

ECOLOGY PROJECT
INTERNATIONAL

2025

EPI

PROGRAM GUIDE

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ON THE COVER: A STUDENT COLLECTS DATA ON MARINE LIFE IN THE TURQUOISE WATERS OF BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR, MEXICO.





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For detailed information on programs, visit www.ecologyproject.org

WHAT SETS US APART

EPI isn't your typical travel company.



WELCOME TO THE EPI COMMUNITY, WHERE YOU'LL HAVE A ONE-OF-A-KIND TRAVEL EXPERIENCE ROOTED IN SCIENCE AND DISCOVERY!

1.

Inspiring youth with nature and empowering them with science:

EPI is a nonprofit organization dedicated to science and global education. Our mission is to inspire and empower the next generation of leaders by providing programs that impart the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become more informed and motivated citizens.

2.

Invested in local communities: EPI has formed lasting partnerships with researchers, national parks, and local community members at each of our program sites since our inception in 2000. These local connections enable us to create a profound impact on the environment, offering an immersive experience unlike any other.

3.

Inquiry, conservation, and service learning: EPI courses are built around students asking and answering the questions that interest them. They'll carry a sense of accomplishment as they help restore tropical forests, remove invasive plants, or improve endangered wildlife habitat.

4.

Making a difference: EPI's student-conducted research directly benefits endangered species and threatened ecosystems, contributing to a body of knowledge that helps scientists, policy-makers, and the public make informed decisions.

Teachers travel free.

Join EPI's program with a minimum of nine students (six in Costa Rica or Yellowstone) and one teacher-chaperone can accompany the group for free! And if you bring twelve students, you can invite a second free chaperone to help make your experience even more enjoyable. With EPI's easy planning and expert guidance, you can spend more of your time making memories that will last a lifetime.





EPI MEANS ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY

Education and conservation are at the heart of all EPI courses.

EPI was founded around three principal values: **scientific literacy, environmental protection, and cultural exchange**. We strive to change the way youth connect with nature by engaging them with authentic, hands-on science that makes a difference in conservation.

We acknowledge the challenges facing our planet today. Together with our students and teachers, we aspire to create a motivated, informed, critical, and creative citizenry who, based on a better understanding of nature and their role in it, practice positive behaviors with respect to the environment.

To become responsible stewards of the environment, it's crucial for our participants to appreciate and comprehend nature, acquire pertinent skills to take action, and possess the right mindset to guide their conduct. In essence, they need to possess environmental literacy—which encompasses knowledge, dispositions, competencies, and behaviors that enable them to proactively tackle environmental issues.

EPI's Environmental Literacy Wheel visually represents the five dimensions of our educational framework (**Knowledge, Dispositions, Competencies, Social Emotional Learning, and Behaviors**) and their sub-components.



OUR STORY

PHOTO BY ADOLFO LOPEZ



Ecology Project International's roots began in the field. Specifically, on a Costa Rican beach in 2000. EPI's founders—a scientist and an educator—first brought a group of local youth to a sea turtle reserve located a mere four miles away from the students' homes. It was a transformative experience for the students who were witnessing sea turtles laying eggs on the shore for the first time, and sparked an idea to engage local youth in conservation science.

Fast forward two decades, and that idea has flourished into a global endeavor spanning two continents and encompassing more than 117,000 participants. Today, you and your students have the opportunity to partake in the same breathtaking real-world scientific exploration that inspired those initial Costa Rican students.

Local involvement is at the heart of EPI's mission. EPI recognizes that involving local citizens is crucial for successful conservation efforts. As a result, EPI funds and delivers educational programming for local communities, with a specific focus on science, wildlife conservation, and social and emotional development. Notably, more than 80% of EPI's participants are local residents living near our project sites.

As a nonprofit organization, EPI works closely with local communities at its program sites, facilitates a donor program that protects endangered wildlife, and maintains an alumni program to sustain momentum long after students return from their field experience.

**>>> Learn more about EPI's
Global Initiatives.**



SEA TURTLE CHAMPIONS

The latest updates from EPI's Pacuare Reserve.

Pacuare Reserve is a working reserve in Limon Province, Costa Rica, tucked away between tropical lowland forest and the shores of the Caribbean Sea. Currently under the stewardship of Ecology Project International. The Reserve is home to an abundance of wildlife, including three species of primates, 252 species of birds, and rare wildcats like the jaguar and the ocelot. Its six kilometers of coastline provide critical nesting grounds for four different species of sea turtles—including the endangered leatherback sea turtle.

If you're one of the 16,000 teachers and students who have traveled to The Reserve and helped with the conservation and research efforts taking place every year, you know just how special this place is. A team of passionate and dedicated biologists, research assistants, kitchen staff, and numerous other support staff and volunteers make up the beating heart of this remote field station. Since it was founded in 1989, this group of caring individuals have been carrying out The Reserve's primary mission: to monitor and protect the world's second largest nesting population of leatherback sea turtles. And they've made huge strides in the past year.

Pacuare Reserve is home to an average of 548 leatherback nests per year, making it the fifth most important nesting beach for this species worldwide. Research programs at The Reserve include collecting biometric data on nesting turtle females, protecting nests by relocating them, and educating national and international students on conservation.

The diligent work of local guards, coupled with nightly censuses conducted by research assistants, students, and dedicated volunteers, has led to an impressive reduction in the number of illegally harvested nests. From 98% in the past, the figure dropped significantly to a mere 0.7% in 2022. Even more promising is the report from 2023, with The Reserve celebrating the achievement of not losing a single nest throughout the entire year.

Other 2023 highlights from the sea turtle conservation & research program include:

32,000 SEA TURTLE HATCHINGS WERE RELEASED
41,700+ EGGS SAVED
106 COLLECTIVE CENSUS MILES WALKED BY STAFF, STUDENTS, & VOLUNTEERS

The success of 2023 is not just good news for sea turtles; the conservation efforts taking place at Pacuare Reserve provide invaluable learning opportunities for students and volunteers. Through educational programming with EPI and through volunteer opportunities, both local and visiting individuals learn about field research techniques, career possibilities, and how they can modify their own behaviors to make a positive impact on the environment.



“

I was so excited to learn about more about leatherbacks and I certainly did, but I also found myself in awe of the commitment to conservation that everyone in Pacuare had. Saving water, reducing waste, and using renewable energy seem so doable now. The joy and fulfillment I felt when working with the turtles made me realize that I need to do something with my life that makes me that happy.

- Sea Turtle Ecology Program Participant

”

**GET INVOLVED
WITH
PACUARE
RESERVE!**

From afar: Teachers can access the Costa Rica storyline from the EPI Classroom on EcologyProject.org and monitor and identify animals on the Pacuare Reserve Camera Trap through Zooniverse.

In-person: Plan a student group or teacher professional development course with EPI. Individual students can enroll on their own. Anyone over the age of 18 can volunteer to be a research assistant at The Reserve or plan an eco-experience with their families.



RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

TOBACCO CAYE MARINE STATION

Hands-on Research with our Belize Conservation Partners

Every EPI student travel program is underpinned by a science and conservation partner organization, providing students with a chance to engage in hands-on field research alongside experts and differentiating EPI from other student travel experiences. Since our establishment, we've collaborated with national parks, universities, wildlife conservation organizations, nonprofits, and field research stations to bring science to life for our participants.

In Belize, EPI currently collaborates with two dedicated conservation organizations: the Toucan Ridge Ecology and Education Society (T.R.E.E.S) and Tobacco Caye Marine Station. Situated on the stunning island of Tobacco Caye, the Marine Station is a non-governmental organization (NGO) concentrating on marine education on the Belize Barrier Reef—the world's second-largest barrier reef and an ecological hotspot.

Making a Difference on Tobacco Caye

The Marine Station engages both local Belizean students and study abroad students in experiential learning projects. Students examine the impact of nurdles (tiny particles of raw material used in plastic production) on Belizean beaches, participate in a global community science project by monitoring and collecting data on coral, and contribute to the removal of invasive lionfish. Notably, the organization's website reports:

More than 120,000 items of trash have been removed from the reef crest. Students played a role in culling more than 2,700 invasive lionfish. Their efforts include surveying over 1,500 corals to date.

Beyond these impressive statistics, students are discovering a passion for environmental conservation, marine biology, and potential future careers.

One student from Half Moon Bay High School in California shared, "The trip felt like a dream, and there were so many interesting studies and surveys I was able to participate in. Being with the group and connecting with nature felt effortless and enjoyable. I realized for sure that I want to pursue environmental science in college."

EPI's Belize Tropical Ecology Program

Students on the Belize Tropical Ecology Program spend three nights at Tobacco Caye Marine Station. In addition to research projects, students have the chance to refine their snorkeling skills in the warm, tropical waters of Tobacco Caye, including a guided night snorkel—a highlight of many students' trips.

**>>> Dive into our Belize
Tropical Ecology Program!**





**BELIZE TROPICAL ECOLOGY
NOVEMBER - AUGUST**

Students assist researchers at Tobacco Caye Marine Station with beach cleanups and invasive species management.



STUDENT & TEACHER EXPEDITIONS

OUT OF THE CLASSROOM AND INTO THE WILD

Designed to offer students authentic learning experiences free from the constraints of the classroom, programs are typically 7-9 days long and are best suited to groups of 12-20 students.

Whether students are busy collecting data alongside scientists or participating in a team building exercise back at camp, these programs will help participants grow a deeper understanding of the scientific process—and learn more about themselves along the way!

OUT OF THE CLASSROOM & INTO THE FIELD!

Student & Teacher Expeditions are tailored for student groups accompanied by their teacher and an additional chaperone. Here's our approach:

Planning & Alignment

Our Field Experience Coordinators will work with you to:

- Determine whether EPI is a good fit. What are your goals for a travel program?
- Select the right field site and duration
- Find dates that work for your schedule
- Provide information to help you get administrative approval

Recruitment & Enrollment Support

Next, our Coordinators will:

- Provide online and hardcopy materials to capture student interest
- Virtually attend student and parent meetings
- Handle all paperwork and payments
- Once 6-9 students enroll with deposits (depending on the program) your course is confirmed
- Courses confirmed by July 1st earn Early Bird pricing (standard pricing applies after July 1st)

Pre-Departure Prep

Before heading into the field, we will:

- Coordinate a call with on-site staff
- Provide packing lists and handbooks to students
- Send a pre-departure packet with itineraries, contact info, and t-shirts

Upon Arrival

Once you arrive at your destination, we will:

- Meet you at a designated location and transport the group to the field site
- Notify our U.S. office and an appointed school contact that the group has made it safely
- From there, no news is good news! In case of emergency, our staff carry an emergency response phone that is monitored 24/7

>>> **Learn more about
Student & Teacher Expeditions**





COSTA RICA • SEA TURTLE ECOLOGY

9 days | March - June | Early Bird: \$3,895 • Standard: \$3,995 | Airfare included

For EPI, it all began here—on a moonlit beach on the eastern shores of Costa Rica, with a giant sea turtle...

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Imagine studying tropical ecology at a research facility deep in the rainforest, full of strikingly colored birds, unusual mammals, and threatened keystone species—like the leatherback sea turtle. From EPI's field station on the shores of the Caribbean Sea, we'll be at the center of leatherback conservation efforts while learning about Costa Rica's immense biodiversity.

RESEARCH & ACTIVITIES

We'll assist researchers by conducting nesting leatherback censuses each night, honing skills that will help restore and improve sea turtle habitat. During hatchling season (beginning in May), we'll witness scores of tiny hatchlings making their perilous way from nest to ocean. We'll explore the wild diversity of the rainforest at night by taking a guided walk under the canopy, and we'll celebrate it all with a whitewater rafting trip at the close of the course.

COSTA RICA • FELINES & PRIMATES

9 days

January - February &
July - October

Early Bird: \$3,695 • Standard: \$3,795

Airfare included

The rainforest of EPI's Pacuare Reserve is home to more than 300 species of animals, including unique primates and some of the highest concentrations of felines in Costa Rica.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Discover what the rainforest has to teach us about ecology and wildlife behavior, all while contributing to research on some of the world's most incredible species. Our home-away-from home is EPI's Pacuare Reserve, which stretches across nearly three miles of Caribbean coastline and 2,000 acres of rainforest.

RESEARCH & ACTIVITIES

We'll walk the Reserve trails seeking troops of primates—such as howler, spider, and white-faced capuchin monkeys—to observe and document their behavior. Alongside Costa Rican researchers, we'll capture the behaviors of jaguars and other felines through a system of camera traps. We may also help with one of The Reserve's many sustainability projects, or spend a day immersed in Tico culture (with plenty of opportunities to practice our Spanish!).



IN 2023, THE TEAM OF RESEARCHERS AND STUDENTS AT PACUARE RESERVE CARRIED OUT **600 HOURS OF PRIMATE MONITORING**, DURING WHICH THEY COMPILED ETHOLOGICAL INFORMATION ON 196 INDIVIDUALS IN 14 TROOPS. IN ADDITION, THEY CAPTURED 45 CAMERA TRAP VIDEOS FEATURING FELINES, INCLUDING FOOTAGE OF THREE JAGUARS AND 16 OCELOTS.





YELLOWSTONE • SUMMER

9 days

June - September

Early Bird: \$2,595 • Standard: \$2,745

Airfare not included

The world's first National Park is brimming with natural wonders, and you'll get up close with many of them on this field research course.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Yellowstone is a well-known destination, yet only a select few have the opportunity to gain a first-hand understanding of its history, wildlife, and current management controversies. Our course basecamp will be near the park's distinguished northern range, providing an in-depth examination of the intricate conservation concerns affecting the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. We'll undertake wildlife surveys, service-based learning initiatives, and discussions with individuals invested in the region to gain a comprehensive understanding of the region.

RESEARCH & ACTIVITIES

We'll collect data alongside the park's bison team, observe wolves with experts on the northern range, and monitor amphibians on the Custer-Gallatin National Forest. We'll also practice Leave No Trace camping techniques and expeditionary behavior as we explore geothermal wonders and stunning vistas. We'll celebrate our hard work with a rafting adventure on the iconic Yellowstone River at the end of the course.

EARN COLLEGE CREDIT!

Yellowstone program participants can earn 3 undergraduate credits from our partners at the University of Montana (separate registration process and fees apply).



YELLOWSTONE • WINTER

9 days | January - May | Early Bird: \$2,845 • Standard: \$2,945 | Airfare not included

Winter in Yellowstone...it's anything but a walk in the park!

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Winter is the quiet season in the park, but only from a human perspective. For Yellowstone's wildlife, it's a time for survival, migration, and renewal. We'll witness this dynamic firsthand alongside National Park Service biologist teams as we contribute to ongoing winter studies, returning nightly to our cozy private lodge just outside the park's North Entrance.

RESEARCH & ACTIVITIES

On snowshoes or on foot, we'll attempt to locate the park's ungulate herds—bison, elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, and pronghorn—in order to collect samples and record data. Our field research techniques will include using telemetry to locate radio-collared individuals and (our favorite!) collecting fecal samples to help researchers analyze the diet of ungulates. We'll break up our research with wolf observation on the northern range and a steamy soak at a developed hot spring in nearby Paradise Valley, Montana.



IN SUPPORT OF THE YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK BISON TEAM, EPI PARTICIPANTS **CARRIED OUT MORE THAN 6,000 HOURS OF UNGULATE RESEARCH** TO PROVIDE INSIGHTS INTO THE DIVERSITY AND MOVEMENT OF UNGULATES IN THE PARK IN 2023.





GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

12 days

Year Round

Early Bird: \$6,595 • Standard: \$6,895

Airfare included

There's no better laboratory for conservation and biology field studies than the Galapagos Islands. From the waters teeming with species found only here, to the highlands inhabited by giant tortoises, you'll work to understand and protect this fragile ecosystem.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Have you ever heard a giant tortoise breathe? Crossed paths with a marine iguana? If you're going to make the once-in-a-lifetime trip to these islands, EPI's unique partnership with the nonprofit ECOS (Education for Sustainable Communities) will make it unforgettable. Our time will be split between the Santa Cruz and Isabela islands, where we'll witness firsthand the sheer abundance of life in this ecological hotspot.

RESEARCH & ACTIVITIES

ECOS is an Ecuadorian nonprofit organization that was born from EPI Galapagos with the desire to increase the local impact on sustainable development education of all the youth in the Galapagos Islands. Our partnership with ECOS gives us exclusive access to researchers, and we'll assist them in locating giant tortoises and collecting data on habitat use. We'll snorkel the waters of the Galapagos Marine Reserve, visit a tortoise breeding center, and (if we're lucky!) observe penguins, Darwin's finches, and Galapagos hawks on the Island of Isabela. A cultural exchange with the local Molas Club will teach us about local endeavors to protect the Galapagos from climate change and other threats.



EPI PARTICIPANTS, WITH THE GUIDANCE OF THE GALAPAGOS CONSERVATION TRUST, **EXTRACTED AND CATALOGED 1,279 MICROPLASTIC PARTICLES** TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF MICROPOLLUTION IN THE ISLANDS.





BELIZE

9 days | November - August | Early Bird: \$4,495 • Standard: \$4,695 | Airfare included

Fall into the gentle rhythms of Belize.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

From the lush canopies of inland rainforests to the second largest barrier reef in the world, Belize is home to a wealth of wildlife biodiversity. On land and in the water, we'll practice our observation skills and field research techniques, helping to protect the species that call this critical ecosystem home.

RESEARCH & ACTIVITIES

We'll divide our time between the Toucan Ridge Ecology and Education Society (T.R.E.E.S.) research station nestled in the rainforest and the picturesque Tobacco Caye island. At T.R.E.E.S., we'll actively contribute to ongoing terrestrial research, engaging in neotropical bat surveys and herpetology studies. Meanwhile, on Tobacco Caye, our focus will shift to marine-based field research, where we'll conduct assessments of tropical fish populations, gather data on coral reef health, and lend a helping hand in invasive lionfish research. In between our fieldwork, we'll delve into the rich tapestry of Belizean culture, including the opportunity to participate in a traditional Sambah drum circle.

I learned so much about how every little thing can impact a whole network; from a drop of water that could be conserved to tiny macroinvertebrates that upkeep streams and the environment around them. I learned that there is a whole world of new things apart from my home, my phone, and my experiences.

- 2023 BELIZE PARTICIPANT





BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR • MARINE SCIENCE

9 days | October - May | Early Bird: \$4,095 • Standard: \$4,245 | Airfare included

From Jacques Cousteau to John Steinbeck, the Gulf of California has enticed the great adventurers. Explore the rich waters of the “world’s aquarium” with EPI.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Gulf of California is the ideal living laboratory for the study of marine science. From our lodging in the coastal town of La Paz and the remote Espiritu Santo Island, we’ll venture into the gulf to study the incredible diversity of life, with countless opportunities for wildlife interaction and hands-on field research.

RESEARCH & ACTIVITIES

Depending on weather and time of year, we’ll swim with curious sea lions and collect data on a variety of marine species that live in these nutrient-rich waters. With EPI Mexico’s Californios Verdes Eco Club, we’ll learn about student-led conservation efforts and participate in service-learning projects like beach clean-ups or coral reef restoration. We’ll also make time to explore La Paz’s iconic waterfront and practice Leave No Trace camping at our beachside campsite on Espiritu Santo Island.



IN 2023, STUDENTS MONITORED AND RECORDED **76 INDIVIDUAL MARINE INVERTEBRATE SPECIES** IN THE GULF OF CALIFORNIA AS PART OF AN EFFORT TO GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ECOSYSTEM’S HEALTH.



BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR • DESERT & COASTAL ECOLOGY

8 days

October - May

Early Bird: \$3,195 • Standard: \$3,295

Airfare included

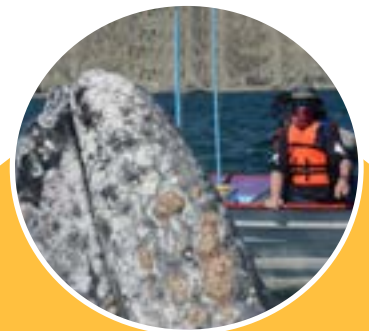
EPI's campus on the edge of the desert offers a hands-on setting to learn about sustainable living and community education.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The charming capital of Baja California Sur, La Paz is the ideal basecamp to experience the desert and coastal ecology of the peninsula. On daily field excursions, we'll contribute to both marine and terrestrial studies and we'll see community sustainability in action through immersive cultural experiences.

RESEARCH & ACTIVITIES

Our field research will take us into the desert ecosystems around La Paz and the Sierra Cacachilas, where we'll observe the resilient flora and fauna that thrive in this arid region. In the aquamarine waters of the Gulf, we'll practice our snorkeling skills, conduct an underwater invertebrate census, and contribute to a coral reef restoration project. We'll cap off the experience with a visit with local Eco Club members and exchange ideas on how young people influence sustainability efforts within communities.



BAJA WHALE ECOLOGY

\$4,145 • \$4,295

JANUARY - FEBRUARY

Climb aboard with EPI and whale researchers to study one of the ocean's friendliest species: grey whales. We'll return each evening to our oceanside campsite in Puerto Chale or our sustainable field campus in La Paz.

The experience I had from this course was fantastic! I learned about different ways to help conservation, different species of animals, and different aspects of Mexican culture. This overall experience showed me different ways in my life that I can change to help the environment.

- JILLIAN, 2023 MEXICO PARTICIPANT

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT TRAVEL



TRAVEL SOLO, BUT NOT ALONE

Experience the world like never before with EPI's Individual Student Travel Programs, designed for middle school, high school, and college students. Our "solo" travel programs offer a unique opportunity for students to develop a sense of independence and confidence by exploring the world on their own terms. Participants will join a group of like-minded individuals and gain hands-on science and conservation skills, preparing them for a future career in the sciences.

Participants in EPI's Individual Student Travel Programs not only gain invaluable science and conservation skills, but also stand out on college applications. Embrace a new sense of independence and join a global network of youth leaders, connecting with passionate individuals from around the world.

WHAT STEPS SHOULD I FOLLOW AS A SOLO STUDENT TRAVELER?

Parents and students get the peace of mind that comes with personalized support throughout the journey, from planning and enrollment all the way to departure.

Planning & Enrollment

To start the process, students and their parents will:

- Read our program descriptions and destinations on pages 13-22 of this guide
- Work one-on-one with a Field Experience Coordinator to decide which program is best for you
- Discuss our safety procedures and determine travel dates

Recruitment & Enrollment Support

Before heading into the field, we will:

- Set up a participant login portal where you'll upload paperwork and flight information
- Provide a packing list and program itinerary
- Guide your flight purchase and determine how you'll meet up with the rest of the participants upon arrival

Upon Arrival

Once you arrive at your destination, we will:

- Meet you at a designated location and transport you to the field site
- Notify our U.S. office that you've made it safely
- From there, no news is good news! In case of emergency, our staff carry an emergency response phone that is monitored 24/7

>>> Learn more about EPI's individual student travel opportunities.



PHOTO BY ECOS



PHOTO BY ECOS

AN ALUM'S TALE OF TRANSFORMATION

The enduring impact of field-based education.

It is the early 1990s, and a young Sara Kerosky (now Guenther) is fixated on the T.V. Unlike most peers her age, her eyes aren't glued to Saturday morning cartoons or the latest Disney film. PBS is highlighting the magnificent, ancient, and utterly massive leatherback sea turtle as it emerges from the depths of the sea to the sandy shore and Sara can't look away.

"It's definitely one of my core memories. It was the first time I'd heard of these huge sea turtles pulling themselves out of the ocean to dig nests and lay eggs. I remember being completely captivated."

In 2002, Sara was presented with the opportunity to witness this particular wonder of nature. A couple of her favorite teachers at Bishop O'Dowd High School would be chaperoning an EPI Sea Turtle Ecology course in Costa Rica over spring break and invited their students to participate. In addition to living off-the-grid in a slice of rainforest along the Caribbean Sea, students would conduct nightly beach patrols to gather data on nesting leatherback sea turtles. With the help of EPI students, teachers, and volunteers, local researchers collect valuable information to track changes in the population and develop strategies to protect the critically endangered species. Sara was so excited for this, and her parents were supportive.

Back in California, Sara enrolled in every environment and ecology course offered at her school. Sara's high school was beginning a major habitat restoration effort on a hill behind the school, and Sara contributed hours of class and volunteer time to help her community transform the hill into a thriving living laboratory.

Sara took her budding interests to UC San Diego, where she earned her B.A. in International Studies and Environmental Studies. After graduation, Sara was offered a summer job working at the Scripps Whale Acoustics Laboratory. In the fall, the Lab invited her to stay on as a Staff Research Associate. She learned to process and analyze marine acoustic data, program automated vocalization detectors, and conduct visual and acoustic surveys on research cruises. She even worked alongside Dr. Jorge Urban's lab in a survey of the Gulf of California, and was excited to learn about EPI's new programs in Baja California Sur, Mexico. She contributed to peer-reviewed publications, presented at an international conference, and coordinated an annual regional marine mammal workshop. After five years, she knew she was committed to a career in research and ready for graduate school.

Sara noticed that while scientific evidence revealed the extent of human impact on the environment, policies to address human impact weren't quick to follow. She wanted to study social science to learn about the behavioral and political barriers and bottlenecks in policymaking that affect conservation efforts. Sara earned her Ph.D. in Political Science from UC San Diego with a dissertation on the political timing of administrative innovations related to implementation of the Endangered Species Act.

Now 37, Sara has been applying her skills and experience to program evaluation, which is all about generating data and evidence to inform decision-making. Today, Sara is a Research Scientist at Montana State University working on loan for the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). She is currently evaluating NOAA efforts to support meaningful engagement among tribes and underserved communities in habitat restoration and climate resilience projects.

"Field-based education is one of the most exciting ways to introduce and exercise critical thinking, research design, and data skills. These are skills and experiences that students carry with them and build on throughout their lives: in their careers, as consumers of information, and as decision-makers. Field-based education is also an opportunity to introduce and demonstrate good mentorship, collaboration, and teamwork. When paired with conservation and community-oriented principles, students return from the field empowered to tackle any problem from a place of care, cooperation, and justice."

Sara's journey from an EPI Sea Turtle Ecology student in 2002 to a seasoned research scientist using data to shape conversations about conservation policy exemplifies the transformative power of field-based education. Her initial field experience with EPI inspired a lifelong passion for conservation, taught her the skills to make a tangible impact in her community, and gave her the language to seek out more learning opportunities. Her commitment to environmental stewardship, evident in her attention to human impact, restoration, and resilience throughout her career, shows the enduring influence of a single immersive experience. As we celebrate Sara's accomplishments, we are reminded of the potential within each student, waiting to be unlocked through the transformative lens of experiential education.

My EPI course showed me what research, conservation, and restoration mean. We designed and executed our own research projects, we did transects in primary and secondary forests, and we met with people living in the communities we visited. EPI gave me the experience and the language to describe the type of work I wanted to do.

- SARA GUENTHER, 2002 EPI ALUM





Conservation is about coming together to look out for the future of all living species with whom we share this planet we call home. Pacuare Reserve is a significant part of my journey, as my awakening to work with the environment came from my first experience with EPI. I feel highly motivated by the space this organization has given me to explore the mind and purpose of a biologist. The EPI Alumni Reunion was a reminder of how revolutionary it is to step out of your comfort zone and give back to any living species with whom we share this life. Stepping foot in Pacuare Reserve again felt like a step closer to becoming another human being who can passionately work to save endangered species. I appreciate the love EPI provides for the world, and I hope to follow the values of this community.

- CASSIE, 2021 COSTA RICA ALUM

EPI ALUMNI

TURNING INSPIRATION INTO ACTION

Our participants leave the field ready for more. More time in the field working alongside conservation experts. More nights in the woods under a blanket of stars. More support in actualizing their conservation ideas. Thanks to the EPI Alumni Program, our participants are able to continue their environmental journeys well beyond their days on course.

When students complete an EPI course, they enter a world of possibilities. We connect aspiring conservationists to internships within our organization, internships with partner organizations, scholarship funding, volunteer courses, networking opportunities, and so much more.

Each year, the EPI Alumni Leadership Award funds students who dream big and do even bigger for conservation in their communities. We've awarded \$10,985 toward conservation-related alumni service projects since the program began in 2009!

To be an EPI Alum is to be a steward of the environment, a leader in conservation, and an inspiration to all.

>>> **Check out unique opportunities available for EPI's Alumni.**



STUDENT & TEACHER PROGRAM INDEX

See pages 13-22 for overviews, research, and activities.

| PROGRAM | LENGTH | FIELD SEASON | EARLY BIRD TUITION | STANDARD TUITION | AIRFARE INCLUDED? |
|--|---------|---------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Yellowstone Winter Ecology Program | 9 days | January-May | \$2,845 | \$2,945 | |
| Yellowstone Wildlife Ecology Program | 9 days | June-September | \$2,595 | \$2,745 | |
| Costa Rica Sea Turtle Ecology Program | 9 days | March-June | \$3,895 | \$3,995 | ✓ |
| Costa Rica Felines & Primates Program | 9 days | January-February & July-October | \$3,695 | \$3,795 | ✓ |
| Baja California Sur Marine Science Program | 7 days | October-May | \$3,645 | \$3,745 | ✓ |
| Baja California Sur Marine Science Program | 9 days | October-May | \$4,095 | \$4,245 | ✓ |
| Baja California Sur Whale Ecology Program | 9 days | January-February | \$4,145 | \$4,295 | ✓ |
| Baja California Sur Desert & Coastal Ecology Program | 8 days | October-May | \$3,195 | \$3,295 | ✓ |
| Belize Tropical Ecology Program | 9 days | November-August | \$4,495 | \$4,695 | ✓ |
| Galapagos Islands Ecology Program | 9 days | Year Round | \$5,995 | \$6,395 | ✓ |
| Galapagos Islands Ecology Program | 12 days | Year Round | \$6,595 | \$6,895 | ✓ |

ENROLL BEFORE JULY 1ST FOR EARLY BIRD PRICING!

School groups that enroll the minimum number of students required to confirm a course (6 for Costa Rica and Yellowstone; 9 for all other courses) by July 1st will receive reduced Early Bird pricing! Groups that enroll after July 1st will be subject to standard tuition pricing.

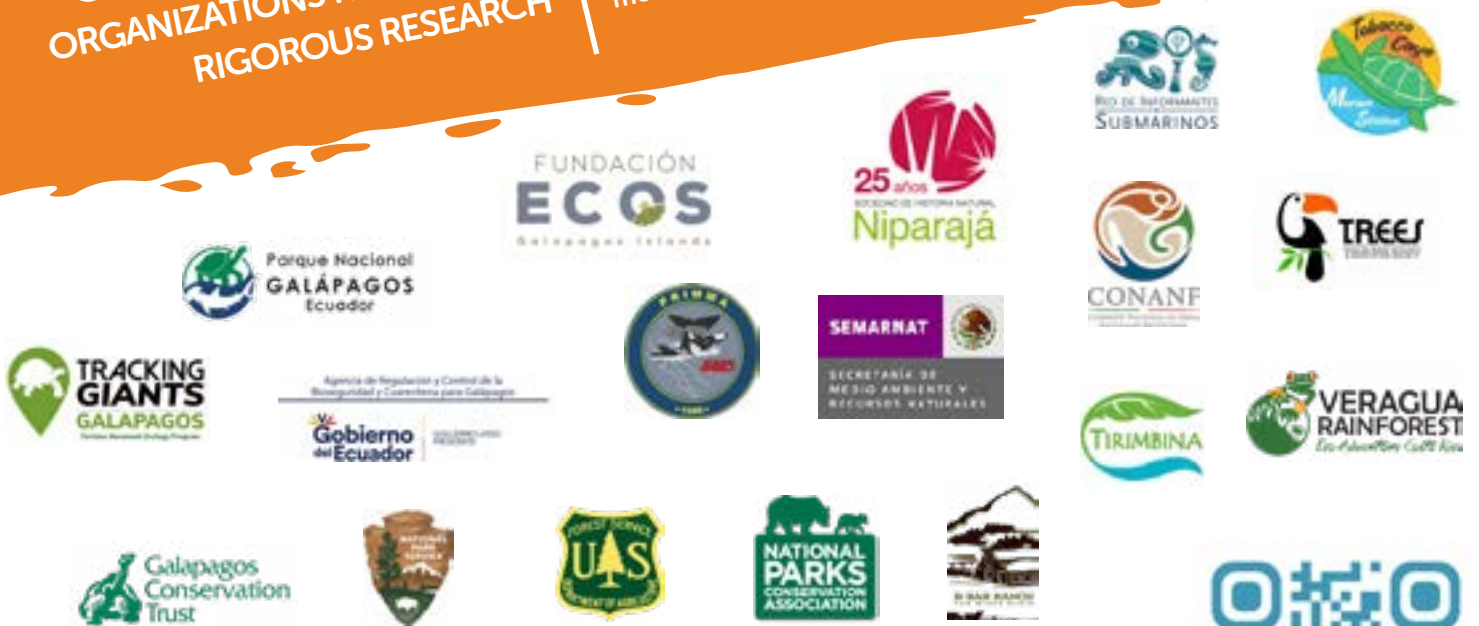
HOPING FOR A CUSTOM ITINERARY?

We're here to make sure you have the experience of a lifetime. If that means an itinerary of a different length than what we've listed here, we're happy to help customize an itinerary that works for you. Get in touch with one of our Field Experience Coordinators to begin planning today.



**EPI PARTNERS WITH
SCIENCE RESEARCH
ORGANIZATIONS KNOWN FOR
RIGOROUS RESEARCH**

Long term datasets, like the ones EPI and our partners steward, are rare and difficult to maintain but crucial to understanding environmental change. Data collected by EPI students provide valuable information that benefits studies of biodiversity, climate change, and vulnerable species, and the process allows young people to contribute meaningfully to conservation research.



>>> Explore groundbreaking research with our science partners!



TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Elevate your professional skills and explore the world!

Our PD programs offer a unique objective—to help you hone your teaching abilities by connecting with other educators and learning progressive, inquiry-based methods.

Through our PD programs, you'll engage in hands-on activities and gain invaluable knowledge and skills that will empower you to introduce more exploration and inquiry-based learning into your classroom. Expand your professional horizons while making a meaningful impact on the scientific community with EPI.

PD PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

- Observe natural phenomena—like hatching turtles or migrating bison
- Participate in authentic research and conservation projects
- Create lessons that align with the NGSS using the 5E Learning Cycle and EPI's learning framework (see page 5)
- Earn professional development hours and graduate credits (separate registration fee and application process required)
- Become a part of the EPI community and our mission to foster an environmentally literate society!



PURSuing PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Here's how we make your professional development goals a reality:

Planning & Enrollment

- We'll post the dates for our 2025 PD programs in August
- Head to our website and choose the program that speaks to you
- Enroll online or contact our Field Experience Coordinators to start the process
- Once a PD program meets the minimum number of participants to run, the course is confirmed!
- When the course is confirmed, we'll provide guidance on purchasing airfare

Pre-Departure Prep

Next, our coordinators will:

- Set up your participant login portal where you'll upload paperwork and flight information
- Provide packing lists and our PD Handbook
- Open up a Google Classroom where you can meet the other participants and get started on any pre-course assignments
- Advise on how to start the process to obtain graduate credit—separate registration process and fees apply



Upon Arrival

Once you arrive at your destination, our staff will:

- Meet you at a designated location and transport you or your group to the field site
- Notify our U.S. office that you and your group have made it safely
- From there, no news is good news! In case of emergency, our staff carry an emergency response phone that is monitored 24/7



>>> **Scholarships available!**
Join EPI's Professional Development network.



2025 PD COURSES

See pages 13-21 for overviews, research, and activities.

| LOCATION | PROGRAM LENGTH | TIME OF YEAR | # PD HOURS | COLLEGE CREDIT* | TUITION |
|---------------------|----------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|---------|
| Costa Rica | 7 days | Summer | 40 | 4 Credits | \$2,095 |
| Galapagos Islands | 10 days | Summer | 48 | 4 Credits | \$4,295 |
| Yellowstone | 8 days | Summer | 40 | 4 Credits | \$2,245 |
| Belize | 8 days | Summer | 40 | 4 Credits | \$3,195 |
| Baja California Sur | 5 days | Winter | 20 | 2 Credits | \$1,695 |

*Separate course registration process and fee applies for college credits.



EARN GRADUATE & CONTINUING ED CREDIT!

Get credit for your work protecting ecosystems and discovering innovative ways to incorporate hands-on learning into your classroom curriculum!

Participants in EPI's Teacher Professional Development Programs earn between 20-40 PD hours depending on the program.

Opportunities for graduate credit are available through our partnerships with Hamline University (for our international PD programs) and the University of Montana (for our US-based PD programs). A separate registration process and tuition fee are required, but our staff can help you get the process started.





PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Established in 2013, our premiere professional development program is designed to offer a diverse range of educators an opportunity to collaborate with one another on real-world conservation projects, and learn EPI's methods for teaching field science along the way.

HOW TO APPLY

The application period is open annually from July to September and can be found on the EPI website. Formal and informal educators are encouraged to apply. The curriculum is best suited to middle, high school, and college educators, and applications from teachers in any subject are welcome.

LOCATION & COST

EPI Teacher Fellowships take place each year in Costa Rica, Mexico, and Yellowstone. EPI funds the majority of program costs, though Fellows pay a needs-based sliding fee ranging from \$300-\$600 and are responsible for their own airfare. There is no cost to apply.

>>> [Learn more and apply!](#)



SCHOLARSHIPS FINANCIAL AID FUNDRAISING



Our goal is to offer programs to each and every student and teacher who hopes to participate. Here's how we can help:

Financial aid. Awards are offered to enrolled participants who apply for financial aid each spring and fall. Eligible students may receive up to \$600.

In-house fundraising platform. Every student receives access to their own crowdfunding platform hosted by EPI.

Scholarships. Thanks to funding from alumni and supporting foundations, a number of scholarships are available each year for groups and individual students.

Off-season travel grants. Groups with flexibility to travel outside our typical field season are eligible for travel grants of up to \$8,000.

Awards for alumni leaders. Students who return from their EPI program with a desire to help solve an environmental problem in their own community are eligible to apply for EPI's Alumni Leadership Award. Students can win up to \$500 to turn their ideas into reality.

FIRST TIME WITH EPI? ASK ABOUT OUR EARLY ENROLLMENT SCHOLARSHIPS!

First-time groups that confirm their course by enrolling 9 students (6 for Costa Rica and Yellowstone) by July 1st will earn a \$1,800 scholarship.

Contact us to learn more.

info@ecologyproject.org

Contribute to our financial aid fund!

When you make a payment to participate in an EPI course, you have an option to add an additional amount of your choice that goes towards a scholarship fund for visiting students. This fund helps provide transformative educational opportunities to those who may not otherwise have the chance to participate. To date, EPI has awarded \$15,000 in financial aid at an average of \$250 per student.

>>> Kickstart your
fundraising today!



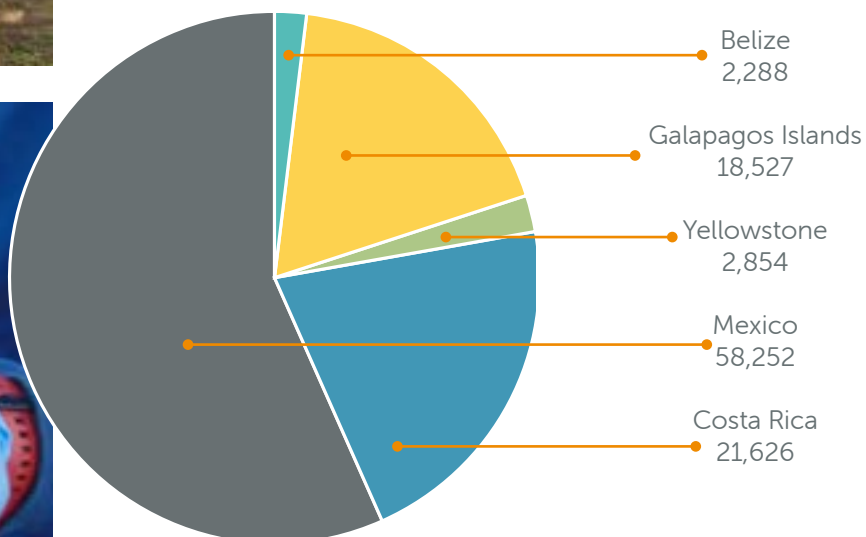
DID YOU KNOW?

Local students (those living near our research sites) make up **89%** of EPI's annual participation!



You're probably aware that EPI runs science and conservation travel programs for U.S. students, but did you know EPI engages local students in leadership activities, habitat conservation, and research efforts at all of our program sites? We believe that youth all around the world are essential as leaders on climate and community action, and we're fortunate enough to see it in action each year.

TOTAL LOCAL STUDENT PARTICIPATION



By the end of our 2023 season, a total of 103,675 local students had participated in EPI's Field Trips, Festivals, Science Symposia, Workshops, Eco Clubs, and Core Field Programs.



STUDENT VOICES:

"En mi experiencia con EPI aprendí a apreciar la naturaleza en todo su encanto, comprendí la importancia de la conservación de las tortugas marinas y amar la naturaleza, conmoviendo ese sentido de pertenencia y empoderamiento por mis islas encantadas y los seres vivos que habitan en esta."

"In my experience with EPI, I learned to appreciate nature in all its charm, understood the importance of conserving sea turtles, and developed a love for nature, deepening that sense of belonging and empowerment for my beloved islands and the living beings that inhabit them."

- 2020 LOCAL GALAPAGOS STUDENT

"Este curso me ayudò a apropiarme del ecosistema de desierto, conocer a profundidad sobre plantas y animales de la zona. Esta experiencia me ha hecho sentir más acogido por el desierto, a valorarlo."

"This course helped me to become familiar with the desert ecosystem, to deeply understand the plants and animals of the area. This experience has made me feel more embraced by the desert, to appreciate it."

- 2022 LOCAL MEXICO STUDENT



ECOLOGY PROJECT
INTERNATIONAL
315 S. 4th Street E.
Missoula, MT 59801

**NEW TO
EPI?**

New schools that enroll by July 1st
are eligible for a \$1,800 scholarship
to distribute to your students!

