



River to Sea Leadership Semester

This is a list of what our instructors deem as fundamental gear for your course. Feel free to bring items that are not on this list, but please keep in mind that you will be responsible for your personal belongings. Do not bring more than you think you will be able to carry.

Prior to leaving our rainforest base for a specific phase (such as the rafting phase or hiking phase), instructors lead students through a process we call the “Duffle Shuffle.” Before each phase, you may have a transition day to clean gear from the previous phase and pack up your personal gear and group equipment for the next phase. During this process you will be issued the necessary equipment for whichever phase of your course that you are about to embark on. At this time, instructors will advise you as to which of your personal items you will not need or cannot take on any given phase. Any such items will be stored safely on base and returned to you at the end of your phase.

When packing, please keep in mind that Costa Rica has a lot of sun, but at times there can be rain, mud and harsh weather. The right clothing can protect your body from these elements and really make a difference in your comfort level. If you have any questions about these packing list items, please email enrollment@OutwardBoundCR.org or call 1-800-676-2018.

General Information

Weather

Costa Rica is located between 8 and 12 degrees north of the Equator. Because of this, the sun is very intense, especially for students coming from more northern latitudes. Despite being a tropical country, many micro-climates exist depending on elevation, rainfall, topography, and by the geography of each particular region.

Unlike higher latitudes, Costa Rica’s seasons are defined by how much rain falls during a particular period. The year can be split into two periods, the dry season known to the residents as summer, and the rainy season, known locally as winter. The “summer” or dry season goes from December to April, and “winter” or rainy season goes from May to November, which almost coincides with the Atlantic hurricane season, and during this time, it rains a lot in some regions.





Dehydration

The most common medical complication during course is dehydration. There are many factors that lead to dehydration - clothing included! It's important that clothing worn on course is of lightweight and breathable material. Wool, polyester, silk and polypropylene are good materials that do not retain moisture. Cotton retains moisture, prevents sweat from evaporating, and often has mould issues, and should be avoided when packing for course.

It's essential to always be drinking water on course. The convenience and quality of your water equipment will affect your water consumption levels. We suggest you bring both a collapsible bladder with hose as well as 2 one-litre hard-plastic water bottles. Two brand names are CamelBak or Platypus.

Water Containers

Two types of containers we suggest are collapsible bladders and polycarbonate or polyethylene (ie. hard plastic) bottles. Bladders are much lighter than the bottles. They are ideal for longer hikes when students prefer to stop less and the bladder is protected by the backpack. Bottles are handy around camp, on the river, day trips, while cooking dinner, and are more or less required. Try to invest in good quality water containers that won't break with rough everyday use. Nalgene is a good brand.

Layering

By dressing in multiple lighter layers, as opposed to a single thick or bulky layer, students are able to adapt better to a wider range of conditions. Layers can be removed or added according to the weather and/or exertion level at any given time. Ideally your clothing selections should complement one another, so that each layer works together as part of a flexible overall system - consisting of *Base Layer*, *Insulating Layer*, and *Outer Layer*. This is true when in the colder regions located at higher elevations. The OBCR base is located at around 1700 meters elevation so it can get a bit cold in the evenings or when raining.

Base Layers

This is the foundation layer worn next to the skin. It keeps skin dry by wicking away moisture. Look for quick-drying long underwear. Avoid cotton - it clings to the skin when wet, doesn't insulate and takes longer to dry. Long sleeves afford protection against the sun in hot, shade-less environments, provide warmth when the temperatures get cooler, and keep the pesky bugs at bay. Thermal underwear made of capelin or merino wool is a good choice for base and during cold, wet nights - we suggest bringing both top and bottom, light to medium weight synthetic material such as polypropylene, silk, or merino wool. You will use these a lot - it can dip into the 30's F in the mountains at night





Insulating Layer

This layer works by trapping dead air space. It will keep your body heat in and the cold air out. This can be multiple items, depending on the temperature and conditions and will manage the moisture from the wicking or base layer through a balance of absorption and letting excess moisture escape through its fibres. Bringing more than one insulating layer will provide increased flexibility; particularly important when you are likely to encounter a broader range of temperatures. Options include fleece and synthetic fibre variants such as Primaloft and Polarguard. Down offers the best warmth-to-weight ratio, however, is not well suited to the heavy rainfall and high moisture climate of Costa Rica. Fleece & Polyester fabrics are best for Costa Rica.

Outer Layer

This layer provides protection from the wind and rain. Keep this layer lightweight, very breathable, water and wind resistant. Breathability is very important! Many students become soaked with sweat rather than rain when wearing a non-breathing coat. We strongly suggest bringing both a poncho AND full rainsuit (rain jacket and waterproof pants) for your outer layer - you'll use your rain gear a lot!

Muddy & Wet

There are many extended periods of course that will be very wet and muddy. It is not a question of if, but when your feet are going to get soaked. That being the case, leather boots become extremely heavy when saturated and dry slowly. In such conditions, a thin sock liner combined with gaiters are important. For semester courses during the drier season of December-April, it may be less important to use heavier variety of hiking boots.

Socks & Sock Liners

Thin liner socks made of synthetic or synthetic wool blend materials are breathable, wick moisture away from the skin and are quick drying. Wool socks work well, but are a little more expensive. Do NOT bring cotton socks - they retain water and will make you miserable. The exception to this is the socks you can use for base or for evenings at base camps.

Gaiters

Gaiters are garments worn over the shoe and lower leg to protect from water, dirt, and rocks. We suggest bringing gaiters that come up to the knee. They should be snug around your boot and leg, but not restricting. This is mostly applicable if you will be doing a hiking phase during the rainy season from April through November when trails become especially muddy. Many students never use these even if they bring them, so use your own best judgement.





Your Headlamp

Headlamps have the advantage over flashlights of being “hands-free” - a very useful feature when doing camp chores after dark. Energizer brand headlamps have proven to be durable as well as cost efficient for course. Remember to bring extra batteries to course - you will use your headlamp everyday and will often be in places where batteries are not readily available. Students in the past suggest to bring 2 headlamps, or a headlamp AND a flashlight. You will be using your headlamp daily - bring a set of batteries for every 10 days of course. Some of our courses may take place or have phases where sea turtles nest. In this case, it is great to have a feature that has a red light on the headlamp.

Hiking Poles

Poles are great for reducing strain on your knees while hiking multiple mountainous days with a heavy pack. For hikers with a history of knee problems, we highly suggest bringing a pair.

Sleeping Gear

We provide non-inflatable “egg-crate” sleeping mats. If you have your own inflatable (backpacking size) sleeping mat and would like to bring it just remember that we are not responsible if it gets damaged - bring a patch kit! We strongly encourage you to bring your own if you anticipate having problems sleeping on our thin foam pads.

Photography Equipment

We suggest you bring a sturdy protective, waterproof if possible, case for any photography/video equipment you bring. It's a good idea to bring extra batteries and SD cards, especially for your hike when access to a computer and even electricity is very limited. During some phases, there will be a way to charge batteries overnight when in some homestays or while in Panama.

Purchasing Footwear:

Heavyweight Boots

- All-leather
- Weigh 2kg (4.4lbs) and considerably more after walking through mud and crossing rivers
- Generally require a longer break-in period
- The sole can be replaced when worn
- The most durable, waterproof, warmest, and expensive of all backpacking footwear





- Suitable for carrying an ultra-heavy load off-trail into snowy, mountainous terrain in sub-zero temperatures; overkill for pretty much all other hiking situations

Midweight Boots

- All-leather boots which often sport a lower cut than their heavyweight cousins
- Usually weigh between 1.5 and 2kg
- Strike a happy medium for those traditionalists who want the durability and protection of a heavy boot, but in a lighter, softer and more flexible package
- Less expensive than heavyweight boots, more expensive than the other options

Lighweight Boots

- Often made from a fusion of synthetic materials, suede and occasionally split-grain leather
- Weigh between 1 and 1.5kg
- Most popular footwear for backpackers and require very little break-in time
- More comfortable, breath better and dry quicker than their heavier equivalents. Less so than trail runners and running shoes.
- Waterproof-breathable linings sometimes included usually lose their effectiveness quickly
- Not as durable as heavier, leather models; slightly more durable than trail runners
- Can't be resoled

Trail Runners & Running Shoes

- Lightweight, breathable, quick drying
- More stability, support and better traction than running shoes, but are heavier
- Ideal three season option for strong ankles and a light pack (NOT for Outward Bound)

Sizing

Over the course of a long hike your feet WILL swell. This is especially true when hiking in hot conditions. Shoes that feel nice and snug in the store, will most probably feel tight and uncomfortable after a few days on the trail. If possible, try the shoes on with the same socks you will be wearing on the trail. This needs to be balanced with the fact that the heavier weight boots tend to become loose as your feet wear them in, so balance these two points.





Breaking In

No matter what your choice in footwear, go for at least a few hikes before coming on course. Your feet need time to adapt. This especially holds true if you purchase boots, which may require weeks of regular wear before they feel completely comfortable. If you purchase new boots, follow the advice of the sales representative/boot manufacturer as to the length of time you need to wear your boots to sufficiently break them in before arriving. The more you wear your boots before you arrive the less chance you'll have of getting bad blisters. Students have had to leave their courses because of bad blisters caused by new boots! It's ideal to hike 10 miles straight in your boots without forming blisters before coming to course.

Item List

Personal Clothing

- 2-3 Pairs of casual street clothes for travel – at least 1 of them should be jeans or other comfortable pants and a shirt that is presentable in the city (e.g. a polo for men)
- 1-2 Tight-fitting rash guard for surfing, river phases, and Scuba diving
- Underwear (4-5 pairs of synthetic backpacking underwear is suggested by past students)
- 3-4 Pairs (minimum) of serious hiking socks – Merino wool is recommended.
- 4-5 pairs regular socks
- 3 T-shirts of synthetic material (for hiking, camping, etc)
- 1 Lightweight long-sleeve shirt (for insect protection)
- 2 Pairs of modest, non-cotton shorts for hiking - No short shorts please, it is culturally inappropriate
- 1 Pairs of lightweight, non-cotton pants (for insect protection)
- 1 Synthetic long underwear layer
- 1 Fleece jacket (cotton sweatshirts are NOT acceptable for hiking, etc)
- 1-2 Sweatshirts – for cold nights on base
- 1-3 Bandanas
- 1 Baseball cap or wide brimmed hat



Rain Gear

You WILL get rained on during your course. Rain gear can make or break your trip. Take the time and spend the money to get quality rain gear.

- 1 Lightweight WATERPROOF/breathable rain jacket with a hood
- 1 Poncho with hood of strong material - you WILL likely want both a rain jacket and a poncho
- 1 Large waterproof backpack cover for an 80L pack

For Women

- 2 Swimsuits – at least one needs to be a sports swimsuit
- 2-3 Pair of board shorts/swim trunks
- 2-3 Comfortable sports bras – non-cotton if possible
- Tampons, pads, or menstrual cup
If bringing tampons, try a brand without plastic applicators or that are biodegradable.
- Menstrual cramp medication recommended if you normally need it

For Men

- 2-4 Pairs of board shorts/swim trunks

Footwear

Please let us know if you have any questions regarding the following footwear:

- 1 Pair medium-weight, high-top hiking boots
- 1 Pair of water shoes to protect your feet during the river section, rappelling, etc. These can be non-Velcro sandals with ankle straps (Chacos) OR neoprene SCUBA/surfing shoes with a rubber sole. We recommend Keens, Texas or Merrell brand water shoes. Crocs are NOT acceptable.
- 1 Pair of Flip-flops (for the beach/casual days)
- 1 Pair SCUBA booties or 3mm wetsuit socks to protect your feet

Past students say Merrell water shoes or waterproof Texas that look tennis shoes are the best for course – for river, beach, running, etc. Students say they're comfortable.

Swim Apparel

- 1-2 Swimsuits –1 or 2-piece sports suits are recommended for women.
- 1-4 Board shorts or swim trunk – Mid-thigh length provides the most comfort during water activities (if you like, you can use the board short for your swim suit as well as the casual shorts for camp and travel, generally students will want around 2-5 changes of shorts. This allows 1-2 for water-sports, around camp, and day activities where they will get wet and 1-2 that you keep dry for around camp)
- 1 Rashguard or tight fitting synthetic shirt with UV protection
- We provide a 3mm short wetsuit for those who prefer to wear it. Most students find the warm tropical water comfortable for our long dives and no need to wear a wetsuit. If you prefer to, you can bring your own wetsuit.

Personal Gear

- 1 Pair gaiters knee height
- Nose clip & ear plugs (for water) if you normally need them
- 1 Pair UVA/UVB protection sunglasses
Polarized lenses are best for being on water
- 1 Pair cheap sunglasses
- 1 Pair croakies or other string to hold your sunglasses
Past students mention it is really common to lose sunglasses on the river phase
- 2 (1-Liter or 1.5-Liter) wide-mouth hard plastic water bottles with carabineer
- 1 CamelBak bladder and hose
- 1 Carabiner – non-locking is fine, nothing fancy
- 1 Fox 40 whistle (non-cork ball) *Required*
- 1 Headlamp with many extra batteries
- 1 Box of large Ziploc type plastic bags
- 1 Bottle of insect repellent
- 1 Aloe Vera gel or other sunburn cream
- 2-3 Lip salve or balm with sunscreen
- 2 Bottles of waterproof sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher)
- 1 Tube Zinc oxide sun protection
If you burn easily, this is the best sunscreen for you
- 1 Pack towel (shammy)
This should be a lightweight, microfiber material. Do not bring a bath towel for your hiking phase.

- 1 Full size bath towel and/or beach towel
Outward Bound Costa Rica does not provide any towels
- 1 Roll Duct Tape - small roll
- 1 Notebook for coursework, extra pens
- 1 Pair swim goggles: If your course includes a SCUBA and/or Lifeguarding phase
- 1 Personal journal, paper, envelopes and many many pens
We gladly provide postage for postcards home.

Medical

- Moleskin or Molefoam (for blister protection) is strongly recommended
- 1 bottle of Swimmer's Ear to help prevent ear infections while on water phases
- Vitamin B Complex - start taking these 1 month before course. They will immensely help with mosquitos.
- Many students bring a series of Ciprofloxacin or other wide-spectrum anti-biotic in the event that they develop an ear or GI tract infection on course. Use your own best judgement, but many travellers swear by carrying this to avoid minor infections affecting your ability to do cool activities.
- Anti-biotic drops for ear infections
If you are prone to ear infections, contact your doctor about bringing prescription anti-biotic ear drops. Many students get ear infections during the river and surf phases.

NOTE: Instructors carry complete First Aid kits on all courses, so you only need to bring medications that are specific to your needs. If you are taking prescription medicines or have glasses/contacts, bring backup supplies (up to twice the normal amount – in case of loss/emergency).

Travel Documents & Money

- Your passport (must be valid for at least six months)
- We recommend that you check online to see if you would need a visa to travel to Costa Rica. It is your responsibility to arrange for this if you do need a visa.
- If you are coming from Brazil or some African countries, you may be required to show specific vaccinations. Check online.
- Your plane ticket and a cop of your flight itinerary
- Two copies of the picture ID page of your passport (very important)
- Copy of any paperwork needed for college credit
- Copy of insurance documentation and emergency numbers
- Written emergency numbers for all bank cards
- Written addresses of family and friends for sending letters and postcards

- Phone numbers of friends and family back home you want to call
- \$500 US CASH or Credit Card for medical emergency and personal items

Suggested Items

- 1 Pair of lightweight trekking poles
- 2-3 pairs of synthetic sock liners – not cotton
- 1 Extra pair of boot laces
- 2 Small dry bags, 6-8 liter size for clothing, smaller size for sensitive gear (ie. camera)
- Camera(s)
Disposable waterproof are good options. If you bring a more expensive camera, we recommend a small dry bag or other waterproof case to store it. If you bring a digital camera, bring extra batteries and memory cards.
- 2 Secure straps (“Croakies”) for your sunglasses and/or glasses
- 1 Winter hat – synthetic or wool, lightweight
- 1 Travel size sewing kit
- 1 Travel pillow
- 1 Pair running shoes
- 1 Spanish-English dictionary
- Sleeping ear plugs
If you're a light sleeper, nights at the homestays can be noisy
- Snacks, especially if you have a restricted diet

Outward Bound Costa Rica Provides

- Hiking backpack – 80 Liters
You are welcome to use your own if you prefer it
- Sleeping bag, shelters and sleeping pads
Sleeping pads are “egg-crate” foam pads. We strongly suggest you bring your own if you prefer or require something more supportive
- Meal kit
- Surfboard/boogie board
- All necessary river, SCUBA, climbing, and other technical equipment

Surfboards



Outward Bound Costa Rica provides all of the equipment necessary for the surfing sections of your course. **YOU DO NOT NEED TO BRING YOUR OWN BOARD!** If you intend to bring a board with you to Costa Rica, ensure that it is carefully packaged for transport. Be sure to bring all necessary parts: fins, bolts, leash, bag, etc. and necessary tools specific to your board. We provide surf wax. Outward Bound Costa Rica is not responsible for any such damages should they occur.

Items Not Allowed On Course

The following items will not be allowed while you are on course. These items will need to be left at base once you start your course, and you will not have access to them again until the last day of your course. You may consider leaving them at home:

- Cell phones – Cell phones will most likely not work once you land in Costa Rica and therefore are only useful in US airports. Regardless of service, they are not permitted on course. This applies for iPhones and smart phones as well. Students will **NOT** be allowed to have a phone on course even if this device is their only camera.
- iPods or other music devices
- Watches/clocks
- Pocket knives or multi-tools – We supply all the cutting implements you will need for your course; personal ones will need to be left on base.
- Lighters – Our instructors carry all fire-starting devices you will need for camping and cooking activities on course.
- Any other personal electronic devices

Please also refer to your Information Packet for additional items that are not allowed on course. We take this very seriously. Violations are grounds for expulsion from course. If you have questions, please contact our Enrollment Manager.

We look forward to a fantastic life-expanding adventure with you!