



Personal kit list for the expedition to Costa Rica (including Nicaragua and Panama)

General

The purchase of equipment for your expedition can be tricky and you should take extra care when putting together your personal expedition kit. Where possible keep the cost sensible and try to borrow any items that you can from your friends, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award department or Combined Cadet Force (CCF) if you have them at your school/college. Do not spend money on kit unless you really need to.

Also please be cautious when seeking advice, especially from people that may not have been to Costa Rica. Advice gleaned from other parties may be inaccurate for the season and the type of expedition that you are going to undertake. The attached list is your official expedition equipment list and should be strictly adhered to. If you are in any doubt then please contact either World Challenge or Cotswold Outdoor. Below is some general advice on equipment requirements and their necessity on your expedition to Costa Rica.

What to expect from the climate in Costa Rica and top tips for kit:

June, July and August fall in Costa Rica's rainy season – or 'green' season as the Costa Ricans call it. This doesn't mean it will rain all day everyday, but you should be prepared for a few short, sharp downpours some afternoons. Although the average temperature during the time you will be in the region will be in the mid 20's, there can be quite noticeable climatic differences from one area to another: the highlands can get quite chilly (sometimes down to near freezing at night), the cloudforest areas can be misty and cool, and the coasts and rainforests can be very hot and humid.

Rucksacks

These can vary enormously in price and specifications. When choosing a rucksack remember that, when loaded, an uncomfortable rucksack can give you a very hard time and it can be very bad for your back so try on several models in the shop. We recommend that you put weight into the pack in store and take plenty of time to make sure that the pack is adjusted correctly to fit your back and is comfortable to carry. We have trialled rucksacks at our Centre in Buxton and have found the Lowe Alpine TFX Horizon 65 and the Lowe Alpine TFX Horizon ND65 to be particularly suitable for our expeditions. They both have adjustable backs to customize the fit and provide maximum comfort which is particularly useful for Challengers who are not normally the 'standard adult size'. These rucksacks are comparatively reasonably priced and, because of the unique relationship between World Challenge and Cotswold Outdoor we have an exclusive opportunity for you to purchase these packs from Cotswold Outdoor at a 20% discount with your Cotswold challenger discount card.

When packing remember that you will need to keep about 10 litres of space in your rucksack free to accommodate the group equipment which is provided by World Challenge. This includes medical kits, safety ropes, cookers, fuel bottles, tents or hammocks.

Remember most rucksacks are not waterproof so it is essential you always line your rucksack with a **waterproof rucksack liner**, but avoid kitchen disposal bin bags as these are too flimsy and they won't last the duration of your expedition. A variety of more resistant bags,

ranging from sturdy rubble sack style liners to sophisticated waterproof bags, are available from most outdoor and many DIY shops.

Rucksacks in Costa Rica

In Costa Rica you will be doing a mixture of day treks and overnight treks. Daysacks will be required for the day treks, and also to carry your essentials whilst travelling from one phase to another, so you need to make sure it is at least 30 litres and has comfortable shoulder straps. A waist strap is preferable for added support but not essential. As all main treks are unsupported, a well fitted rucksack is essential, and you need to ensure it is at least 65 litres.

Sleeping bags

Sleeping well is an extremely important part of your expedition. There are two types of filling used in sleeping bags: down (i.e. feathers) and synthetic. Down bags are usually warmer and easier to handle for their weight and pack size but offer little insulation if wet. Synthetic bags remain warm when wet but will be heavier and bulkier than down bags. All sleeping bags are rated by season and as a general rule:

- 2 season bag - suitable down to around + 5 °C
- 3 season bag - suitable down to around - 5 °C
- 4 season bag - suitable down to around -10 °C

All ratings are only a guideline, if you know that you feel the cold when sleeping it may be advisable to use a warmer bag than recommended.

Recommendation for Costa Rica

For those attempting a high altitude trek, a 3 season sleeping bag is recommended. It can get cold, sometimes down to freezing, on the mountains. For those not trekking at altitude a 2 season sleeping bag is recommended. If you're prone to feeling the cold you can always add a little more warmth by using a sleeping bag liner – see below.

Sleeping bag liners

Designed to help keep your sleeping bag clean and add a couple of extra degree's warmth, *silk* or *cotton liners* pack down small and can be washed easily. A single duvet cover, although slightly bulkier, can make a good less expensive alternative. *Fleece liners* are bulkier but upgrade a sleeping bag by one season. Sleeping bag liners are very useful if you expect to experience different weather and climatic conditions on expedition as they provide some versatility. They are also useful when staying at budget hotels/hostels where you may prefer to use your own linen.

Recommendation for Costa Rica

A cotton or silk sleeping bag liner will be fine for Costa Rica. It can be used in place of your sleeping bag in warmer areas and will add an extra layer of insulation if you feel the cold at night whilst on your trek.

Sleeping mats

When you sleep directly on the ground in your sleeping bag, you lose body heat. Sleeping mats are designed to insulate you from the ground and can make a difference of around 2 - 4°C to the warmth of your sleeping bag. There are basically two types of sleeping mats: foam and inflatable mats. *Foam mats* are cheap and reliable, however it is important to have a good quality foam mat - the cheapest mats may not last the duration of the expedition and will provide very little protection. *Inflatable mats* are more comfortable and offer more insulation but are more expensive and could puncture, though repair kits are available. It is not necessary to purchase this for your expedition as long as you have a good quality foam mat, unless you feel you require the additional warmth.

Recommendation for Costa Rica

Either a foam or inflatable mat will be fine for Costa Rica. Practically speaking the inflatable ones tend to pack down smaller and so can be more easily packed inside your rucksack.

Walking boots

There are two types of boots: leather and fabric. As a general rule of thumb *leather boots will* give slightly better support to your ankle and will last longer but do take longer to break in. *Fabric boots* are extremely popular and perform well in warm-weather destinations. They offer greater comfort and breathability and are perfectly suitable for your expedition. Whichever type of boot you chose they must have a rigid sole with a good tread and good ankle-support. It is advisable to purchase your boots well before your expedition and wear them for a few small treks to make sure they are comfortable.

Recommendation for Costa Rica

Due to the hot, wet and humid weather conditions of Costa Rica, breathable fabric boots would be more appropriate for your expedition.

Waterproofs (shell layer)

When you are out all day, good protection from the elements is essential for comfort and safety. Breathable fabrics are advisable but do not spend a lot of money on fabrics such as Gore-Tex unless you plan to use them on a regular basis after your expedition. Essential features of a jacket include an integral hood with stiffened peak and full storm flaps covering zips and pockets, which are accessible when wearing a rucksack. Waterproof trousers and jackets should also have taped seams. The requirement for a good quality 'shell' that will give reliable protection from the wind and rain, as opposed to simpler light-weight waterproofs, will depend on the climate and altitude of the treks on your itinerary.

Recommendation for Costa Rica

As you will be in Costa Rica during the rainy season it is essential to take waterproof clothing. Breathable fabrics are strongly recommended due to the humidity.

Fleece jackets

Fleece jackets vary enormously in price. The aim of a fleece jacket is to keep you warm as part of a layering system. The layering system works by trapping warm air between the layers, so baggy fitting layers are not effective. Fleeces 'wick' (expel) moisture away from the body and retain little water, but beware of cheap imitations as they will not wick efficiently and weigh more. The majority of fleeces are not windproof so they usually need a shell layer to cover them if it is cold and windy (i.e. your waterproof jacket and trousers). Micro fleeces add an additional layer of warmth.

Recommendation for Costa Rica

The temperature can drop overnight, sometimes down to freezing on the higher altitude treks, so it is advisable to take a fleece with you to Costa Rica.

Base Layers

As previously mentioned, warmth and comfort is attained by the layering system. Thermals are the first layer or base layer and should be close fitting to work effectively. Their aim is to wick moisture away from the skin and dry quickly. They are usually available in different weights and can be quite inexpensive but avoid those made from cotton as these do not have any wicking properties. Technical synthetic fabrics such as polyester or polypropylene are ideal. Cotton, however, may well be appropriate for hot climates although, once wet, cotton becomes cold and clammy and takes a long time to dry.

Recommendation for Costa Rica

If trekking at altitude the nights will be cold so it is advisable to bring a good set of base layers to keep you warm. For the phases of your expedition in humid areas, synthetic fabrics are ideal (cotton fabrics will get wet and stay wet). Long sleeved tops that can act as protection against insects and the sun are useful (long enough to tuck into trousers and collars to protect around the neck).

Water Bottles

Keeping fully hydrated is essential, you will drink far more water than normal whilst trekking. Whilst on expedition you must carry at least two 1L water bottles, one to purify your water in, and one to drink from. Additional water storage may be required for some destinations.

Recommendation for Costa Rica

You need to carry between 2-3 litres of water with you on your main treks.

Walking Poles

These are particularly useful for longer treks (5 days plus) or high mountain treks. Research shows that the use of two walking poles can reduce the strain on the back, leg-joints, ankles and knees by up to 60%, especially on down hill stretches when carrying rucksacks. If purchasing walking poles please note that cost does not necessarily represent extra quality, and two is better than one, but one is better than none at all!

Recommendation for Costa Rica

Walking poles are not completely essential but they can be a big help on all main treks.

Money Belt

These are designed to be worn on the waist under your clothing for maximum security. Ideally the money belt pouch should be large enough to take a passport and keep your cash unfolded. A money belt is highly recommended for your expedition to Costa Rica.

Mosquito nets

Due to the risk of insect borne diseases in Costa Rica you will need a mosquito net. Nets may be required for your project phase (if you are going to be sleeping in a classroom for example) and for any time you spend 'sleeping under the stars' (i.e. without tents). For any nights that you are camping in tents you will not need a mosquito net as the tent doors and windows are screened with mesh.

You need to ensure that your net is impregnated with insecticide such as permethrin. You can either buy a net that is already impregnated, or you can buy impregnating kits and do this yourself. You will need a single size hanging net (not a free-standing one). Box-shaped nets are very spacious but need two or four points to hang from; wedge or pyramid-shaped nets only need one hanging point, but are not so spacious. Either type is suitable. Bell or hoop nets are not recommended as they are more bulky to carry.

Individual kit list for Costa Rica

Base Layer	
2/ 3	T-shirts
2 pairs	Thin liner socks
3 pairs	Heavy duty walking socks
3 pairs	Underwear
1 set	Thermals (only for those doing Volcan Baru or Cerro Ena)
Warmth Layer / Trekwear	
2 pairs	Comfortable, strong, quick-drying trousers
1 pair	Comfortable cotton shorts or equivalent
1	Long-sleeved shirt or equivalent
1	Fleece Jacket (a microfleece is fine for those not trekking at altitude)
1 pair	Warm gloves (only for those doing Volcan Baru or Cerro Ena)
1	Wool or fleece hat (only for those doing Volcan Baru or Cerro Ena)
Protective layer	
1	Wide-brimmed sunhat (not baseball cap)
1	Good quality waterproof jacket with hood or lightweight waterproof jacket
1 pair	Good quality waterproof trousers
Misc	
1	Bathing costume
1 set	Old clothes for use on project phase
Footwear	
1 pair	Walking boots with good ankle support and semi-rigid sole
1 pair	Sandals with ankle strap
Equipment	
1	Large rucksack (65 litre)
1	Daysack (30 litres)
1	Rucksack liner to waterproof your kit
1	Sleeping bag (2/3 season) and compression sack
1	Sleeping bag liner
1	Sleeping mat (foam or inflatable)
1	Head torch with spare bulb and batteries
3	1 litre water bottles or equivalent hydration system
1 pair	Sunglasses (good quality, UV A and B reflective)
1	Towel (not beach towel, but lightweight travel towel)
1	Whistle
1 set	Fork, spoon, mug and plate/bowl (bowl is generally more practical)
1	Mosquito net
Optional	
1	Bandana
1 set	Playing cards
1	Paperback book
1 or 1 set	Collapsible walking poles
A / some	Small gifts for locals (e.g. pens, pencils, postcards etc)

Health and hygiene	
1	Washing / shaving kit
1 roll	Toilet paper
1	Large packet of wet wipes or antibacterial gel
1	Insect repellent (formulas with DEET tend to be the most effective)

1	Sunblock/ high factor suncream
1	Tube of lip sunblock / lip salve
Sufficient	Biodegradable soap
Sufficient	Sanitary products (females)
1	Antibacterial foot powder
Sufficient	Personal medication
1	Personal first aid kit to include antiseptic cream/wipes, assorted plasters, blister kit, Antihistamine for allergies (not Triludan), 10 x re-hydration sachets i.e. Dioralyte, painkillers i.e. paracetamol
Ancillaries	
1	Notebook/ journal and pen
1	Small penknife
1 pair	Gardening/work gloves for the project phase (if applicable – please refer to your project form)
1	Money belt
1	Cheap waterproof watch
1	Set of re-sealable plastic bags for waterproofing kit
1	Padlock
1	Inexpensive purse / wallet
Group items (per 3 /4 people or 'tent' group)	
1	Travel sewing kit
1	Spare boot laces
15m	Strong synthetic cord (paracord)
1	Roll of thick waterproof plastic tape (Gaffa Tape)
1	Box of waterproof matches/ lighter
1	Guide book
1	Spanish Phrase book
2	Bungees (elastic cords with hooks at each end)
Documentation	
1	Passport (must be valid for at least 6 months after your return date)
1	Visa (if applicable)
2	Copies of passport (photo page) – take these to build up day
4	Passport photos – take these to build up day
	Ensure that you complete your personal contact details online (on the expedition members' website) at least 4 weeks prior to your departure

Please note you are advised to travel to your destination in clothes from this kit list so as to avoid taking unnecessary items on expedition with you. They will only weigh you down!

Cost versus quality

Do not feel that you have to buy the most expensive equipment and do try to borrow as much as you can. If you are unable to borrow the equipment, Cotswold Outdoor provides an exclusive service offering Challengers, School Leaders and Expedition Leaders advice and discounted prices on clothing and equipment suitable for your specific expedition. You can either use their efficient mail order service (Tel: +44 (0)844 557 7755), visit their website (www.cotswoldoutdoor.com) or visit a Cotswold Outdoor shop personally for equipment advice. Don't forget to use your World Challenge discount card (if you haven't received yours please contact our Support Team on +44(0)1494 427 600 or email welcome@world-challenge.co.uk)!

If you intend to get a lot of use from your equipment prior to or after the expedition, then you may feel that you would prefer to buy leading brand items. These will probably last for longer, particularly if you envisage continuing your interest in the outdoors after the expedition. Manufacturers sometimes even offer lifetime guarantees on equipment such as rucksacks and waterproofs.