

Raleigh
International

Costa Rica &
Nicaragua

Go Out There

Why does Raleigh work in Costa Rica & Nicaragua?

While Costa Rica is classed as a middle-income country, over 20% of its population live below the national poverty line and more than 1.4% live in extreme poverty. A large number of those affected by poverty belong to indigenous ethnic groups. Many of these groups live in reserves with poor land and little infrastructure, and their livelihoods are often heavily dependent on the use of natural resources.

Nicaragua is one of the least developed countries in the Americas (ranked 18th out of 20 in Latin America) and the majority of its population live in poverty. Those most affected by extreme poverty are rural agricultural communities. Many of these communities do not have access to health services, water, sanitation, waste management or electricity and have insufficient housing. As their livelihoods also depend on a small number of crops, they are particularly vulnerable to environmental issues and the effects of climate change.

Raleigh's Focus in Costa Rica

Our programmes in Costa Rica focus on access to basic services for indigenous communities and protecting natural resources.

Natural Resource Management



Costa Rica has plans to become the world's first carbon neutral country by 2021 and has set aside almost 25% of its land as national parks or protected areas, areas that are rich in animal and plant life. Many rural communities live in or around these biodiversity hot-spots, so their use of natural resources is particularly important.

Raleigh realises the value of biodiversity and natural resources in providing communities with food, water and a way to make a living. We also recognise their importance in sustaining the health of our planet as a whole. We aim to increase knowledge and awareness of communities on the edge of protected areas by contributing to environmental training, awareness raising campaigns and encouraging sustainable lifestyles. We also work with conservation organisations and national parks to support scientific conservation work and protect biodiversity.

Costa Rica contains 5% of the world's biodiversity



Raleigh's Focus in Nicaragua

In Nicaragua, our expeditions focus on improving community managed water and sanitation systems and protecting natural resources.

Water and Sanitation

In the north central regions, where Raleigh focuses its projects, there is little rainfall so lack of water is frequently a problem. There are numerous health issues caused by contaminated water and poor sanitation as well as many related social issues. Diarrhoea, a common illness caused by unsafe water and hygiene practises, kills more children each year than AIDS, malaria and measles combined (Unicef and WHO 2009).

Raleigh is committed to improving access to safe water and sanitation in rural communities through awareness-raising, training and construction projects. These projects improve the health of the communities we work with and contribute towards the efficiency and productivity of their livelihoods. Raleigh also helps set up community groups such as water management committees. These encourage communities to take ownership of the projects and ensure their long term sustainability.

Only 34% of the rural population in Nicaragua have access to sanitation and just 63% have access to safe water.



Raleigh believes that young people have the energy, enthusiasm and potential to make a positive change in their own communities and globally. Your expedition will give you, your fellow volunteers and the young people in the communities you work with the opportunity to develop a range of skills and attitudes. By developing young leaders we hope communities, both local and global, will continue to work towards a sustainable future.

Youth Leadership in Costa Rica and Nicaragua

Youth Leadership is a very important part of Raleigh's programmes in both Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Young people are often particularly vulnerable to the issues caused by poverty; however they are also best placed to take up the challenge of addressing these issues.

World-wide young people (under 25s) make up almost half the total population.

What will volunteers do?

There are three phases to your expedition, a community project, an environmental project and an adventure phase. If you are on a 7 week expedition you will do two of these phases. Your community and environmental projects involve at least two activity types which are always interlinked. These are awareness raising and infrastructure construction.

Awareness-raising

The aim of awareness-raising is to have a positive effect on people's health and environments by encouraging them to change their behaviour.

By demonstrating the positive impacts of different behaviour we encourage communities to change their habits. This is done through interactive sessions with focus groups, music, art or drama.

This type of work is critical for ensuring that any infrastructure is used to its maximum potential.



Infrastructure construction



The aim of infrastructure construction is to provide communities with facilities that allow them to lead healthier and more sustainable lives.

Local people are likely to be very capable of building and maintaining their own infrastructure. Raleigh volunteers contribute by offering an extra pair of hands and, more importantly, by linking the new facilities with positive behaviour changes. For example, you might combine the building of a gravity fed water system with healthy behaviour such as regular hand washing.

All volunteers will be given the chance to lead their group while carrying out these activities. With the support of project managers, they will take on the responsibility of ensuring the group works as a team to achieve the day's objectives.

You will find out the exact details of your projects when you arrive in country but here are some examples.

Community Phase

In this phase you will be staying with a rural community and living with local families. Currently, Raleigh groups work on WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) projects. In 2014 a group worked in a community called Circo de Piedra and were involved with the construction of a water system. However construction only formed a small part of their project:



“As a way of guaranteeing the success of the project long after Raleigh leave the site, a committee has been formed to supervise the management of the water system and all related aspects of organisation... The Raleigh volunteers have been involved in planning and executing several action days over the course of their stay to educate the community about these topics and to train not only the committee members on their roles and involvement, but also to inform potential future committee members of the importance of ensuring the sustainability of the project.” (14R Team case study – Circo de Piedra, Mirafior)

For more information on current and past projects, check out the [Raleigh CRN Blog](#)

Environmental Phase

Environmental projects are usually based in remote communities near Costa Rica's nature reserves. Recently Raleigh teams have worked with communities on the edge of La Cangreja national park to raise awareness of the importance of natural resources:

“We have maintained a large section of trails which has made the park far more accessible. We encouraged the community to communicate more about the long term benefits of maintaining the park through our successful action days. We were also able to set up a meeting with both the Park Ranger and his bosses which was very encouraging to the sustainable future of the park.” (14K Team case study – La Cangreja Park)



Adventure Phase

The adventure phase is a chance for UK, international and in-country volunteers to develop their teamwork and leadership skills while exploring remote regions of Costa Rica or Nicaragua. Recent Raleigh groups have trekked through the forests of Corcovado National Park in Costa Rica and across the volcanic region of El Hoyo National Park in Nicaragua.

Volunteers take turns leading the group through wild landscapes and remote communities. While it is certainly an adventure this phase also provides invaluable personal development and cultural learning opportunities giving volunteers the skills to continue being active citizens in the future.



Travelling through Costa Rica or Nicaragua on foot gives a real insight into the countries' environmental and social issues and puts them in a wider context

You can discover the impact you're helping to create by reading our [Impact Report 2014](#).

Thank you for volunteering with Raleigh International. We believe that we can inspire communities and young people around the world to create lasting change. This vision could not be possible without you.

"I have talked to people in the communities who say that they are inspired by volunteers coming to their community to work. They say to me, 'Why shouldn't I work for the welfare of my community if they are?' They see the passion and vocation in it. It inspires them to do more."

– Ignacio Moreno, local project partner liaison, Cooperativa Juan Francisco Paz Silva, Nicaragua