

COSTA RICA

Costa Rica ranks among the top 20 countries worldwide for **biodiversity**, despite the fact that its land area represents less than one third of one percent of the planet's surface. There are more than 1,400 species of orchids in Costa Rica, and new ones continue to be discovered every year! This staggering biodiversity stems from Costa Rica's function as a land bridge between two continents and its combination of varied ecosystems and geographic features. These include rain and cloud forests, savanna, mountains, volcanoes, two separate ocean coastlines, beaches, and mangrove swamps.



No country in Latin America has been more successful than Costa Rica in creating long-standing economic and political stability. Costa Rica has aggressively protected its natural resources and, in the process, become a global model for the rewards of sustainable tourism. A quarter of Costa Rica's land has been officially protected, and off the coast ten times that area has been set aside as marine reserves.



APPROACH TO GLOBAL ISSUES

Despite its economic and political progress, Costa Rica's biodiversity remains under threat from the same economic pressures that have deforested much of Central America, Banana and pineapple plantations are encroaching upon the last of Costa Rica's unprotected lowland forests. Farmers continue to cut down mountain forests to plant subsistence crops that expose fragile soils to erosion. Poachers and land squatters operate with impunity throughout Costa Rica's under-funded nature reserves. Foreign investors have sparked a real estate boom, dislocating farmers and resulting in widespread development alongside many of Costa Rica's protected areas. The real estate boom has sharply increased land prices, making it prohibitively expensive to create new nature preserves.

Costa Rica has been trying to address these challenges by placing great importance on its rich biodiversity and recognizing the role of forests in mitigating climate change. The country has implemented various policies to protect its forests, including the establishment of national parks, biological reserves, and protected areas. Additionally, Costa Rica has implemented Payment for Environmental Services (PES) programs, where landowners

are financially incentivized to conserve and restore forests on their land.

Costa Rica has set ambitious goals to combat climate change. In 2019, the country announced its plan to become **carbon neutral by 2050**, with a goal to achieve 100% renewable energy production by 2030. To achieve this, Costa Rica has heavily invested in **renewable energy sources**, such as hydroelectric, wind, geothermal, and solar power. These efforts have allowed the country to consistently generate a significant portion of its electricity from renewable sources.

The Costa Rican government has made sustainable tourism the cornerstone of its long-term economic strategy. In order to support sustainable tourism, Costa Rica has focused on preserving its environment and improving the quality of education for Costa Rican youth. By improving education, Costa Rica hopes to both spread environmental awareness and create a new generation of tourism professionals. The government has endorsed the teaching of English in its schools and is making a push to bring computers, and computer teachers, to schools around the country.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The United Nations developed 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a part of the blueprint for the UN 2030 Agenda. The SDGs are an urgent call for action for all countries in a global partnership to tackle the pressing issues facing the world. They recognize that addressing one goal must go hand-in-hand with strategies to work on other goals.

At World Leadership School, we work with our network of partners around the world to use the SDGs as a lens to showcase how local communities, regions, and countries are working to meet the UN SDGs. Our curriculum is woven throughout our programs and helps students gain valuable insights on a program that they can use back in their own home communities.



THIS PROGRAM CAN HIGHLIGHT THE FOLLOWING SDGS:







BASIC ITINERARY, LODGING & FOOD

Our communities in Costa Rica are located near Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí, in northern Costa Rica, and are ideally situated for student groups. The area is a 2-hour bus drive from San José, which means that students can experience the rainforest within hours of arriving in Costa Rica. The area is also close to some of Costa Rica's most important national parks and rainforest reserves.

Upon arrival, we begin our orientation by staying one or two nights at a comfortable ecolodge in Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí. We will explore the natural surroundings, including the nearby rainforest. On day two or three, we meet and begin living with homestay families in the community where we will be working. If the program does not include homestays, then the group will continue to stay at the ecolodge.

66

This was amazing. I had a lot of fun and learned a lot about myself. The cultural immersion was like nothing I had done before, and everything that I experienced helped me in one way or another. I want to bring my family back to Costa Rica, and though they won't experience as much as I did, we can still have a taste of what I felt over the past week.

STUDENT FROM ROLLING HILLS PREPARATORY SCHOOL







In the mornings, we actively collaborate with local organizations dedicated to addressing pressing global challenges that impact both the local and global community. During the afternoons, the group will take part in cultural and adventure activities as they deepen personal bonds with their group members. On many evenings the group will come

together for moments for reflection and WLS Learning Sessions. They will explore ways to apply their acquired knowledge to their home community.

On the final day, we will return to San José to catch our return flight to the United States.



WLS MISSION AND APPROACH

The mission of World Leadership School is to partner with K-12 schools to reimagine learning and create next-generation leaders. We do this by taking students out into the world and coaching teachers to bring purpose to learning.

World Leadership School works with schools in a variety of ways. We deepen global, impact-driven student experiences through travel, and work alongside teachers to bring world-connected learning back into the classroom through workshops, faculty travel and the WLS Coaching Institute. We help educators make a shift towards learner-centered pedagogies, such as project-based and purpose learning, and try bold new ideas and experiences in class. School leaders celebrate these showcases to accelerate classroom innovation across the entire faculty.

Youth Purpose



At World Leadership School, we see travel as a powerful tool for guiding students toward **lives of purpose.** World Leadership School has over a decade of experience working with K-12 schools to design and deliver immersive partnership-based travel programs in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the USA.

There is growing research on how adolescents develop purpose. This work builds off recent brain science and validates the leadership development work we do at World Leadership School. We believe the rise in teen stress is a symptom of a larger crisis of meaning.

The biggest problem growing up today is not actually stress; it's meaninglessness.

- DR. WILLIAM DAMON, DIRECTOR, STANFORD CENTER ON ADOLESCENCE



Only 20 percent of American youth today have purpose, according to research from Stanford University, which defines purpose as a "stable intention that is both meaningful to self and consequential to the world." Purposeful students are happier, healthier and manage stress more effectively than students who are merely goal-driven.

At World Leadership School, we believe there are visible and intentional strategies K-12 schools can pursue that help teachers and students explore purpose and bring greater meaning to learning. We believe the question guiding the future of learning is "How can K-12 schools help students explore, discover and articulate purpose?"

97%

of students are more interested in immersing themselves in another culture. 93%

of students are inspired to take action on global issues in their community and beyond. 95%

of students feel empowered to find solutions to global issues.

96%

of students are more interested in investigating the world.

96%

of students are better able to understand the difference between cultures. 42%

of students want to reshape what they plan to study or do in the future.

THE WLS EXPERIENCE

Purpose-Centered and Impact-Driven

The deep learning that happens when traveling schools develop a long-term partnership with a rural school or an NGO is purpose-centered and impact-driven. Through these partnerships, students are immersed in community life, work alongside local students, and learn from local leaders.

disconnect, de-center & re-envision

Students disconnect from technology and their normal rhythms of life; they are pushed off balance, or de-centered, through immersive experiences; and they work alongside local leaders and students to see the world, and themselves, in a new way. Our programs are guided by our approach to community engagement, which is rooted in long-term partnerships with the communities with whom we engage.

Walking Together

World Leadership School's programs are designed around research and our own experience with responsible and sustainable community engagement. The focus of our work is deep and long-term partnerships. We recognize that each traveling school, and community, has its own journey and our goal is that they walk side-by-side with each other – this is what we call "walking together."

Partnerships look different depending on each community. We partner with non-governmental organizations, associations, schools, artisans' collectives, or any other group. In working with smaller communities, we are aware of challenging dynamics that may exist outside of our partnership. We involve community leaders from the beginning and strive to overcome challenges and avoid the pitfalls of traditional community service work.

Learning Experience

The bulk of learning on our programs comes from experiences that students have on the ground with community partners and local leaders. These leaders offer inspiring examples of how to overcome obstacles and unite people around a common need. They also come in an amazing diversity of styles and temperaments. Some of these leaders are highly educated, while others are not;

some are outspoken, while others are quiet; some occupy elected positions, but others work only through social networks.

By studying these leaders, students learn there are many ways to work for change and leadership is more than being popular or having a lot of social connections. During the program, students reflect on what these leaders have in common. Over the years, we have boiled these reflections down into three core principles.

Purpose-Driven Leaders...



Learning Experience

Our progressive curriculum designed specifically for the development ages and stages of Middle and Upper School students has emerged from studying community leaders, purpose theory, and positive psychology, the study of how human beings flourish. Recent neuroscience has proven the deep link between emotion and cognition when it comes to developing compassion, empathy and other complex human behaviors. This is not "touchy-feely" or "soft" work -- it's exactly the opposite.

Students experience our curriculum that helps them answer two important questions: "Who am I?" and "How do I take action in the world?"

We think of this as a journey both inwards and outwards along a path of purpose. Students explore who they are and how they impact the world. The experience culminates when students bring together self-learning into their own "leadership story." In the process, many students connect with a new sense of purpose.

We have developed **two sets of curriculum** designed for two different development stages - one is designed for upper/high school students, and the other is developed specifically for middle/lower school students.







To help guide student learning, WLS has developed **two sets of curriculum**, one for middle school and the other for high school students. Students begin this curriculum before travel and continue during the program.

Our curriculum is based on the WLS Action Learning Cycle, which is a process we use each day to help students process their experiences. Our instructors are trained to facilitate our curriculum in combination with their unique leadership styles and skill sets. They will adapt learning sessions to the needs of the group throughout the program. But this is not "soft" work -- it's exactly the opposite. This work helps students stand up for themselves and others. In the WLS Action Cycle, students use both their emotions and their thoughts to process their experience. But change only happens when we act, so our cycle begins and ends with action.







STAFF

The safety of our programs rests on the experience and skills of our Staff, Instructors, and Country Coordinators, who convene annually at our staff training in one of our program locations across the world.

- The Staff of World Leadership School, based in Boulder, Colorado and Washington, DC, have many years of experience working in different educational environments. Their focus is logistics, risk management, program design, professional development, and consulting.
- Our Instructors are veteran educators with extensive international experience. They have wilderness medical training and often have past affiliations with Peace Corps, Outward Bound, NOLS, and/or independent schools.
- Our Community Coordinators live and work year-round in the communities we partner with. They screen our homestay families, evaluate our transport and other service providers, and provide emergency support.



RISK MANAGEMENT & SAFETY

We strive to **responsibly manage risks**. Our itineraries minimize highway travel and maximize immersion in rural communities that we know well. We update our risk management protocols, integrate feedback into program design, and invest in safety and communication equipment. Despite these efforts, World Leadership School cannot

guarantee safety nor can it eliminate the inherent and other risks of international student travel. For information regarding program activities and associated risks, risk management, and student and parent responsibilities, please contact our office or visit www.worldleadershipschool.com.

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