



***Turtle Island Restoration Network  
Cocos Island Research Expedition***

***Trip Preparation Materials***

***2017***



***Congratulations!***

***You are bound for Cocos Island, Costa Rica,  
one the world's premiere dive sites to view ocean wildlife.***

***You are joining Turtle Island Restoration Network and our Costa Rican sister organization  
CREMA for an exclusive opportunity to participate hands-on  
in research on sea turtle and shark migration.***

***In this packet, you will find all the information that you need  
to prepare for the experience of a lifetime at Cocos Island.***

***We look forward to meeting you!***

Along with this Diver Prep Document, you will see on the list of documents (on the page where you found this document) the following two forms. Please complete and return to Turtle Island Restoration Network:

1. TIRN Diver Liability Release form
2. TIRN Dive Researcher Profile form

Please fill out the Dive Researcher form online, and return the liability waiver to [vera@tirn.net](mailto:vera@tirn.net) or fax number 415-663-9534.

You will also be receiving an email from Undersea Hunter, our trip operator, with a link to their Application Form (as well as other information regarding the trip, including the DeepSea Submersible). Please complete the Application Form at your earliest convenience, and let us know if you have any questions.

**Travel insurance is highly recommended in case of trip cancellation or interruption.**

If you have any questions about these materials or about the trip, please contact:

Erica Heimberg  
Turtle Island Restoration Network  
[erica@tirn.net](mailto:erica@tirn.net)  
1-800-859-7263 (toll-free, from within USA only)  
1-415-663-8590 x105 (from inside or outside USA)

If she is not able to answer your questions, she will redirect them to executive director Todd Steiner, who has led more than 18 Cocos Island Expeditions, or the vessel operator, Undersea Hunter.

**Cost of Trip Includes:**

- Ground transportation San José-Puntarenas and return
- An 11-day/10-night cruise. All meals and non-alcoholic drinks included
- Divemaster service
- Nine full days of action-packed diving with three to four dives per day. Nitrox fills, tanks and weights are included
- National Park Fee

**Not included:**

- Transportation to San José, Costa Rica
- Hotel in San José, Costa Rica
- Lunch en route to Puntarenas on Day 1
- Additional equipment rental you might need not included above

**Sample Itinerary (10-day trip)**

Arrival Day -- You must arrive at least one day prior to the boat departure date.

Upon arrival to San José, we can have transportation waiting for you for the cost of \$10-20 or you can take a taxi to your hotel. There are always taxis available at the airport, and minivans for those of you who carry a lot of gear. We can also recommend and arrange accommodations for hotels in San José. Please note that we do not pick up from all San José hotels.

The evening before boat departure, an Undersea Hunter representative will confirm your pick-up time the next day. The evening is at your leisure. Air transport, airport transfers, hotel nights and meals before and after the cruise are not included in the charter.

Day 1 -- The following day, generally between 8 AM and 1 PM we pick up from certain hotels and transfer everybody by bus to Puntarenas where you will board the vessel. The drive takes about 2 1/2 hours, and gives you a chance to view the lush forest and rich farmland of the region.

Due to occasional low tides our boats may need to depart from the pier earlier in the day. Should this occur, you will be transferred by skiff to the vessel. When all passengers have arrived on board, the vessel will take a 32-36 hour cruise out to Cocos Island.

Day 2 -- A travel day. There will be time to arrange dive and camera gear as well as enjoy the Pacific and the sunshine. Also, the group of incredibly experienced divers provides plenty of stories to pass the time. There are videos and the experience of the Captain and crew to help you get excited for the diving...as if you need them! In addition, you may want to take this time to take one of our technical diving courses.

Days 3 - 8 -- Spent diving the pinnacles around the perimeter of Cocos Island. Divers usually average three dives per day at depths of 60-100 feet or more. Participants will have an opportunity to help tag sharks, deploy receivers and record data during dives. Seminars and talks provided by CREMA and Turtle Island Restoration Network staff after dinners.

Day 9 -- Make the last 3 dives before the cruise back to Costa Rica and reality!

Day 10 -- All day to discuss the diving and to compare your adventures!

Day 11 -- Arrival at Puntarenas. Immediately after breakfast you will be transported back to San José. We strongly recommend staying one more night on land before flying out, in case of any unforeseen delays.

## **COCOS RESEARCH ACTIVITIES**

Our expeditions offer unique opportunities to help with research activities and learn about ocean conservation. Generally, we follow a slightly modified dive schedule that Undersea Hunter (UH) uses on its recreational dive trips, which includes three day dives + one night dive, and we visit all the "best" dive sites at Cocos. The modifications include switching out some night dives with late afternoon dives, a good time to catch turtles returning to known sleeping/resting areas. It also gives us additional flexibility to visit sites not normally open to recreational divers, which may also contain turtle resting areas. Just as with UH recreational diving trips, the participants are divided into two teams which dive from two separate skiffs (so there is never more than half the participants at any one site at a time). This also leaves maximum flexibility to allow people to choose between enjoying recreational diving and/or participating in the research.

Individuals can participate to the extent they want to get involved, and include:

- Participants will be trained in proper capture of turtles underwater and will have the opportunity to participate in capture activities
- Participants can observe and help with transport, standard weighing, measuring and tagging of sea turtles on-deck
- Participants will be trained in shark and ray identification and can participate in underwater shark & ray counts
- Participants can help deploy and retrieve acoustic receivers underwater
- A number of afternoon and evening lectures on the research at Cocos and ocean conservation will be presented
- Participants are encouraged to photo and video document all activities and share with researchers, especially sea turtles for photo identification
- If you have a research background and have experience with poll spears and spear guns, it may be possible to be added to the research permit to tag sharks underwater

## **DIVING CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

The minimum required level of certification to dive at Cocos is Open Water. Additional Specialties of Deep & Night Diver are strongly recommended. Also recommended is Advanced Open Water certification. We also recommend having a minimum of 25 hours of diving

experience. Please note, the dive guide will always be the final authority as to whether a passenger can do any specific dive.

### **REQUIRED EMERGENCY DIVE INSURANCE**

Undersea Hunter requires Divers Alert Network Emergency Insurance (<http://www.diversalertnetwork.org/insurance/index.asp>) or proof of equivalent insurance.

### **TRAVEL INSURANCE**

Travel insurance is **highly recommended** in case of trip cancellation or interruption. Divers Alert Network offers trip insurance as well as dive emergency insurance, see <http://www.diversalertnetwork.org/trip/index.asp>.

### **CREW**

The crew consists of a unique combination of talents, offering the ultimate in service. The dive masters and two deck hands make sure you have the best possible diving adventure, while the chef and steward prepare our delicious meals and take care of your needs.

### **MEALS & BEVERAGES**

The menu aboard offers a delicious combination of International and local cuisine. Meals are varied and well balanced, and we also offer delicious snacks between dives. Food is abundant with plenty of fresh tropical fruit and salads and is served buffet style. Please let us know of any special dietary needs or requests, but try to be lenient, as storage and preparation space is limited. Soft drinks and beer: Free / Bottle of wine: \$15 - \$35.

### **CLOTHING**

We recommend casual and cool cotton attire while on board. Nights can be chilly and/or drizzly. A sweater, light jacket or windbreaker should be sufficient on a cool evening. In San José dress is slightly more formal - long pants for men in the evening and a dress or pantsuit for women is appropriate. Puntarenas is generally very warm and shorts are acceptable. We suggest packing in a soft duffel bag for easy luggage storage.

### **BAGGAGE**

Pack lightly since you will be dressing for warm tropical weather. At Customs there are no limitations on the personal equipment such as diving, camera and video equipment as well as computers that are for personal use.

## CURRENCY

Hotels and banks will accept and exchange US Dollars for Costa Rican Colones. US dollars, VISA, MasterCard and American Express are accepted on the vessel. Personal checks and travelers checks are not accepted onboard.

## ARRIVAL TO COSTA RICA

We recommend that you fly to San José via direct flights from Los Angeles, Miami, Houston, Dallas or other gateway cities. Keep in mind that you can encounter delays or luggage problems when making connections, and it is never a bad idea to bring an extra set of clothes and basic items in your hand luggage. **You must arrive at least one night prior to the departure date and we strongly recommend staying one night after the return, in case of any unforeseen delays.**

Upon arrival to San José, you may take a taxi to your hotel. There are always taxis available at the airport, even minivans for those of you who carry a lot of gear. An Undersea Hunter/Fiesta Tours representative will inform you at your hotel the night before departure of your pick up time to go to the vessel the next day. **Please note that we do not pick up from all San José hotels to go down to the vessels. See next section for hotels where Undersea Hunter picks up.** The evening is at your leisure. Hotel nights and meals before and after the cruise are not included in the charter.

The following day, generally between 8 AM and 1 PM, you will be picked up from your hotel and transferred by Fiesta Tours to Puntarenas, the seaport village where you will board the vessel. The drive takes about 2 1/2 hours and gives you a chance to view the lush tropical forest and rich farmland of the region. On the way there will be a stop for a snack or lunch. The price of this meal is not included in the price of the trip.

When all passengers are boarded, the vessel will take a 32-36 hour cruise out to Cocos Island. Although at most times the cruise to the island is calm, precaution against motion sickness is advised. At the end of the trip you will cruise back to Puntarenas and be transferred by bus to your hotel in San José.

## HOTEL INFORMATION

You should arrive in San José the day before the Cocos departure date and we recommend you stay the evening we return, as we often do a Bon Voyage final dinner together in San José. If you need to leave that day, the Undersea Hunter can drop you off at the airport by noon on our way back from Puntarenas, where the vessel is docked. Otherwise, Undersea Hunter will pick you up and drop you off at your hotel. We recommend the following hotels:

### Luxurious:

**Hotel Grano de Oro** [www.hotelgranodeoro.com](http://www.hotelgranodeoro.com)

Calle 30, Avenida 2 y 4, San José, Costa Rica

**Tel:** (506) 2255-3322

**Email:** [info@hotelgranodeoro.com](mailto:info@hotelgranodeoro.com)

*Situated on a shady street just off Paseo Colon, San José's main thoroughfare, Hotel Grano de Oro is a true oasis, a sanctuary in the heart of the city. Converted from a Tropical Victorian*

*mansion, the 40-room hotel maintains the warmth and comfort of a private home. Hallways lined with period photographs and original art meander through the building and present lush tropical flower arrangements and luxurious plants at every turn. Spanish tile fountains grace intimate atriums, ensuring that one is never far from the soothing melody of falling water. The entire Hotel is non-smoking.*

Modest:

**Park Inn by Radisson** [www.parkinn.com/sanjose](http://www.parkinn.com/sanjose)

Ave. 6, Calle 28, Barrio Don Bosco, San José, Costa Rica

**Tel:** (506) 2257-1011

**Email:** reservas@parkinncostarica.com

*Park Inn is a new and modern style hotel with 112 rooms with city and mountain views. The hotel is located in a quiet San José area and offers a buffet with local and international cuisine as well as a la carte service, 24 hour room service, a small gym, a small terrace swimming pool and a jacuzzi.*

**Hampton Inn & Suites** [hamptoninn3.hilton.com/en/hotels/costa-rica/hampton-inn-and-suites-by-hilton-san-jose-airport-SJCAPHX/index.html](http://hamptoninn3.hilton.com/en/hotels/costa-rica/hampton-inn-and-suites-by-hilton-san-jose-airport-SJCAPHX/index.html)

Hwy 1 Blvd, Alajuela, Costa Rica

**Tel:** (506) 2436-0000

*This hotel, located just a couple of minutes from the airport, has a business center, exercise room and swimming pool. Airport shuttle, breakfast, local calls and in-room movie channel are included in the rate.*

**Holiday Inn Express** [www.ihg.com/holidayinnexpress/hotels/us/en/sanjose/sjoap/hoteldetail](http://www.ihg.com/holidayinnexpress/hotels/us/en/sanjose/sjoap/hoteldetail)

1 Km al Este del Aeropuerto Internacional Juan Santamaria, San José, 2-1017, Costa Rica

**Tel:** (506) 2443-0043

**Email:** reserve@gmhiex.net

*This hotel is located one mile from the airport and offers easy access to the Inter-American Highway. From comfortable rooms to a free breakfast buffet, they have what you need to relax and enjoy. Unwind by a sparkling outdoor pool and workout in the Fitness Center. They also offer foreign currency exchange, mobile phone rental, complimentary high-speed wireless Internet access, and a 24-hour shuttle service to the airport.*

## **TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & VACCINATIONS**

PASSENGERS MUST HAVE A VALID PASSPORT FOR ENTRY TO COSTA RICA, which must be valid for at least 6 months. Non -U.S. citizens must check with the Costa Rican consulate if visas are necessary prior to travel. Please note: **if you are traveling to Costa Rica from some South American countries then you will need to have a yellow-fever vaccination prior to traveling in**

**order to enter Costa Rica.** For information for U.S. citizens, see <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/costa-rica.html> and if you are a citizen of a non-U.S. country, you should check your State Department's website for travel information to Costa Rica.

## **HEALTH**

A well-equipped first aid kit including oxygen is on board. You may want to bring anti-seasickness medicine and eardrops if you feel you will need it. Please inform us and especially the dive guides if you are taking medication or suffer from allergies. There is NO smoking allowed inside the boat. Smoking is permitted on the sundeck only.

## **ECO-FRIENDLY SUNSCREENS**

You can reduce the risk to reef and ocean systems by choosing only sunscreens with physical UV filters (i.e. titanium dioxide and zinc oxide). Be sure to avoid sunblocks with octylmethoxycinnamate, benzophenone-3, parabens or octocrylene. Some recommended sunscreens are:

**Badger** produces some great natural, water-resistant sunscreens and is rated highest for safety and efficacy by the Environmental Working Group.

**Caribbean Solutions** has another reef-safe, natural sunblock.

**Loving Naturals** produces a zinc-based sunscreen with 100% natural ingredients.

**Reef Safe** (made by Tropical Seas) claims to be completely safe for marine life.

## **CALLING TO AND FROM THE BOAT**

The satellite number of Argo is +870 773 202 864. When calling from the boat, the cost of the satellite is \$3.5 per minute. The cost of calling from a landline to the satellite varies depending on your phone provider. The connection is not always perfect. Sometimes you have to try several times to get through, or call at different times of the day until you get an answer. There is a delay on the communication, so it's a bit like having a radio conversation.

## **DEEP-SEE SUBMERSIBLE**

Our dive trip operator, Undersea Hunter, offers the opportunity to experience their DeepSee submersible, a custom-build one-atmosphere submarine, capable of carrying a pilot and two passengers to a depth of 1,500 feet (450 meters). She is a flexible, capable and masterfully designed vehicle that can agilely operate throughout her range in comfort and safety.

The view from DeepSee's acrylic sphere is unparalleled, with a 360-degree field of vision. The 4-inch thick acrylic sphere actually disappears when immersed, giving the astonishing sensation of total freedom. The Deep See submersible is generally available on all trips, although it's not



guaranteed. DeepSee is a highly technical one-of-a-kind submersible. It is subject to an extensive daily checkup routine, governed by the ABS (American Bureau of Shipping) protocols. Considering the sub's complexity, we cannot guarantee that it will be available for all days or dives reserved. In the unfortunate event that DeepSee is not available for your dive, we will provide a full refund of the pre-booked payment. No further compensation will be offered in such an event.

**WEATHER AND TEMPERATURE AT COCOS ISLAND**



MONTH	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Ocean Temp F/C	80/27	80/27	80/27	80/27	77/25	77/25	77/25	77/25	77/25	77/25	77/25	80/27
Air Temp - Low	73/23	73/23	73/23	73/23	71/22	71/22	71/22	71/22	71/22	71/22	73/23	73/23
Air Temp - High	89/32	89/32	89/32	89/32	87/31	86/30	86/30	86/30	86/30	86/30	87/31	89/32
Climate												

[WWW.UNDERSEAHUNTER.COM](http://WWW.UNDERSEAHUNTER.COM)

**TAX DEDUCTIBILITY**

Each country has a different set of tax rulings. USA: In the United States, Turtle Island Restoration Network is a public charity described under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. It is not a private foundation, as it is an organization described in Section 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(1)(A)(VI) of the Internal Revenue Code. In general, contributions of cash, securities and property donated by US citizens to support scientific research expeditions sponsored by Turtle Island Institute are tax-deductible. Note: Contributions of cash or securities to a charitable organization are tax deductible only upon completion of giving. As such your payment(s) toward a Turtle Island expedition may be tax deductible only after you have participated on the expedition. Under certain circumstances, volunteers may deduct reasonable out-of-pocket expenses associated with their participation in a Turtle Island expedition including some expenses for transportation to and from the research site. AS WITH ALL TAX MATTERS, PLEASE CONSULT YOUR PERSONAL TAX ADVISOR ON ALL ISSUES CONCERNING TAX DEDUCTIBILITY.

## **CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS**

Turtle Island Restoration Network (TIRN) uses the same cancellation policy given to us by Undersea Hunter. A cancellation fee of 10% from the deposit is charged for all cancellations more than 1 year before the trip. A cancellation fee of 10% from the total trip price is charged for all cancellations made between 6 months and 1 year before the trip. All payments are non-refundable from 180 days prior to departure.

We recommend the purchase of a short-term cancellation insurance policy in case of unexpected changes in your plans. Accident, medical, and baggage insurance are also recommended. Ask your travel or insurance agent to help you with these details.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**What dive gear do I need to bring?** 1/8" to 3/16" (3-5mm) wet suit, mask fins, snorkel, regulator with visible pressure gauge, a mandatory dive computer, buoyancy compensator, depth gauge, dive gloves, weight belt (without weights) and dive watch.

**What should I wear?** We recommend casual and cool cotton attire while on board (T-shirt and shorts). Nights can be chilly and/or drizzly. A sweater, light jacket or windbreaker should be sufficient on a cool evening. Bring hard sole booties for walks on the island.

**Do I need to bring towels?** Towels are provided to each guest after each dive.

**What is the water temperature at Cocos?** You will be diving in water about 78-83 F (26-29 C), although it can be a few degrees lower under the occasional thermocline.

**Are underage passengers allowed?** Children under age 15 are allowed only under certain circumstances. Contact us for more information.

**Can I visit the island?** We will usually make one or two visits to the island itself during a trip. You can schedule more visits in between dives with your cruise director if you want.

**What about communications on board?** Internet is available per purchase of a MB card (cost ranges between \$180-\$430). There is a satellite phone on board (cost is \$3.50 per minute).

The vessels maintain constant radio contact in the event of any emergency. Your family and friends may contact the Undersea Hunter office at (506) 2228-6535 (8-5 Mon-Fri) and they are happy to let them know how you are if they call. The emergency contact number to call after hours is (506) 8813-5656.