

# Monteverde, Costa Rica (sustainability and the environment)

CIEE Study Center fall / spring ☀️ 🏠 📅

conservation / environmental studies / internship / spanish language / sustainability



## program snapshot

- Specially designed CIEE courses on environment, sustainability, and conservation
- Visits to businesses, NGOs, and grassroots projects that practice sustainability and effective conservation
- Field trips to national parks and reserves to learn about tropical ecosystems
- Excursions to agricultural, conservation, biological, and natural history sites
- Internship in environmental education, conservation, or organic farming
- Opportunity to live with a Costa Rican family to improve Spanish language skills

## 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 conservation biology, highlighting the challenges and rewards of identifying and implementing effective projects in a local context. Its goals include offering students a theoretical foundation of conservation and sustainability, hands-on exposure through visits and an internship, courses in Spanish and opportunities to use Spanish in daily life, and an appreciation of Costa Rican natural history.

## 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 at 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 over 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

Kathy Rockwell, Logistics Coordinator, is a lifelong Monteverde resident and daughter of Quaker settlers in the region. Prior to working with CIEE, Kathy was the Assistant Manager at the Monteverde butterfly garden. In addition to several teaching faculty, there are two teacher assistants, normally past participants, who work with program participants.

## about monteverde

Monteverde is a small community of 4,000 that accommodates up to 200,000 tourists each year. Its forest is located in the largest private reserve in Central America and reflects a long heritage of grassroots conservation. Despite its economic benefits, ecotourism has associated costs: immigration, disparity of wealth, increased consumption, and many other factors that put pressure on the forest and the economy. As Monteverde has grown as an eco-tourist site, other activities have flourished, including a K-12 bilingual school focusing on environmental education, a fair trade coffee cooperative, and women's cooperatives.

## 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 work, an internship experience, and readings. 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, social justice, national security, and the economy.

### 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 consequently 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, laboratory practicals, participation in discussion and activities, and oral presentation of readings. 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 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 over 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 San José 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 San José, students study issues of urbanization and resultant environmental problems, like water use, trash, and air pollution. 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 San José and Monteverde, and in some of the homestays. Internet access will not always be available, however, 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: late August–early December

### Spring

15 weeks: early February–late May

## culture

### Cultural Activities and Field Trips

Students take trips to sites of many agricultural practices: coffee farms, organic farms, multinational export monocultures, biofuel plantations, cattle ranches, dairy operations, and tree plantations. In addition, they visit women's cooperatives, fair trade cooperatives, and other social organizations behind sustainable development.

Trips to sites of conservation interest include national parks and private reserves, ecotouristic areas, and NGOs. Students also visit grassroots conservation efforts, including Ostional's sustainable turtle project, EARTH Institute, Bribri Indigenous Reserve, Santa Rosa National Park's restoration ecology efforts, the Children's Eternal Rainforest, animal rescue centers, Great Green Macaw nest box project, and sustainable forestry projects.

Trips to sites of biological and natural history interest include Manuel Antonio moist forest and beach reserve, Selva Tica private rainforest reserve, the dry forest beach protected area of Bahía Junquial, and Caño Negro swamp.

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

## costs

### CIEE Fees

Fall 2009: \$12,900

Spring 2010: available 8/15/09

The CIEE fees for 2009–10 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, comprehensive student handbook, pre-departure advising, and a CIEE iNext travel card, which provides insurance and other travel benefits.

### Estimated Additional Costs (Fall 2009)

Personal Expenses	\$ 700
Transportation	\$ 800
(round-trip based on U.S. East Coast departure)	
Books and Supplies	\$ 40
<b>Total Estimated Additional Costs</b>	<b>\$ 1,540</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 recommend credit for the semester is 17 semester/25.5 quarter hours.

Contact hours for the Spanish language course and the biology-related courses are 60 hours and recommended credit is 4 semester/6 quarter hours per course, unless otherwise indicated.

### Languages of Instruction

Spanish, English

### Faculty

All courses are taught by local faculty.

## courses

### Required CIEE Courses

#### BIOL 3001 MTVE/CONS 3001 MTVE

##### Tropical Conservation Biology and Policy

The importance of tropical biodiversity and the main drivers leading to its loss are the focus of this course. Students learn the fundamentals of conservation biology and how they are applied to conservation problems in the Tropics. Lectures outline current theory and are supported by readings from scientific literature. Field exercises demonstrate common techniques used to inventory biodiversity and determine which components are most at risk. Visits to parks, businesses, NGOs, and grassroots conservation efforts show how conservation is practiced in Costa Rica.

#### ENVI 3001 MTVE

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

We are living beyond our means as a global community. This course explores current thinking on how to live more sustainably. Costa Rica is a global example of not only conservation, but also of sustainable development. Students learn about the problems of overusing natural and non-renewable resources, the causes and consequences of urbanization and poverty, and environmental damage. Moreover, the course explores such issues as social inequity and national security that accompany resulting environmental degradation. Students explore why such issues are particularly acute in the Tropics and how developing economies with high population growth can develop sustainably. This course attempts to show what has been tried, assess the value of such attempts, and discusses where to go next.

#### HIST 3001 MTVE

##### Costa Rican Natural History

Living for a semester in Costa Rica would not be complete without visits to its world-renown reserves and national parks, learning about monkeys, sloths, butterflies, and whales. This course takes students to spectacular natural areas and compares them with human-transformed land. Students learn about the ecosystems, key species living there, and how these species interact in intact and disturbed habitats. Contact hours: 30. Recommended credit: 2 semester/3 quarter hours.

#### INSH 3003 MTVE

##### Conservation and Sustainability Internship

Internships in environmental education, organic farming, conservation, ecotourism, reforestation, and other activities in and around the Monteverde community provide firsthand working knowledge and experience in sustainable activities. Students participate in a one-month full-time internship once they have traveled extensively, had many lectures and discussions, and are ready to put theory into practice for themselves. Internships involve a proposal to local schools, businesses, NGOs, or farms, putting their ideas into practice, and an assessment of the experience through both written papers and oral presentations. Contact hours: 96 (22.5 theoretical/70 practical). Recommended credit: 3 semester/4.5 quarter hours.

#### SPAN 1001 MTVE, Beginning Spanish Language

#### SPAN 2001 MTVE, Intermediate Spanish Language

#### SPAN 3001 MTVE, Advanced Spanish Language

Though grammar and composition are included, Spanish language courses focus on conversational Spanish with many cultural activities.

