

# Packing list for International Tropical Research Biology

*Biol 320*

*January 2022*



and



In general, most items are available for purchase in Costa Rica, but we suggest you bring the following items to better enjoy your stay at OTS field stations.

## **Check List #1: Clothing and Personal Items** (field work items in list #2)

This check list has been compiled to assist people who visit the tropics for the first time, and guide more seasoned travelers to what may or may not be available locally.

### **Essential**

Valid passport

Money, ATM card, and/or credit card

It is a good idea to have at least a little cash (US dollars or Costa Rican colones) on hand when you arrive. ATM machines are accessible near most sites, including the luggage claim section of the San José airport. Most ATMs accept foreign cards and issue colones, while fewer give US dollars. Traveler's checks are hard to change.

Be sure to inform your credit card company of your travel.

Shirts

Long-sleeved field shirts are good for bugs; roll them up when too hot. Lightweight cotton or wicking synthetic field shirts are best. You will appreciate having quick-drying clothes. Consider a shirt that is appropriate for dinner in the city.

Pants

Although blue jeans are good for casual wear or the city, they do not make good field pants. Denim is hot, heavy, and very slow-drying. For the field, we recommend lightweight but sturdy pants. Although it is warm this will protect your legs. You will appreciate having quick-drying clothes and at least 2 pairs of field pants. We do not recommend rain pants. Some researchers prefer "zipoff" field pants.

Shorts

Underwear (cotton recommended)

Socks. If you bring rubber boots (see below), consider knee-high socks.

Fleece jacket, sweater, sweatshirt, or a wool shirt

Although you will be in the tropics, it can get cold...and the air conditioning in buildings can be frigid. If you plan to go to highland sites, low temperatures can even be near freezing in some places. Even in San Jose, it can get chilly at night and there are no heaters.

Rainwear

Bring a light breathable rain jacket (or poncho). Rain pants are not recommended.

### Footwear

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 pair of breathable/quickdrying shoes or boots for fieldwork. It will be muddy, shoes may not recover after the trip. You may bring rubber boots if you have them and prefer them. Fancy leather hiking boots are not recommended, because the soles can get caked with mud

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 pair of sneakers to wear around camp as the field shoes dry

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 pair of sandals/flip flops to wear in the shower. **Please be aware** that for your own safety you will not be allowed to wear this type of footwear either in the forest or while moving from building to building at the field sites.

\_\_\_\_\_ Towel

It's good to bring a thin towel for traveling, as some economy hotels and hostels do not provide towels. OTS stations do provide towels.

\_\_\_\_\_ Medical supplies

The OTS station has some basics, and Melinda and Justin will have some basic first aid materials. Things you should consider bringing for yourself

-Your personal required prescription medications –in their original container

-Tylenol/Advil: your preferred mild pain reliever

-Imodium or any insurance for stomach upset, just in case

-Anti-itch cream in case of bug bites

-Anything else you anticipate you might want/need

\_\_\_\_\_ Insect repellent

Chiggers can make your life miserable. Be sure your insect repellent choice is effective against these. Natural or 5-30% DEET types are recommended. 100% DEET melts plastic and is unnecessary.

### **Recommended**

\_\_\_\_\_ Hat

Could be a baseball hat, or anything that will provide shade from the strong sun, or keep your head covered in the forest if you prefer. Wide- brimmed hats recommended.

\_\_\_\_\_ Umbrella

\_\_\_\_\_ SPF 15+ sunscreen

Tropical sun is dangerously intense. Although you can purchase sunscreen in Costa Rica, it will be more expensive.

\_\_\_\_\_ Books, if you are a reader and think you will have time

\_\_\_\_\_ Toiletries

Travel size soaps/shampoo/toothpaste. This won't be glamorous, you shouldn't need much! Tampons can be purchased in-country, but women should bring a supply for emergencies.

## Optional

\_\_\_\_ Eyeglasses or contact lenses

Bring extra solution for contacts as it is expensive and many types are unavailable in Costa Rica.

\_\_\_\_ Anaphylaxis kit (i.e. Epipen)

If you are allergic to bee stings, bring an emergency anaphylaxis kit with epinephrine, such as an Anakit or Epipen, available by prescription. Please inform OTS staff of your allergy.

\_\_\_\_ Pocket knife (must go in checked baggage)

## **Check List #2: Basic Field Equipment**

### Essential

\_\_\_\_ Flashlight and headlamp

A good light is an absolute must. It is DARK walking back to your bunks. A headlamp can be better than a flashlight because your hands are free. In addition to a headlamp or strong and reliable handheld flashlight, bring a small backup flashlight to keep with you at all times.

\_\_\_\_ Wristwatch (inexpensive and water-resistant). This serves as a data collection device as well as an alarm clock.

\_\_\_\_ Daypack: (e.g., small backpack) for field use

Those that come with a water bladder and hose can be useful.

\_\_\_\_ Personal journal

We will provide Rite-in-the-Rain data collection books, but you must have a separate (non-waterproof) journal for cultural observation entries.

\_\_\_\_ Pencils/pens

Sharpie pens and mechanical pencils work best with Rite-in-the-Rain notebooks. Bring a few.

\*\*\*Don't bank on technology for data collection (ie taking notes in your phone). You're out of luck if the battery isn't up to snuff and the wet weather will be very hard on it.

\_\_\_\_ Water bottle: 1-2 water bottles about 1-liter size

### Recommended

\_\_\_\_ Binoculars if you have some. Justin and Melinda will bring a few pair to borrow if there is something amazing to see.

\_\_\_\_ Spanish/English dictionary

\_\_\_\_ Batteries

If you use rechargeable batteries, bring several sets, along with your own charger. They are expensive and sometimes unavailable in Costa Rica. If you have specialty (lithium) batteries, see the airline [restrictions](#) to make sure you comply.

\_\_\_\_ Camera

SLR cameras will benefit from an extra lens cap and/or skylight filter as well as a waterproof case or other item to protect it from the rain. A waterproof/shockproof camera is a plus.

\_\_\_\_ "Ziploc" plastic bags

Useful for electronics and everything, really. Garbage bags could also be useful for your boots. If you store binoculars or cameras inside zip-lock bags during the rain, do not close the bag tightly, for they will fog.

**Optional**

\_\_\_\_ Laptop computer (electric supply in Costa Rica is 110V). You shouldn't need it for the data collection. There is wireless available. You're welcome to bring it if you wish.

\_\_\_\_ Field guides

\_\_\_\_ Travel games

*One bag to check (\$25 fee at airport is your responsibility) and one carry on is recommended.*

*Electric toiletry items (hair dryers/razors) are allowed, but we encourage you to go as simple as possible.*

*Do NOT bring fresh fruit, drugs or alcoholic beverages.*