asked to be part of the work team, getting involved in all areas of the farm (with animals, creativity, farming and social activities, could also include administrative tasks).
- To understand the dynamics and processes of the farm in its different areas (all of them being interconnected), gaining autonomy to perform tasks and/or teach others

### Working days:

The farm operates with two possible schedules, depending on the season and team availability:

- Schedule A: From 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (minimum 6 hours).
- Schedule B: From 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (up to 8 hours).

Volunteers will be assigned to one of these schedules according to the operational needs of the farm. They will work 30 to 35 hours per week, with at least one day off.



## 5. Asociación Costarricense de Interculturalidad (ACI)



ACI is a non-profit organization founded in 1967. The organization is an active full member of the International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE).

**Location:** San José Centre

**Duration:** 6-12 months

**ICYE Category:** Education / Cultural / Human rights

**Accommodation:** Host family

**Sustainable Development Goals related to this project:**



### Aim of the project:

ACI Costa Rica has the mission of promoting and facilitating intercultural learning, volunteer service and other international non-formal education experiences, which contribute to the development of transcultural values, knowledge and skills necessary for current and future society, fraternity and the development of global citizens for a more tolerant, peaceful and sustainable world.

### Project activities:

The experiences promoted include incoming and outgoing programs, involving long and short-term periods, for groups and individuals. These programs are managed in cooperation with its national and international networks, partner organizations and communities. International projects and specific activities on youth and capacity building are also developed.

### Community context:

The project is in the centre of San José, the capital city of Costa Rica and its biggest city, which means volunteers will have access to all kinds of services and facilities.

### Volunteer requirements:

- Open-mindedness
- Responsibility and reliability; organized, structured and independent person
- Proactivity and motivation
- Creativity and interest in intercultural issues
- Basic computer skills and interest in administrative tasks
- Enjoy working with people
- Patience
- Communication skills
- Ready to work on a variety of different tasks and under pressure
- Language skills (Spanish and English, preferably other languages like German or French)
- Common sense

### Volunteer tasks:

- Assisting the staff members in charge of the incoming and outgoing volunteers with office work (administration work, translations, actualization of documents, etc.)
- Supporting orientation days for short-term volunteers.
- Supporting communication with international volunteers.
- Assisting in social media and participating in educational fairs and other promotional activities
- Research (e. g. establishing databases or research on other topics of interest)
- Assisting with the preparation of activities (seminars, Language Cafés, etc).
- Occasional visits to projects and host families to document activities and update descriptions.

### Working days:

Four days a week (Monday to Thursday, or Tuesday to Friday; it is arranged later), from 8:00 am to 17:00 pm. It could also include some extra activities announced with time.

