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**COSTA RICA
OUTWARD BOUND**

t: 1.800.676.2018
f: 1.866.374.2483
e: info@crrobs.org

t: +506.2278.6062
PO Box 1817-2050
San Pedro, San Jose

Dear Academic Advisor:

Costa Rica Rainforest Outward Bound School, CRROBS, is an approved, registered academic institution in Costa Rica with over nine years of experience educating students around the world.

Through our program, students are offered credit in: Spanish Language, Cultural Anthropology, Natural History, and Recreational Leadership. In addition, students have earned credit in: Art, Biology, Economics, Environmental Studies, Folklore, Geography, History, Literature, Philosophy, Medicine, Nutrition, Physical Education, Political Science and Recreational Management and Leadership via independent study through their respective universities.

In order to obtain these credits, students read various texts in anthropology, natural history, sustainable development, and Spanish Language. Moreover, they are exposed to native Costa Rican cultures through village homestays and service projects. Ultimately, this experiential learning process teaches students through direct exposure—an exposure that can not be experienced in a traditional classroom. As a result CRROBS credit has been endorsed through a number of academic universities throughout the United States, Canada, and Costa Rica.

Below is a listing of colleges and universities that have granted credit to CRROBS semester students:

- Stanford University
- Georgetown University
- Evergreen State College
- Delta College
- Michigan State University
- University of Colorado
- Greenfield Community College
- Wayne State University
- University of Toronto
- George Washington University
- College of Charleston
- Humboldt State University
- University of Victoria
- Williams College
- Sonoma University
- Prescott College
- University of Georgia
- Rutgers
- Colorado Mountain College
- Southwest Texas State University
- University of Maine
- Arizona State University
- San Jose State University
- California State University
- Oberlin College
- Stetson University
- Western State College
- University of British Columbia
- Earth University, Costa Rica
- University of Costa Rica
- Coastal Carolina University
- Seattle Central Community College
- University of Delaware

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like to discuss any aspect of the curriculum at our school.

Sincerely,

Jim Rowe, PhD
Executive Director

Laurence Shaw
Communications Director

Maggie Foote
Admissions

SUMMER SEMESTER COURSE

Imagine rappelling down a waterfall, rafting through huge rapids, hiking from one coast of a country to the other, and surfing the premier breaks of Central America's Pacific coast. Now imagine yourself engaging with the locals who live in the rainforest and staying at the home of your native guide. Our semester course contains all of this and more in a unique mix of adventure activities, cultural exploration, environmental learning, and group development. It packs 60 days with physical and emotional challenge, as well as intellectual stimulation. Students will stretch their bodies and minds in ways previously unimaginable while being encouraged to question their own realities and belief structures as they explore lifestyles different from their own. Students will explore issues of economic development and environmental degradation through first-hand exposure. Throughout the course, students work closely and effectively with other group members, an experience which is sure to establish the closest of bonds. This experience inspires responsibility, leadership, perseverance, and compassion. The Summer semester program is an unparalleled opportunity for growth and learning.

Activities included in the 60-day Summer Semester course:

- Coast-to-coast rainforest trek from the Atlantic to the Pacific
- Whitewater raft captaining clinic
- Ropes assisted tree canopy climb
- American Red Cross First Aid and Adult, Child, and Infant CPR certifications
- Homestay cultural and language immersions
- Solo experience, up to two days in duration
- Waterfall rappelling
- Whitewater kayak instruction
- Surfing instruction

COURSE OVERVIEW

The 60-day course is divided into three distinct phases: land, surf, and white water.

Please note: The following itinerary may change in sequence and content, and the duration of all activities depend on group dynamics, current weather conditions, and other factors.

COSTA RICA LAND PHASE: *Hike the Atlantic to the Pacific*

The group begins their coast-to-coast hike from the Caribbean town of Limon, located in the middle of Costa Rica's East coast. The route continues to the central highlands regions and back down towards the Pacific Ocean. During the 28 day hike, students have the unique opportunity to experience three types of rainforests first hand as they hike through low, medium, and high elevation rain and cloud forests. Students learn how to identify first, second, and third generation growth rainforests. They are also exposed to the stark realities of deforestation.

During the land phase, the group spends several days living with families in rural communities. Most of the communities are very remote, without roads, telephones, or electricity and can only be reached on foot or on horseback. Students are encouraged to participate in the families' daily activities, such as milking cows, making cheese, harvesting corn, rice, beans, sugarcane or pineapples, or helping with whatever activity is taking place at the time.

In addition to the many cultural experiences, students engage in exciting adventure activities. These activities require newly acquired technical skills, attention to safety and team work. They will climb a strangler fig tree and rappel down a 60ft waterfall at the local Shaman's house. These activities are not only thrilling challenges, but they are designed to teach students the value of teamwork and trust.

The rainforest is an incredible resource for learning about the natural environment. Our local guides explain about the various medicinal and edible plants that the rainforest has to offer. On all of our courses, we try to give more than we take from the rainforest and the communities that we stay with. The semester course contains several days of environmental and community service projects as a way to contribute to the local communities.

SURF PHASE: *Central Pacific Coast and/or Nicoya Peninsula*

Costa Rica is one of very few countries which has good surfing opportunities all year-round. Instruction is provided both at beginner and more advanced levels. Although students progress at individual rates, most are able to ride waves at the end of this phase and have learned the values of persistence and tenacity that are necessary to learn this rigorous sport.

Surfing is taught from a holistic approach. Lessons about wave formation, lunar phases, coastal ecology, beach conservation, and ocean rescue are incorporated throughout the curriculum.

WHITEWATER KAYAKING PHASE: *Hard Shell Kayaking*

Costa Rica is world-renown for its whitewater, as well as the natural beauty that lines the river banks. No prior experience apart from being a competent swimmer is necessary for the kayak phase. All students are given the opportunity to progress as quickly as they are able under the guidance of CRROBS white water technicians.

The whitewater kayaking phase teaches both basic and intermediate kayaking skills, mastering the basics on class I, II, & III rapids. Whitewater teaches people to make decisions early and to commit whole-heartedly to those decisions, as well as to work effectively with others and to stay calm under pressure.

WHITEWATER RAFT CAPTAINING PHASE: *Raft Guiding*

Many of the skills learned while kayaking, such as river reading and paddle navigation contribute to the development of raft guiding skills. Students learn to captain a six person raft through class I, II, & III rapids. Commanding fellow group members to paddle through challenging whitewater is valuable lesson which improves leadership skills and can aid in the development of certain job skills.

For nearly all participants, the semester course is a life-impacting experience. Students leave the course with a new understanding of themselves and the world around them, profound personal experiences to look back on, and often life-long friendships. Many CRROBS alumni have remarked that it has actually taken them years to fully realize the impact of their Summer Semester experience.

Summer Semester Course Credit

Guiding Educational Philosophies

CRROBS courses are based on the educational pedagogy of 50 years of Outward Bound experience and use many principles of Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, developed at Harvard University. All students participate in group discussions, readings, and activities. Outward Bound courses create an environment for students to learn through personal experience. The pedagogical foundation is one that demands personal reflection, group communication, cultural sensitivity, mental expansion and physical commitment.

Rationale for Academic Credit

This Outward Bound semester course gives the student a safe, supportive environment in which to study the lands and cultures of Central America. Students participating in the course have unique access to the people and places which global debates have focused on for the last four hundred years.

As students spend time in Costa Rica, Panama, and Nicaragua, their experiences in the wilderness and in local villages push them toward developing not only cognitive skills but also psychomotor and affective skills. For example, as students see direct consequences for their choices while rafting, they strengthen their decision-making process. They learn the importance of addressing local community needs through service projects, the value of effective communication while assisting fellow students rappel down a cliff, and develop an understanding of ecology through hiking through the rainforest. Furthermore, students see first-hand the ramifications international economics have on small village communities and the effects of deforestation.

More specifically, students enrolled in the course will focus on the following intellectual, physical, and emotional activities:

Cognitive Foci

- Reading of required texts on anthropology, natural history, and sustainable development
- Discussion of tropical ecology, zoology, botany, agriculture, and environmental issues from both scientific and metaphysical perspectives
- Understanding of native Costa Rican cultures through homestays and interviews
- Communication in Spanish

Psychomotor Foci

- Rainforest navigation, travel, and survival
- Whitewater rafting
- Minimal impact camping
- SCUBA diving
- Rainforest canopy climbing
- Farming in tropical landscapes
- Rappelling and backpacking

Affective Development (Personal Growth)

- Completing seemingly insurmountable tasks
- Contributing personal skills to group efforts
- Developing leadership skills
- Communicating effectively

CRROBS Course Descriptions

**Note: Credit is given on a Pass/Fail basis*

Spanish Course Description

Suggested Credit: 3 credits or the equivalent of one full class

This course stresses Spanish speaking and comprehension skills. For the duration of the 85-day course, students have daily opportunities to practice their Spanish skills with instructors and natives that they meet in the countries of travel. Throughout the course, students are accompanied by one bilingual instructor that speaks English and Spanish and one Costa Rican instructor that speaks only Spanish. Instructors incorporate Spanish instruction and presentation as much as possible, as well as informal Spanish communication. Interaction with communities and country natives is an integral part of the course. Students participate in homestays in very remote regions of Costa Rica where families only speak Spanish.

Cultural Anthropology Course Description

Suggested Credit: 3 credits or the equivalent of one full class

This course focuses on rural Costa Rican culture, indigenous Cabecar communities, Nicaraguan culture, and the Afro-Caribbean culture in Panama. Students pass through several rural communities in Costa Rica during their land phase. They stay overnight with several families in diverse regions of the country. In Nicaragua (Ometepe Island in Lake Nicaragua) and in Panama (the Isla Solarte community) they are exposed to other Central American cultures. Students analyze agricultural systems, religious belief systems, and indigenous cultures. Special emphasis is placed on studying and evaluating the impact that Spanish and North American cultures have had on the local indigenous populations. They also explore the differences between rural and metropolitan life, and the relationships between the natives and their natural environment. Students discuss issues in daily seminar discussions and present information that they have learned through interviews and interaction with the families they visit. Time spent in Costa Rica, Panama, and Nicaragua allows students to make comparisons about varied cultures in a relatively small region.

Natural History Course Description

Suggested Credit: 3 credits or the equivalent of one full class

This course places a strong emphasis on rainforest ecology and provides an understanding of tropical dry forest and coastal ecology. Rainforests contain about one-half of the world's animal and plant diversity, and Costa Rica has one of the largest percentages of protected rainforest in the world. In Costa Rica alone, students will pass through an incredible variety of ecosystems: lowland coastal tropical rainforest, mountain tropical rainforest, cloud forest, subtropical and tropical alpine tundra, tropical dry forest, mangrove, intertidal zone, and transitional forest. While hiking through varied rainforest areas, students have continuous opportunities to examine the flora and fauna of the rainforest, from leaf-cutter ants to hanging bromeliads. Students will stop routinely to study new plants, insects, and animals. Both large-scale ecosystems and micro-environments will be studied, as well as individual plant and animal functions. Costa Rican native instructors have an extensive knowledge of the traditional medicinal uses of plants, which are explained both throughout the hiking phases and during intensive medicinal plant walks. Students also witness the impact of modern development on the environment. Issues surrounding development and conservation will be debated during seminar discussions.

Latin America History

Suggested Credit: 3 credits or the equivalent of one full course

Columbus' voyage began a new period in the history of colonialism. This course examines the complex world that the Spanish Conquest destroyed and explores the "New World" created in its aftermath. The course opens with a journey into the worlds of the Indigenous cultures of Costa Rica, Panama and Nicaragua. By spending time with local families students observe the Latin American way of life. With local families, students discuss how globalization and local politics are changing and affecting the community. Students are assigned readings about Latin America History and use local newspapers and conduct interviews with local residents to enhance their knowledge of the subject matter. Students will discuss foreign policy in detail, focusing on the long term impact of past policies and policy alternatives for the future. Students also learn about the roles of women and men in Central American culture, racism, and how the past is shaping the future for Central Americans.

Recreational Leadership Course Description

Suggested Credit: 3 credits or the equivalent of one full course

This course teaches students principles of leadership not only applicable to outdoor settings, but to any group environment. From the course start, students assume various leadership roles, such as the leader of the day, the motivator, the safety guru, etc. which are rotated daily. Students reflect and discuss their own performance in these roles as well as the performance of their peers. Pertinent leadership topics are discussed in seminars in the evenings, such as group dynamics, decision-making, gender roles, and risk management. Students learn the spectrum of directive to non-directive leadership styles and when to implement various styles. Additionally, students study facilitation techniques, tone-setting, debriefing, and transference. Individuals leave the course with a solid understanding of the consensus decision-making process, as well as how to handle emergency situations and confrontational situations.

Coastal Ecology

Suggested Credit: 3 credits or the equivalent of one full course

This course examines the ecology and evolution of coral reef communities, sea grass beds, and mangroves. As they explore particular coastal areas they discuss issues such as the degradation of reef-building corals by microalgae, hurricanes, coral bleaching, diseases of corals and sea urchins, over-fishing, and pollution. Students participate in lectures and field research exercises mostly in Bocas del Toro, Panama.

While participating in kayaking and whitewater rafting activities instructors make a point to teach students about river ecology, watersheds, effects of urban runoff and the overall importance of rivers in our ecosystem. Students are able to see for themselves the importance of these rivers and how they have formed over the years. The effects of dams in the region, pollution and endangered river species are a few examples of the topics discussed among the group members.

CPR and First Aid

Suggested Credit: 2 credits or the equivalent of one full course

Training in American Red Cross Adult, Child, and Infant CPR and First Aid is provided by an American Red Cross certified instructor. Students have the opportunity to gain certification in these disciplines. Successful certification is required for credit.

Course Readings

Land Phases

The Approach to Medical Problems (in entirety)
A Neotropical Companion (Chapters 1-4), John Kricher
"Farming on Rain Forest Soils," *Breakfast of Biodiversity*
"The Rain Forest is Neither Fragile Nor Stable," *Breakfast of Biodiversity*
"Taking Population Seriously," *Lessons of the Rainforest*, Lappe and Schurman
"Tropical Forests and Life on Earth," *Lessons of the Rainforest*
"Rainforested Regions of Latin America," *Lessons of the Rainforest*, Ghilleen Prance
"Indigenous Peoples," *Lessons of the Rainforest*, Jason Clay
"A New Leaf," *Lessons of the Rainforest*, Morris Berman
"Beyond Anthropocentrism," *Thinking Like a Mountain*, John Seed
"Chief Seattle's Message," *Thinking Like a Mountain*
"Living Within Limits: Ecology, Economics, and Population Taboos," *Voices for the Earth*, Garrett Hardin
"The Cattle Raiser," *The Impact of Modern Man*,
"Women and Work in Rural Areas," *Women and Development in the Third World*, Janet Henshall Momsen
"The Search for Sustainability in Amazonian Pastures," Serrao and Toledo
"Surmounting Barriers to Forest Regeneration," Nepstad, Uhl, and Serrao
"Applied Ecology and Agroecology," *Race to Save the Tropics*, Stephen Gliessman

Water Phases

"Shorelines and Estuaries: Turning the Tide," *Save the Earth*, Robert Earll
"The Global Citizen," *Voices for the Earth*, Donella Meadows
"Searching for El Nino," *Newsweek*, Sharon Begley
"God Bless the Child," Ben Marcus
"Power Dreams"
"Oceans and Seas: Failing Fisheries," *Save the Earth*, John Beddington
"River Morphology: The Dynamics of Running Water,"
"Some Do's and Don'ts of Modern Advanced Kayaking"
"Swimming Self Rescue"
"Self Rescue: Rolling"
"Rivers and Lakes: Damming the Flow," *Save the Earth*, Philip Williams
"River Camping and Cookery"
"Conservation: Preserving the River Resource"
"The River of Life," *The Living Book of Nature*

Independent Study Credit: a viable alternative

What is an independent study project?

An independent study project is a project you conduct to learn more about topics that are intriguing to you and that are relevant to your Outward Bound course. We encourage students to be creative and original in choosing a topic, research methods, and a final presentation. *Please note you are responsible for arranging the approval of credit at your university or other educational institution.*

Academic Credit for Your Project: From Idea to Credit

(1) Consider subjects you will enjoy discovering more about while on the course.

(2) Present specific topics you would like to pursue to professors from your home university, particularly professors who can give you feedback about those topics and who can help you get university credit for the course.

For university credit, you often need a sponsor (usually a professor or advisor). Discuss with the sponsor the basic principles of Outward Bound, the semester course, and the independent project that you want to pursue. It is best to have your ideas and plans well developed but flexible enough to accommodate suggestions and/or requirements from your sponsor.

3) Before starting the course, establish a contract containing the type and number of credits that will be awarded. The contract should include your sponsor's and institution's expectations regarding project presentation and evaluation.

Sample Ideas for Independent Study Topics

Below are some ideas for independent study topics. The deciding factor in topic choice should be a topic in which your passion and imagination will motivate you towards completion. This topic may or may not be on this list of suggestions.

Anthropology:

Personally observe and interview people from Costa Rican rainforest cultures, rural Nicaraguan cultures, and Panamanian Afro-Caribbean culture.

Art:

Study local arts and find the correlation between artistic expression and cultural beliefs.

Biology:

Document ways that local people use traditional plants in the rainforest. Keep a journal of different species seen in course areas. Identify them in field or upon return.

Communication:

Analyze communication styles within the group and their results. Explore how communication styles vary according to environment, stress, sense of urgency, time of day, or other factors and the impacts of the different communication styles. Track the four stages of group development.

Economics:

Compare the advantages and disadvantages of a diverse local economy, such as Nicaragua's, versus a more export-based economy like that of Costa Rica.

Environmental Studies:

Research local environmental conservation efforts.

Folklore:

Record and compare the local folklore of Costa Rica, Panama, and Nicaragua.

Geography:

Learn about El Nino and its climatological, societal and economic consequences. Discover the physical geography's effects on ecology or human geography.

History:

Interview modern day indigenous persons and experts in the field of indigenous history.

Literature:

Read and analyze literature by local writers from the three countries. Read the works of adventurers that came to these areas before you.

Medicine:

Compare the concept of health and healing in indigenous cultures with Western medicine. Study medicinal values of the forest. Research Travel/Mountaineering Medicine, First-Aid, or local tropical diseases.

Nutrition:

Keep a journal of your daily food intake and how your body reacts to it. Compare the diets of the different cultures we visit.

Physical Education/Exercise Science:

Keep a log of your training before the course and a log of activities and responses your body has to activities during the course.

Philosophy:

Experience how the course's and modern Outward Bound philosophies correspond to principles in Plato's Republic. Discuss nature as an educator in its own right.

Political Science:

Compare and contrast Costa Rican, Panamanian & Nicaraguan political systems. Consider government and community action regarding environmental laws or economic development.

Recreation Management and Safety:

Discuss forms of risk management used in this course and benefits surrounding activities with perceived high risk and low actual risk such as rock climbing and rafting.

Possible methods for obtaining and recording data for your project

- Reading: Find out about relevant print resources before and during the course.
- Interviewing: Daily contact with local cultures will allow interviews in both English and Spanish. For non-Spanish speakers, an interpreter will generally be available. Bringing a small tape recorder may be helpful.
- Photography: Pictures are an excellent way to capture and present people, places and events. If you choose to use photographs, please use consideration and sensitivity toward individuals you are taking pictures of, as taking photographs may sometimes be inappropriate. Also be aware that many of the areas we travel through are rainforests, so you will need a water-proof camera case. Insurance is also recommended for your valuables.
- Journal writing: Record your thoughts, ideas, experiences, and perceptions in your journal. This documents what you're learning and gives you the opportunity to expand upon those ideas.
- Artwork: Art is a powerful means of expression. Study local art or produce your own. Carry watercolors or other transportable art supplies with you to express your experiences.

Sample Semester Presentations from previous semesters

1. Rainforest Biology (plants, mammals, birds, rainforest layers)
2. Indigenous peoples of the Rainforest (How do they live, what do they eat, unique threats to their communities, sustainable products in the rainforest)
3. History of Costa Rica (economy, ethnicity and identity, environmental and ecotourism)
4. Meteorology (climates in Costa Rica, high and low pressure fronts, cloud identification, forecasting, storms, lightning and danger in the jungle)
5. History of Outward Bound (founder Kurt Hahn, Kurt Hahn's teaching philosophy, birth of Outward Bound, purpose of Outward Bound, CRROBS history)
6. Health and well-being (importance of good health in the field, sickness that occur in the jungle and how to prevent it, nutrition, stress, reality therapy)
7. Navigation (map reading, compass parts and reading the compass, orienteering lesson, shooting and reading bearings, magnetic variation and measuring distances, living without a watch)
8. Rainforest Conservation and the Environment: What is conservation, what part does CRROBS play to protect the rainforest, rainforest destruction-natural, and human impact, how plantations affect the environment, endangered animals such as the titi monkey and leatherback turtle?
9. Communication and Conflict Resolution/Management: Passive aggressivity and assertive behaviors, conflict definition and why it happens, how to deal with conflict within a group, four stages of group development

Sample Academic Transcript

Date:
Student:
Course: Summer Semester

Course Description:

Costa Rica Rainforest Outward Bound® School semester course creates an environment that allows for significant growth through personal challenges, group efforts, and cross-cultural understanding. By venturing into culturally and geographically unfamiliar environments, students will experience a safe but demanding adventure which inspires responsibility, confidence, leadership, compassion, and community service.

The Costa Rica Rainforest Outward Bound® School semester course has four primary objectives:

- develop cross-cultural sensitivity and communication skills (Spanish);
- learn the technical skills required for planning and completing individual expeditions;
- explore the notion of progress from different cultural perspectives;
- nurture personal development through self-reliance, physical fitness, community leadership/followership, and cross-cultural understanding.

In this 60 day college level course, students come to know the lands and the people of Costa Rica. As they experience village and rainforest life, students discuss aspects of sustainable development and rainforest ecology, pursuing an understanding of how those aspects play out in the lives of indigenous people. The course aims to provide a holistic view of the current situation of the local indigenous and rural Mestizo populace through personal experience with the people and their environment. To get the full benefit of Central America’s natural environments, students are able to participate in activities such as white-water rafting, trekking and surfing. Our belief of personal development through experiential education is core to Costa Rica Rainforest Outward Bound® School.

As students spend time in Costa Rica, Panama and Nicaragua, their experiences in the wilderness and in local villages pushes them toward developing not only cognitive skills but also psychomotor and affective skills. For example, as students see direct consequences for their choices while rafting, they strengthen their decision making process. They learn the importance of effective communication through helping one another rappel down a cliff and develop an understanding of ecology by hiking through the rainforest. Furthermore, students see firsthand the ramifications international economics have on small village communities. To gain full benefit from this experience, students interact with the local cultures as much as possible and are assisted with materials and opportunities to improve Spanish language skills.

Subject	Credit Hours	Grade: Pass/Not-Pass
Introduction to Spanish	3	Pass
Coastal Ecology	3	Pass
Tropical Natural History	3	Pass

Approved by:

Maggie Foote, Admissions