

Costa Rica

Awareness Trips



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Welcome

Awareness trip travelers describe the experience as rewarding, eye-opening, energizing, impactful and humbling. They say they've grown in awareness and that their perception of poverty has changed.

Whether it's to meet sponsored friends or simply experience the beauty of another culture, awareness trips offer an adventure like no other. During a trip we want to reach across borders, learn from one another and have fun. Travelers will see how contributions are used to support and empower families, and for most the highlight will be getting to meet their sponsored friends.

Trips are open to sponsors and non-sponsors. Some people travel solo, while others bring friends and family members to share the experience. Our travelers range in age from 6 to 70-plus. Families with children (6 and older), whether sponsors or not, are welcome.

Trip Dates

March 9-15, 2024

November 9-15, 2024

Space is limited! Apply as soon as possible. Check our website or call us regarding availability. We are reserving some spaces for first-time travelers so they can experience Unbound firsthand.

Summer trips and those that take place during school breaks fill up quickly.

Sample Itinerary

On your trip, you'll be welcomed by the local staff who will be your hosts for the week. You'll visit the neighborhoods and communities of sponsored friends and learn about their joys and challenges while experiencing the beauty of the people.

A detailed schedule will be sent two weeks prior to departure.

Day 1: Arrive in San José, where local Unbound staff will welcome you at the airport.

Day 2: Learn about how Unbound operates in Costa Rica, from the programs to the role of Unbound staff to the social realities.

Days 3-4: Begin each day with a fun, group ice breaker, resembling how Unbound mothers groups begin their regular meetings. Travel by bus through beautiful landscapes to visit Unbound families in their communities. Walk the neighborhoods with sponsored youth. Enjoy performances of traditional Costa Rican dances and join activities to counter feelings of isolation among sponsored elderly.

Day 5: Spend a day of recreation with your sponsored friends! Enjoy an interactive day full of games and other activities to make the time with your sponsored friend even more special.

Day 6: Experience the unique flora and fauna of Costa Rica through touring a local site of interest such as a coffee plantation and roasterie, an animal sanctuary, volcano, or a pineapple plantation.

Day 7: Depart San José. Arrive home.

Note: Unbound will make every effort to offer the opportunity to attend Catholic Mass on Saturday night or Sunday. The official religion of Costa Rica is Roman Catholicism. This is reflected in the culture and in daily conversation. During the trip, participate in prayer to the level you feel comfortable.

Costs You'll Need To Cover

Fees other than those set by Unbound are subject to change.

- Unbound trip fee: **\$1,250**
- Roundtrip airfare between your home airport and San Jose, Costa Rica (SJO): **prices fluctuate**
- Make your airline arrangements only after your registration is confirmed and you receive the trip coordinator's written instructions for scheduling your flight. You can research airfares online or through a travel agent.
- Passport book (must be valid for at least six months beyond the end of your intended stay, with a minimum of one blank (unstamped) passport page)
- Immunizations as recommended by physician: **costs vary**
- Travel health insurance: **costs vary**
- Personal expenses related to ending my trip following a COVID-19 diagnosis during the trip. For example, medical, lodging, food, and flight change expenses.

What We Provide

- The opportunity to meet your sponsored friend
- Lodging and transportation costs for your sponsored friend, chaperone and local staff
- Planned group activities
- In-country ground transportation
- Lodging. While in Costa Rica, you will stay in simple accommodations, in our two-story, retreat-style dormitory that is located on a picturesque hillside overlooking San Jose. Couples and/or families will be assigned rooms together. Solo travelers will be assigned a private room unless otherwise requested. While running water for showers is available, it might not always be heated.
- Meals and bottled water. Although tap water is potable, we will provide ample bottled water throughout the trip. Alcoholic beverages are not included in the trip fee, but there may be occasions when you will have the opportunity to purchase them. Meals are eaten with the group and will be simple fare from the local cuisine.
- Interpreters. Unbound will provide interpreters throughout the trip.
- Memories that last a lifetime

Health & Mobility

Mobility: The ability to walk on uneven and muddy terrain, walk up and down hills and climb flights of stairs is necessary. You will encounter stairs and hills regularly throughout the trip. In general, groups sometimes walk up to half of a mile at any one time.

Altitude: Your lodging is located at approximately 5,300 feet above sea level while the city of San Jose sits at around 3,800 feet above sea level. The group will travel up and down in elevation nearly every day. Consult with your doctor to see if this will affect you.

Motion sickness: This trip takes routes along winding, mountainous roads, which can cause motion sickness.

Immunizations

Unbound does not require travelers to provide proof of a of a COVID-19 vaccination for trips to Costa Rica.

Consult your doctor or local health department for immunization recommendations based on your health history. Staff members of Unbound are not qualified to offer advice on immunizations. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/travel has country-specific recommendations. You can also contact them by phone at (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). We recommend speaking with a medical professional as soon as possible, as some immunizations are time sensitive.

CDC recommendations may reference a specific area of a country or vary depending on the style of travel. An Unbound trip coordinator can answer questions about the areas of the country that might be visited, lodging and other factors that you and a medical professional may need to know.

Weather and Climate

Costa Rica enjoys a tropical climate, and the temperatures are relatively constant year round. The average highs are typically in the low 80s and the average lows in the mid-60s. Costa Rica does get a lot of rain, so a raincoat is recommended. Minor tremors are common in Costa Rica and may occur during the trip.

Safety While Traveling

Unbound cares about your safety, and the safety of your sponsored friends and our staff. Local Unbound staff members are your hosts during the awareness trip and accompany the group. Our local staff is from the destination country and lives there. Our social workers visit the neighborhoods, towns and countryside regularly and are aware of safety concerns. Because of their unique qualifications and background, our local staff is responsible for putting together the schedule of activities for your trip and choosing the locations you will visit. The members of the communities are excited to welcome sponsors.

Nobody can guarantee safety. International travel carries inherent risks, and we understand the realities in the countries where we work. We monitor current events, weather conditions, political situations, guidance offered by the U.S. State Department and other available resources. We're in regular communication with our local staff members and stay current on security matters. We've cancelled trips when we've deemed it prudent based on local conditions.

All Unbound travelers are expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct and other rules outlined in the Travel Agreement found in the registration materials. Unbound is proud of our history of safe and enjoyable trips and we look forward to having you join us!

Costa Rica Traveler Comments

"Amazing!! I learned so much and brought home what I learned. I have been talking and sharing with people since we have been home."

-Jo, sponsor for 10 years

"**Awareness** is a great name. Talk and pictures, etc. cannot adequately relay the message. I would encourage anyone considering a trip to do it..."

-Anonymous

"The happiness and generosity of the Costa Rican people is amazing. The love that they have for one another was felt repeatedly. I wish I could encourage everyone to visit their friend just one time and spread the word of the wonderful things Unbound does for these people day after day."

-Tammy, sponsor for 16 years

"I really enjoyed meeting my sponsored friends and their families. The whole trip was a wonderful experience for my grandson and me. I am looking forward to taking trips in the future!"

-Lynn, sponsor for 1 year

How Do I Sign Up For A Trip?

All travelers are required to submit a registration packet. There are two registration packets, one for travelers 18+ years old and one for those who are 17 and younger at the time of the trip. You can download a registration packet from our website at www.unbound.org/trips, call our (800) 875-6564 number or send an e-mail to trips@unbound.org to request that one be e-mailed or mailed to your home address.

Complete, step-by-step instructions on how to register are included in the registration packet.

Space is limited! Apply as soon as possible. Check our website or call us regarding availability. We are reserving some spaces for first-time travelers so they can experience Unbound firsthand.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What do you do on an awareness trip?

A. Our local staff meet travelers at the airport and host our group for the length of the trip. Sponsored members and their families welcome travelers into their communities and homes, and activities and celebrations demonstrate the impact of our program to families living in poverty. Travelers will see how contributions are used to support and empower families, but for most the highlight will be getting to meet their sponsored friends.

Whether it's to meet sponsored friends or simply experience the beauty of another culture, awareness trips offer an adventure like no other. Awareness trip travelers describe the experience as rewarding, eye-opening, energizing, impactful and humbling. They say they've grown in awareness and that their perception of poverty has changed.

Q. Will I meet my sponsored friend, and how much time will we spend together?

A. This is one of the main reasons we offer the trips, and we will do everything possible to make this happen! If you are a sponsor, you will spend a day during the trip with your sponsored friend, a member of their family and a staff member. Your sponsored friend will travel from their area to meet you, and your time is often spent at a park or recreation area. In extremely rare circumstances, the ability to travel, health or other unexpected situations prevent a visit from happening. For this reason we cannot make guarantees.

Q. Who can go on an Unbound awareness trip?

A. Trips are open to both sponsors and non-sponsors, and our travelers range in age from 6 to 70-plus. Some people travel solo, while others bring friends and family members to share the experience. Families with children (6 and older), whether sponsors or not, are welcome.

Q. Is airfare included?

A. Airfare is not included.

Q. Should I bring my friend a gift?

A. Sponsored friends and their families greatly anticipate these visits, and your presence is, in itself, a special gift. Exchanging gifts is common in many cultures. If you wish, you may bring simple gifts for your friend and for the family. Check the trip preparation guide included with your confirmation packet for gift ideas.

Q. I don't speak the language, is that an issue?

A. Don't worry, Unbound provides interpreters throughout the trip.

Q. How strenuous are the trips?

A. The days begin early and are filled with activities. The trip can be rigorous, as rest time is limited. You may travel long distances in a bus or van and may be gone all day visiting communities, sometimes in very warm weather. Participants should be able to climb stairs and walk on uneven terrain such as dirt paths or cobblestone. The amount of walking varies by trip. A trip coordinator would be happy to talk to you about any concerns you have about your ability to participate.

Q. Will my health insurance cover me in another country?

A. Consult with your medical insurance company prior to traveling to confirm whether your policy applies in a foreign country. If your policy does not cover emergency expenses including a medical evacuation, we urge you to consider the purchase of temporary travel insurance. Many insurance plans, including Medicare, do not cover treatment outside of the U.S. You can obtain further information on travel insurance from a travel agent or through research on the Internet.

Unbound strongly urges travelers to have trip cancellation and trip interruption insurance to help cover the costs associated with isolation due to a COVID-19 diagnosis.

Q. What happens if a traveler tests positive for COVID-19 during the trip?

A. Travelers that test positive for COVID-19 during the awareness trip will not be allowed to continue to join trip activities and must end their participation in the trip. The traveler will be responsible for all additional expenses, which may include meals, additional transportation, medical expenses and lodging. Unbound strongly urges travelers to purchase trip cancelation insurance. Travelers should also budget for or purchase trip interruption insurance to help cover the costs resulting from early departure from a trip.

Note: Travelers cannot lodge at Unbound dormitories after testing positive for COVID-19. This is relevant to trips to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Costa Rica. Unbound will transport the individual to a hotel near the airport, which accepts COVID-19 diagnosed guests.

Q. Where can I get more information?

A. You may email your questions to trips@unbound.org or call a trip coordinator during business hours at (800) 875-6564.