

**STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM IN COSTA RICA**  
**Primate Behavior and Ecology Field Course**  
**May 21-June 17, 2013**

**ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

This program will immerse students in a beautiful Neotropical lowland rainforest and allow them to become intimately familiar with tropical biodiversity, wildlife (especially primates), and rainforest ecology, while exploring and challenging their own relationships with nature and technology. The program is housed at the La Suerte Biological Field Station in northeastern Costa Rica, in one of the most biologically diverse regions in the world. Students will take two 3-credit courses (ANT 3350 and ANT 3320). The first course will focus on the behavior and ecology of the living primates, with a special emphasis on the three primate species living at La Suerte: *Alouatta palliata* (the mantled howling monkey), *Cebus capucinus* (the white-faced capuchin), and *Ateles geoffroyi* (the black-handed spider monkey). The second course will focus on methods used in field studies of the biology and behavior of primates and other vertebrates and in the methods used to quantify rainforest habitat characteristics. Students will spend several hours each day in the forest, and will design and conduct independent research projects. While the focus of the course is on nonhuman primates, students will also explore other aspects of rainforest environments, including the ecology of tropical rainforests and human interactions with wildlife and wildlife habitats in Central America.



After a night in San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica, students will be transported by bus to the La Suerte Biological Field Station. Since it was established in 1993, the La Suerte Biological Field Station has been visited by over 1,300 students from across the United States, Canada, and all over the world to study primate behavior and ecology, tropical rain forest ecology and conservation. The field station encompasses 1000 acres and includes a mosaic of primary and secondary tropical rainforest, riparian habitats, and areas of human use, and is inhabited by wild groups of three species of nonhuman primates, making it an ideal "laboratory" in which to study primate behavior and diversity and the effects of anthropogenic habitat modifications on wildlife. Much of the station lies along Río La Suerte, a beautiful river that empties into the Caribbean at Tortuguero National Park. The area is home to thousands of plant and insect species as well as hundreds of species of amphibians,

reptiles, birds (260 species) and mammals. The list of animals includes three monkey species as well as pacas, jaguars, agoutis, keel-billed toucans, white-crowned parrots, great green macaws, strawberry poison-dart frogs, eyelash vipers and green iguanas. Students will live and work at the research station from May 25 to June 19, and will also make an excursion to Tortuguero National Park and visit the



nearby village to better understand the ecological, economic, and cultural context in which the field station is situated.



Students will study the diversity, characteristics, and geographic distribution of the nonhuman primates, examine how environments (particularly tropical rainforest environments) shape primate physical and behavioral adaptations, and explore the ways that human activities have impacted wild primates and primate habitats in formal evening seminars, and will receive extensive hands-on research training in the natural laboratory provided by the tropical rainforest habitats at La Suerte. A section of the course will be devoted to an examination of primate conservation biology and the direct and indirect impacts of human activities on primates and their habitats. Throughout

the course, the students will make connections between themselves and their study subjects, both as close evolutionary relatives, and also as consumers of tropical rainforest products (and therefore, as competitors for resources). Students will learn the basics of rainforest ecology and the ways in which organisms occupying different ecological niches interact. In a series of training rotations, groups of students will receive intensive training in field methods used in habitat and trail mapping, primate censuses and surveys, collection of behavioral data, collection of botanical data, and monitoring of rainforest productivity. Students will then have the opportunity to apply this knowledge by designing their own research project on a topic related to primate behavior or ecology, conducting independent research, and presenting the results of their research to the class

## ELIGIBILITY

Classes will be held in English. No competency in Spanish is required, but students speaking Spanish will have ample opportunity to practice their language skills. The program is open to students 18 and older with an interest in anthropology, primatology, biology, tropical ecology, wildlife, conservation biology, sustainable development, or other related fields. **For non-ASU students, a background check will be required and they are encouraged to contact Nathalie Turner as soon as possible for more information on how to apply:** [turnerm@appstate.edu](mailto:turnerm@appstate.edu)

## PROGRAM INCLUSIONS

- 6 credits (ANT 3350 Primate Behavior and Ecology [3 credits] and ANT 3320 Primatological Field Methods [3 credits])
- Hotel and cabin accommodations for four weeks
- Three meals per day for four weeks (group meals)
- All ground transportation within Costa Rica
- Side trip to Tortuguero National Park
- Roundtrip transportation from Charlotte to San Jose (including airfare)

## NOT INCLUDED

Personal expenditures  
Undergraduate tuition  
Airport exit tax



## LOCATION AND HOUSING

Living accommodations at the field school site combine the atmosphere of a college dorm with the sounds, sights and smells of the tropical rain forest. Several of the cabins are located along the edge of the forest, overlooking La Suerte River and offer a spectacular view of the rain forest and its inhabitants. Each cabin contains screened-in rooms, showers (no hot water), flush toilets and bunk beds for 2 to 4 students per room.



Early morning wakeup calls are provided by wild howler monkeys near your cabins. Three meals per day are provided. Meals are served buffet style and include a combination of traditional Central American cuisine and also typical North American dishes. Meals include fresh fruit, homemade cheese and vegetables, yucca, heart of palm and other foods local to the region. Most of the food is vegetarian in nature, and vegetarian options are always available. All beef served comes from local, free-ranging animals. Efforts are made to accommodate students with other medically-indicated special dietary needs.

## **NOTE**

Appalachian State University reserves the right to cancel or alter the program format and/or to change costs in case of conditions beyond the University's control. For more information on how to apply for this program, please visit <http://www.international.appstate.edu/education/shortterm.php>

## **FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION**

State and federal financial aid can be applied to your study abroad expenses if you are eligible, and some scholarships are available. If you already have a scholarship, it's possible that it can be applied toward the cost of studying abroad. For scholarship opportunities, please visit <http://www.international.appstate.edu/education/scholarships>

