

# Monteverde, Costa Rica (sustainability and the environment)

CIEE Study Center fall / spring ☀️ 🏠 🏠

internship / natural history / spanish language / sustainability / tropical conservation biology



## program snapshot

- Participate in specially designed CIEE courses on sustainability and conservation
- Travel to remote and unique locations in Costa Rica and Nicaragua
- Intern at a local education, conservation, or development business, or an NGO
- Live with a Costa Rican family, and be immersed in the culture and language
- Get to know the organizations in the Costa Rica sustainability movement
- Take excursions to protected areas of rare and endangered biodiversity to learn about their threats and what can save them

## what you'll learn

The Sustainability and the Environment program gives students in environmental studies and related majors an in-depth understanding of sustainability and tropical conservation issues in the context of a progressive developing country, Costa Rica. The goals include providing both a theoretical foundation in conservation and sustainability principles, enforced with real-life examples, through lectures, field excursions, and an internship. Spanish courses and living with a local family offer students the chance to learn the language and immerse in the culture.

## thoughts from abroad

This program is for students who are as passionate about saving the world as they are willing to get dirty and sweaty while doing it. It is for the idealist who wants to understand the complexities of the pressures that affront global biodiversity such as population growth, consumption, urbanization, and globalization, but also wants to experience possible solutions firsthand.

This is possible in Costa Rica, home to astounding biological richness, a model nation for conservation in practice, yet also an example of a developing tropical country with the associated troubles of rampant, unregulated development and consumption. Our program is for serious students who want a challenging semester in which they come to know and understand the biodiversity that needs our protection, the scientific principles of conservation biology, the basics of sustainable development, and how to incorporate human society into conservation solutions, all while having the opportunity to intern in a conservation-related field. All of this, plus intensive exposure to the Spanish language and Costa Rican culture awaits students in Monteverde. We promise you an exhilarating, academically demanding, potentially life-changing semester as you explore some of the greatest challenges that humanity currently faces.

— Karen Masters, Resident Director

### About the Resident Director

Dr. Karen Masters has a B.S. from the University of Michigan, an M.S. from the University of Florida, and a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Princeton University. She has lived in Monteverde for more than 20 years and has been teaching at the CIEE Study Center in Monteverde since 1997. She currently studies the effects of climate change on epiphytic orchids in Monteverde and has published papers on a host of conservation-related research.

### About Other CIEE Staff

Marlene Brenes, Secretary and Bookkeeper, is a lifelong resident of La Cruz, a farming community near Monteverde. She was raised on a farm, now famous for its pioneering efforts in organic agriculture. Rolando McAdam, Logistics Coordinator, has lived in Monteverde for some 20+ years.

## about monteverde

Monteverde is a small community of 4,000 that accommodates up to 200,000 tourists each year on account of the incredible natural setting and unparalleled biodiversity. Its forest is located in the largest private reserve in Central America and reflects a long heritage of grassroots conservation. The reserve encompasses not only Cloud Forest but everything from Dry Forest to Rain Forest habitats. Monteverde's forests house over 2,500 species of plants, including over 500 species of orchids. In addition, Monteverde has over 60 species of amphibians, 100 species of mammals, and over 450 bird species, including the famed Resplendent Quetzal.

## academics

### Academic Program

The CIEE Study Center in Monteverde has a long tradition of high academic quality in the natural sciences. The Sustainability and the Environment program is open to environmental studies/science and related majors who have completed three courses related to environmental studies, including environmental science, conservation-related courses, policy and management, and/or sustainable development.

The program integrates lectures, field experience, student group work, lab exercises, an internship, and interactions with community members. Emphasis is placed on hands-on field observation of conservation and development projects throughout Costa Rica and parts of Nicaragua, as well as human-nature interactions and their application to the conservation of nature and socioeconomic development.

### Academic Culture

The Sustainability and the Environment program incorporates extensive experiential components. The required courses combine classroom-based academics with broad practical experience. Professors prepare the students in the classroom and accompany students on field trips. Given the number of projects and visits required for this course, students should expect an intense, yet rewarding semester. The Spanish language

courses are offered by the Centro Panamericano de Idiomas. There are nine levels of Spanish offered, with no more than four students per instructor.

### Nature of Classes

Classes are held with CIEE students only and are quite small and dynamic. There is no direct enrollment with local students.

### Grading System

Students are assessed using traditional evaluation tools, including tests, written reports and essays, participation in discussion and activities, and oral presentations. Standard letter grades of A, B, C, D, and F are given with pluses and minuses.



## where you'll study

The CIEE Study Center in Monteverde is located at the edge of the forest in a small, friendly, bilingual community surrounded by a cloud forest. Monteverde is free of biting insects and green all year-round. Monteverde's Cloud Forest has been studied for more than 25 years by both visiting and Costa Rican biologists. This widens the research opportunities available and acquaints students with practical biological problems associated with agricultural development, eco-tourism, and grassroots conservation efforts in developing countries.

## living

### Housing and Meals

Housing, meals, and local transportation costs are included in the program fee. Students are placed in individual homestays in Monteverde or nearby towns. They have their own room in the family's house, and the family provides three meals per day. During overnight field trips, students stay in simple hotels or field stations.

### Orientation

A three-day mandatory orientation session, conducted in Alajuela at the beginning of the program, introduces students to the country, culture, and academic program, as well as provides practical information about living in Costa Rica and the Monteverde community. It includes both structured activities and independent sightseeing. Students learn about the program, the various trips planned,

the calendar, and expectations. They also receive readers and other course materials at this time. While in Alajuela, students study urbanization and its relationship with food security and waste management. Upon arrival in Monteverde, a special orientation of the program site is held. Ongoing support is provided on an individual and group basis throughout the program.

### Internet

Students can access the Internet at the CIEE Study Center, in Internet cafés in Monteverde, and in some of the homestays. However, Internet access is not always available, particularly while traveling.

## eligibility

- Overall GPA 2.75
- 3 semesters of college-level environmental studies
- Some college-level Spanish language recommended

## duration

### Fall

15 weeks: mid-August—late November

### Spring

15 weeks: early February—late May

## culture

### Cultural Activities and Field Trips

Students interact with a variety of sectors of Costa Rican society including residents and business people of the Central Valley (for example, Alajuela), members of rural communities and border towns, indigents of landfill shantytowns, and communities of indigenous groups such as the BriBri of the Talamanca mountains and the Afro-Caribe people of Cahuita. Visits are made to two Nicaraguan locations where students meet the survivors of civil war, local farmers, and business people striving for the socioeconomic development that their neighbors in Costa Rica enjoy.

The program gives students a chance to see development projects from an insider's vantage point. Projects include an operational hydroelectric power plant plus a controversial proposed dam, a geothermal plant, and wind farms. They experience large-scale agri-business plantations of African oil palm, pineapple, banana, and sugar cane, and industrial livestock farms. They also visit small-scale agro-forestry projects for cacao and coffee production, hydroponic greenhouses, and subsistence farms of mixed crops and livestock. If they want, students can eat the products they learn about.

The semester is filled with opportunities to experience nature, learn about conservation initiatives, and meet the activists behind them. There are excursions to national parks and private reserves spanning diverse terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Students visit grassroots conservation organizations, such as the Monteverde Conservation League, to learn about how conservation on a shoe-string is accomplished and how environmentalism can foster economic development. Some of the rare and endangered ecosystems that the students are lucky to experience include Monteverde's Cloud Forest, the Sierpe mangroves, and the Indio Maíz Reserve of Nicaragua.

In addition, students visit important cultural sites, participate in local holidays, learn to cook Costa Rican food, and attend family events and community functions.

## internship

Internships in environmental education, farming, land management, ecotourism, reforestation, sustainable design, and green energy in and around the Monteverde community provide firsthand working knowledge and experience in sustainable activities. Students participate in a one-month internship once they have traveled extensively, had many lectures and discussions, and are ready to put theory into practice for themselves. Internships involve submitting a proposal to local schools, businesses, NGOs, or farms for placement. Students then put their ideas into practice, and assess the experience in written and oral presentations.

## costs

### CIEE Fees

Fall 2011: \$13,600

Spring 2011: available 8/15/11

The CIEE program fees for 2011–12 include tuition, scientific equipment and lab fees, housing, all meals, local transportation, optional on-site airport meet and greet, full-time leadership and support, orientation, cultural activities, local excursions, field trips, national park entry fees, outdoor camping equipment, a comprehensive student handbook, pre-departure advising, and a CIEE iNext travel card which provides insurance and other travel benefits.

### Estimated Additional Costs (Fall 2011)

Personal Expenses	\$ 800
Transportation	\$ 750
(round-trip based on U.S. East Coast departure)	
Books and Supplies	\$ 60
<b>Total Estimated Additional Costs</b>	<b>\$ 1,610</b>

Check our website for current fees.



## coursework

### Program Requirements

CIEE participants are required to take all five courses. The program is designed to provide a full semester of electives for environmental studies/science majors. Because requirements vary between schools, contact your study abroad office for course equivalents and credits awarded toward your degree.

### Credit

Total recommended credit for the semester is 17 semester/25.5 quarter hours.

Contact hours for the Spanish language course are 60 hours and recommended credit is 4 semester/6 quarter hours per course. Contact hours for the science-based courses exceed 60 and recommended credit is 4 semester/6 quarter hours, unless otherwise noted.

### Languages of Instruction

Spanish, English

### Faculty

Ecologist Matt Gasner teaches Tropical Conservation Biology and Policy and draws on extensive experience to bring to life the issues surrounding the future of tropical biodiversity. His research includes investigations of how ongoing climate change may impact bird communities and the habitats that they occupy. Additionally, there are two teaching assistants (often past program participants) who work closely with program participants and facilitate students' cultural and social adaptation to the Monteverde experience. Dr. Karen Masters, CIEE Resident Director, teaches the Sustainability and Internship courses. Spanish language courses are taught by the Centro Panamericano Language Institute Staff.

## courses

### Required CIEE Courses

#### BIOL 3001 MTVE/CONS 3001 MTVE

##### Tropical Conservation Biology and Policy

Students learn the scientific foundations for biodiversity conservation in tropical, developing countries, see how these principles inform environmental policy and management, and assess where improvement is needed. Students explore topics such as biodiversity, land ethics, extinction, climate change, ecosystem valuation, ecological restoration, and environmental governance. Hands-on exercises during field trips enhance students' understanding of concepts. Contact hours: 120 (30 lecture hours, 90 lab hours). Recommended credit: 4 semester/6 quarter hours. *Instructor: Matthew Gasner, MSc.*

#### BIOL 3002 MTVE

##### Costa Rican Natural History

This course consists of field instruction in three spectacular ecosystems: cloud forest, rain forest, and rain-shadow forest. We explore them both by day and by night. Students learn about select flora and fauna, how they interact, and how they are influenced by abiotic factors such as climate. The ultimate aim is to provide a fuller understanding of the beauty, complexity, and fragility of nature—a fundamental complement to their parallel courses in conservation biology and sustainable development. Contact hours: 30. Recommended credit: 2 semester/3 quarter hours.

#### ENVI 3001 MTVE

##### Sustainability: Environment, Economy, and Society

This course introduces the interdisciplinary concept of sustainable development and explores sustainability practices using examples in Monteverde, and around Costa Rica. Issues treated include urbanization, food security, agriculture, forestry, water resources, energy production, trade, tourism, poverty, and literacy. Ecological design principles are examined in agriculture and forestry practices. Hands-on exercises during field trips enhance students' understanding of concepts. Contact hours: 120 (30 lecture hours, 90 lab hours). Recommended credit: 4 semester/6 quarter hours. *Instructor: Karen L. Masters, Ph.D., CIEE Resident Director*

#### INSH 3003 MTVE

##### Conservation and Sustainability Internship

Students participate in a one-month internship that may include environmental education, ecological restoration, horticulture, agriculture, or institutional development, offered by private businesses, NGOs, and educational institutions. They enhance their understanding of biological conservation and rural development and become sensitized to how different sectors of Costa Rican society approach sustainability issues. Students learn about the mission and day-to-day operations of their agency, develop personal and interpersonal skills, and gain new technical abilities and knowledge. Total hours: 135 hours. Recommended credit: 3 semester/4.5 quarter hours. *Instructor: Karen L. Masters, Ph.D., CIEE Resident Director*

#### SPAN 1001 MTVE Beginning Spanish Language I

#### SPAN 1002 MTVE Beginning Spanish Language II

#### SPAN 1003 MTVE Beginning Spanish Language III

#### SPAN 2001 MTVE Intermediate Spanish Language I

#### SPAN 2002 MTVE Intermediate Spanish Language II

#### SPAN 2003 MTVE Intermediate Spanish Language III

#### SPAN 3001 MTVE Advanced Spanish Language I

#### SPAN 3002 MTVE Advanced Spanish Language II

#### SPAN 3003 MTVE Advanced Spanish Language III

Though grammar and composition are included, Spanish language courses focus on conversational Spanish and include many cultural activities. Students are evaluated for speaking and writing abilities and are placed in classes of a maximum of four students per instructor. Contact hours: 60. Recommended credit: 4 semester/6 quarter hours. *Instructors: Centro Panamericano Language Institute Staff*

