

KAYAK COSTA RICA

IN SEARCH OF JAGUARS, TICOS AND PURA VIDA





Table of Contents

Expedition Aims & Objectives.....	3
Expedition Team Members.....	4
Itinerary.....	7
Expedition Diary.....	8
The Adventure Starts.....	8
Week 1 Southern Valley.....	9
Warm Up Rivers	10
Middle General.....	10
Upper General.....	11
Rio General Multiday	12
Week 2: Cerro Chirripo	14
Feliz Cumpleanos.....	14
Cerro Chirripo Hike Day 1.....	14
Cerro Chirripo Hike Day 2 & 3.....	17
Week 3: Turrialba & Northern Slope.....	18
Turrialba Arrival	19
Rio Pacuare.....	19
Rio Pejibaye.....	21
La Vurgen.....	21
Rio Sarapique.....	22
La Virgen Snake Garden.....	23
Returning Home.....	24
Finances.....	25
Acknowledge.....	25
Conclusion	26

EXPEDITION AIMS & OBJECTIVES

- To experience self-supported, independent, and varied whitewater kayaking in an interesting location
- To increase awareness of Costa Rica as an exciting and viable kayaking destination.
- To provide an intermediate-level expedition focussed on skill and confidence improvement

A large proportion of kayaking expeditions are focussed around difficult or extreme white water. However, it can be difficult to bridge the gap between the skills of a UK paddler and the skills required to attend one of these more challenging expeditions. In this expedition we aim to provide an opportunity to bridge that gap, by targeting more intermediate-level white water and focussing more on the expedition experience than the experience of paddling difficult waters.

To provide a more engaging expedition we are embarking on a 'Coast-to-Coast' approach. Rivers flow from Cerro Chirripó, the country's highest mountain, to both the Atlantic and the Pacific. We aim to paddle these and climb the mountain at the source of the two rivers, combining the popular kayaking theme of 'Source-to-Sea' with 'Coast-to-Coast'.

COSTA RICA

Costa Rica is a small country that encompasses just 0.03% of the world's land mass located in Central America, between Panama and Nicaragua. It has coasts on both the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. The terrain of the country consists of a central spine of mountains with a coastal plain either side. The highest point is Cerro Chirripó, which rises to 3,810 meters (12,500 ft) in the Chirripó National Park. Due to changes in rainfall and elevation, the country has a range of different microclimates.

With over 500,000 plant and animal species, Costa Rica is one of the planet's most biologically dense countries. According to Costa Rica's National Biodiversity Institute (INBio), the biodiversity in Costa Rica represents close to 4% of the total species on Earth.

Due to the nature of tropical rivers and floods, the rivers' characteristics can change dramatically over time. The majority of guides and information for kayaking in Costa Rica is at least a few years old, Chasing Jaguars: The Complete Guide to Costa Rican Whitewater was published in 2003 and is the only formal known source of information. Due to Costa Rica being a country with extreme weather conditions it is likely that the descriptions within this guide would have changed significantly.



EXPEDITION TEAM MEMBERS



JAKE REYNOLDS

21 years old

Expedition Leader & Translator

4th Year Electronic and Information Engineering, Imperial College London

Jake first started paddling when he joined Imperial College for his undergraduate studies, and it has since become his primary hobby. As an active member of Imperial College Canoe Club, including holding the positions of Treasurer and President, he has paddled extensively in the UK and Europe. He recently travelled to Uganda to paddle large volume water, and has completed a BCU Whitewater Safety and Rescue Course.



HELEN CINNAMOND

28 years old

Expedition Treasurer & Photographer

Staff Member, Imperial College London (Registry)

3rd Year Information Technology MSc, Birkbeck College, University of London

Helen started working for Imperial College back in 2010 and first became attracted to kayaking as a way of meeting like-minded outdoor types. She has been an active member of the Imperial College Canoe Club since 2010 having held the position of Social Secretary between 2011-2012. Helen has progressed to an intermediate paddler having paddled her way around Europe including the UK, Austria, Switzerland, Slovenia, the French alps and Norway. She is currently studying part time for an MSc.



WILL ELDRED

26 years old

Expedition Logistics

Graduate Science Teacher, Imperial College London (Biology)

Will began his passion for water sports during his time at secondary school. He competed in the Devizes to Westminster boat race aged 14. Will progressed onto white water during his first year at Imperial College studying Biology in 2007. He led an expedition to Sri Lanka in 2012 funded by the Imperial College Exploration Board as part of his Presidency of the Imperial College Canoe club.



JOE BIBBY

27 years old

Expedition Equipment

Graduate Engineer, Imperial College London (Physics)

Joe has been around water since a young age, having started in sailing. He then joined the IC Canoe Club whilst undertaking his MSci in Physics at the College and has become a key member within the club holding the office of Social Secretary between 2012-2013. Joe has paddled his way across Europe with ICCS including the UK, Ireland, Pyrenees, Norway, Austria, Corsica, the French Alps, Switzerland and Slovenia.



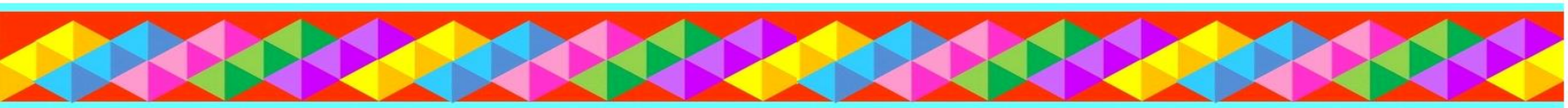
ALLY COTT

Expedition Medic

30 years old

Graduate, Imperial College London (Materials)

Ally has been kayaking for 12 years, and has progressed from complete beginner to accomplished river runner whilst at Imperial College. Ally has held the digimeister and bosun roles during his time in the IC Canoe Club. He has paddled in the UK, Ireland, France, Belgium, Andorra, Spain, Norway, Austria, Corsica, Switzerland, Slovenia, Italy, Germany, and Morocco and rafted in British Columbia. Ally was heavily involved in Union activities as Deputy President for Clubs and Societies 2007-2008, and subsequently working as a staff member with the Student Union.



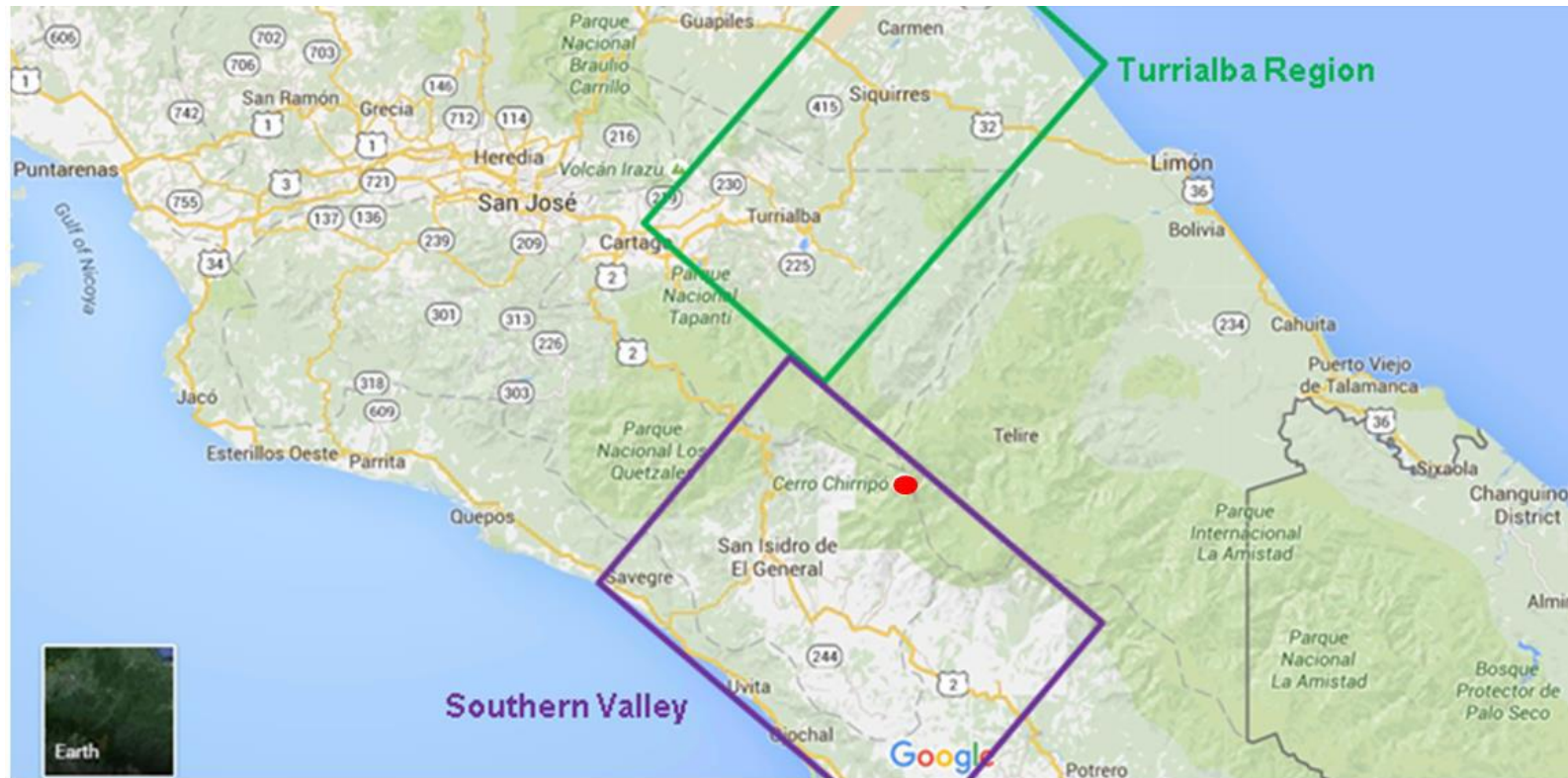
ITINERARY

DEPARTURE DATE: 25th July 2016
RETURN DATE: 17th August 2016

Due to the micro climates existing in Costa Rica, the areas and rivers that were paddled highly dependent on local water levels and weather

The expedition consisted of three parts:

- the first section consisted of paddling source to sea on the Pacific side (Southern Valley),
- the second consisted of climbing the source mountain (Cerro Chirripo),
- the third concluding with paddling source to sea on the Atlantic side(Turrialba Region)



EXPEDITION DIARY

This diary is adapted from our blog, updated whilst we were in Costa Rica, currently available at <http://kayakcostarica2016.weebly.com/blog>.

25th July to 27th July - The Adventure Starts

After 24 hours of travelling we finally made it to San Jose with boats and kit intact. Big thanks to the Air Canada staff at Heathrow and Toronto airport who despite being horrified at the prospect of 5 kayaks, after several phone calls to head office managed to accommodate us.

We arrived in San Jose airport with a flourish of activity and bold Spanish tones filling the air. “Senor, Senor, Taxi, Taxi Taxi!”

Lessons learnt: remember the Spanish for 'we need a vehicle with roof racks' after an amusing taxi ride from the airport in two mini vans with boats haphazardly stored inside.

The team spent the first day in the capital City of San Jose arranging logistics, transport and food for the first week of paddling. This involved visiting multiple governmental buildings and tourist establishments, trying to source maps and water level information. Fortunately, our forward planning paid off and we were able to get decent scale maps from the Instituto de Geographic Nationale (IGN)





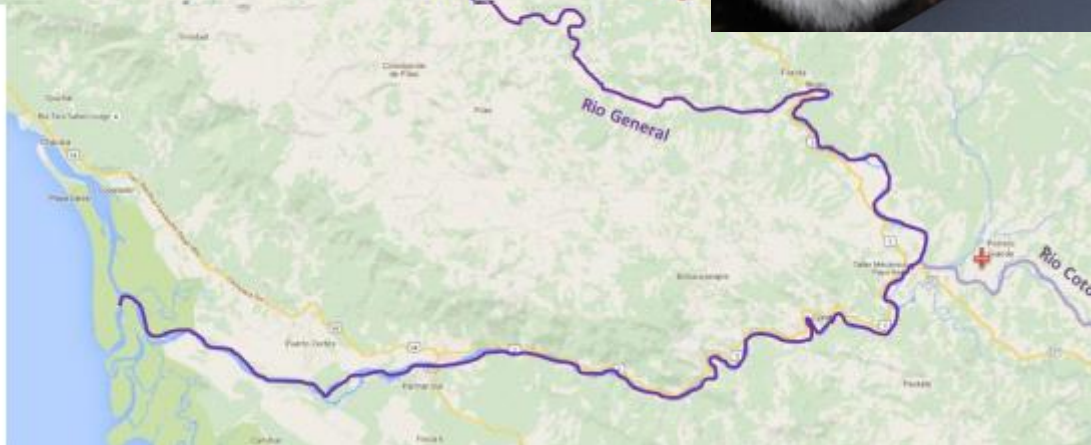
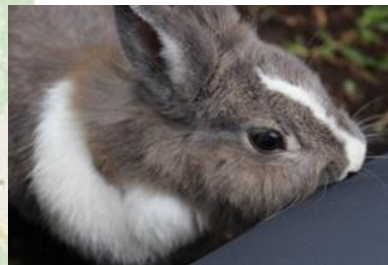
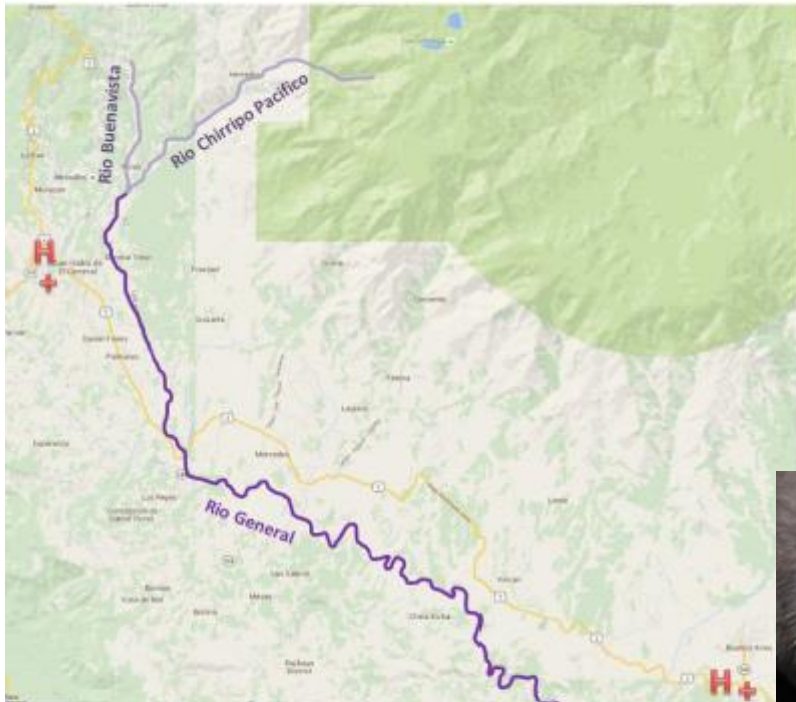
Week 1 - Southern Valley

The first week of the expedition was based out of the town of San Isidro de El General and involved paddling various sections of the Rio General.

The characteristics of this river included big bouncy Grade 3/4 white water through boulder gardens and sprawling farmland.

The area is predominantly flat, rural and dry. Pineapples are farmed in abundance

Examples of flora and fauna found in this region:



28th July to 29th July - Warm Up Rivers

After an early start from San Jose we arrived in the town of San Isidro del General over the ominously named Cerro de la Muerte (Hill of Death). The driver was concerned that we were going to make him drive to the beach but after some convincing he drove to the end of the road where our Air BnB was. We then lugged the boats to where we were staying and met Omar, our genial host. Omar proved to be an excellent 'fixer' and within half an hour we had a taxi organised to take us to the first river. When our taxi arrived with its appropriately named driver, Uber, we loaded up for the Middle Rio General for our first taste of Costa Rican White water.

MIDDLE GENERAL (Grade 3+)

The middle started with a bang with some large 3+ rapids made by diggers mining stone from the river and setting a precedent, which we were to follow for the whole of the General. Some unnatural and thrilling big man made rapid had formed where the sediment rock had been dislodged in the excavations. This was an explosive introduction to the characteristics of kayaking in this area.



Getting to the end of the river we rang Omar and he sent Uber to pick us up. We headed back to Omar's for food and rest ready for second warm-up section, the Upper General the next morning.



UPPER GENERAL (Grade 3+)

The Upper General was a narrow, twisty and overgrown river, but was rather tamer than the middle we had done previously. While upside down a rock to the helmet assisted Ally in the fastest roll we have ever seen, and a swim from Helen made some impressive bruises, but a happy team were ready for the multiday. Fully warmed up, the skies opened at the takeout for a good bit of monsoon rain while we waited for Uber. Jake's extremely fusty group shelter was made use of by most of the group while Joe huddled under a wet towel.

Cerveza and swimming in the pool at Omar's followed by packing and organising a taxi for the multiday on the Lower General made for a relaxing afternoon before the nerves set in



30th July to 1st August - Rio General (Multiday)

After having a taste of Costa Rican white water the team set off on its first major engagement, a 3-day self-sustained paddle. After being dropped off at the bridge in Juntas with food, water and camping equipment loaded into the boats, we got off to a false start when 200 metres in Ally decided that paddling in a remote valley with a dodgy shoulder seemed like a bad idea. Ally bowed out gracefully and the remaining four forged on. With a total of 42 miles of grade 3/4 water to cover, the team paddled on ever aware of the 12 miles needed to cover until the first night's camp, which was in a field with an 'unmissable' giant Ceibo tree. Helen did her first river roll in anger and Jake wondered if we would ever make it to the 12-mile campsite. As the day wore on we realised several key points.

1. Map reading is incredibly difficult on river, as features are often hidden.
2. Map scales are hard to appreciate 'big left bend or tiny left bump'
3. Big wide rivers are deceptively fast.

As darkness approached and after an exhausting 7 hour paddle we decided to cut our losses and camp at the next suitable beach, lamenting at how we hadn't made the planned campsite. After rigging up the accommodation and grub we decided to test out GPS for clues to our location. Turns out we had reached the original campsite.... several hours earlier...and were now 12 miles downriver. We had absolutely played a blinder and were over half way there! Watered, fed and satisfied we fell asleep ready for a new day.





The following morning as we were packing up camp Helen started to feel unwell. The diagnosis was dehydration, with paddling postponed until much liquid and rehydration salts were imbibed. When the team finally took to the water around lunchtime the pace was slow going; Helen was having a terrible time. Feeling a bit shaken and weak she could only make it for a few miles downstream and it became apparent that the best thing to do would be to camp and reconvene the following day.

After a much needed dinner of tomatoey sardines, spam and pasta we headed to bed. The following morning proved more of a success. With the team back to full health the remaining 12 or so miles seemed like the home stretch. The river mellowed out to a gentle grade 2 float past hummingbirds, kingfishers, a family of otters and the occasional iguana sunning itself on the bank. As the valley gave way to a low rocky gorge we paddled quietly and pensively through the last stretch affectionately referred to as 'crocodile mile' until the bridge at the small town of Brujo came into sight. Relieved to have made it to the end intact and not a single crocodile encounter we laid by the side of the road waiting for our ride back to Omar's and celebratory fajitas.



Meanwhile Ally had spent a relaxing few days watching Spanish Dumbo, Spanish Sesame Street and going for long nature walks in the forest. He managed to see a sloth in the garden much to the envy of the group. As the group reconvened Ally introduced us to his new friend, an opossum who had taken up residence in the yard.

The evening was spent packing up ready for the early morning drive to San Gerado.



WEEK 2 – CERRO CHIRRIPO

2nd August - ¡Feliz Cumpleaños!

The day started out with birthday pineapple and a sing along of ¡feliz cumpleaños! as it was Will's Birthday. Much amusement was had as Helen and Ally had purchased magic candles which refused to be blown out by even Wills mighty lungs.

Following this, a scenic yet slow bus ride ascended us to the mountain village of San Gerado, at around 1500m altitude. The route at the end took us alongside the start of the Rio Chirripo Pacifico, one of the primary tributaries of the Rio General.

We experienced the second example of Costa Rican government administration after having to visit two separate offices at opposite ends of the village in order to collect our permits. Nothing it seems ever involves just one office.

After securing permits we spent the rest of the day acclimatising to the elevated altitude in preparation for the hike. With alarms set for 4am we headed to bed in anticipation of the day ahead



3rd August : Cerro Chirripo Hike Day 1

The team awoke early in the morning to a glorious sound of Joe 'Technicolor yawning' at 3am. As 5am rolled around Joe wisely opted to spend three days attached to the porcelain throne rather than risk the climb. The remaining four headed off in the dark contemplating if an activity would ever be completely by all 5 members at once.

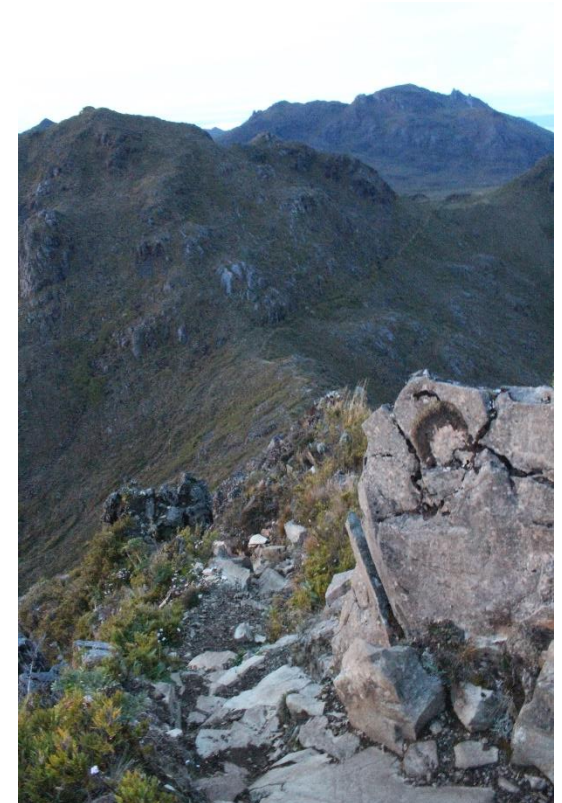
The Cerro Chirripo trail leads 19k up to the peak at almost 4000 metres above sea level. We made our way through the first 7km enjoying the beautiful humid cloud forest, stopping occasionally to sample the incredible wildlife; lizards, monkeys, toucans, Peccaries (wild boar) and a variety of fantastical tropical birds.





At the 10km point the hike became much steeper and it was around the same time that Helen and Jake discovered that they were suffering from the delayed onset of Joe's ailment. Except they were now half way up a mountain with toilet and bed facilities but a distant dream. Will swiftly followed suit an hour later and everyone was jealous of Ally's cast iron stomach.

Despite this setback the team forged on together helping each other make the difficult climb. As the 11k marker approached rainforest gave way to arid paramo. Tropical ferns and Palm trees were replaced with dusty scrubland and cacti, a very different habitat to the earlier rainforest one.



The final 2k up to the Crestones lodge slowed to a tortuous pace as the team endured illness, altitude sickness and soaring dry heat. It took 2 hours to complete this 2km section alone.

As we came over a crest the Crestones lodge came into sight just as the heavens opened and a great sense of relief was felt by all. We had made it. Nine hours and several tears after starting. Exhausted we headed to bed in preparation of the 3am start the following morning.



4th August : Cerro Chirripo Hike Day 2 & 3

As 3am rolled around it became apparent that Helen and Will would barely make it out of bed let alone up to the peak. Ally and Jake headed off as a duo to make the steep 5km climb up a sheer cliff to the peak; Jake only made it to 4k before having to turn back and be out on bed rest with the others.

Ally became the only member to successfully conquer the peak, watching the sunrise above the clouds and taking the obligatory photo next to the peak signage. He signed the guestbook as '1/5 Team Kayak Costa Rica' before heading down to rejoin the invalids.

The remaining day was spent regaining strength for the climb down and taking in the views from Crestones. When clear you could see the west coast of Costa Rica and the Pacific Ocean stretching for miles into the distance.

On the morning of the third day feeling healthier Will decided to attempt the peak before heading off down the mountain. He made his way to the top and corrected Ally's guestbook entry to '2/5 Team Kayak Costa Rica'.

We then set off for the long hike back down enjoying going downhill for the first time in days.

Meanwhile back in San Gerado Joe was feeling much better and had spent a pleasant day walking the bottom section of the mountain and doing laundry. After seeing a snake cross his path he retired to the hostel to wait for the others.

Team hike made it to San Gerado late afternoon and collecting Joe we headed off to the local hot springs to soothe aching muscles and sore blisters.

With the mountain conquered we were keen to get back in our boats so headed off the following morning in search of the white wet stuff.



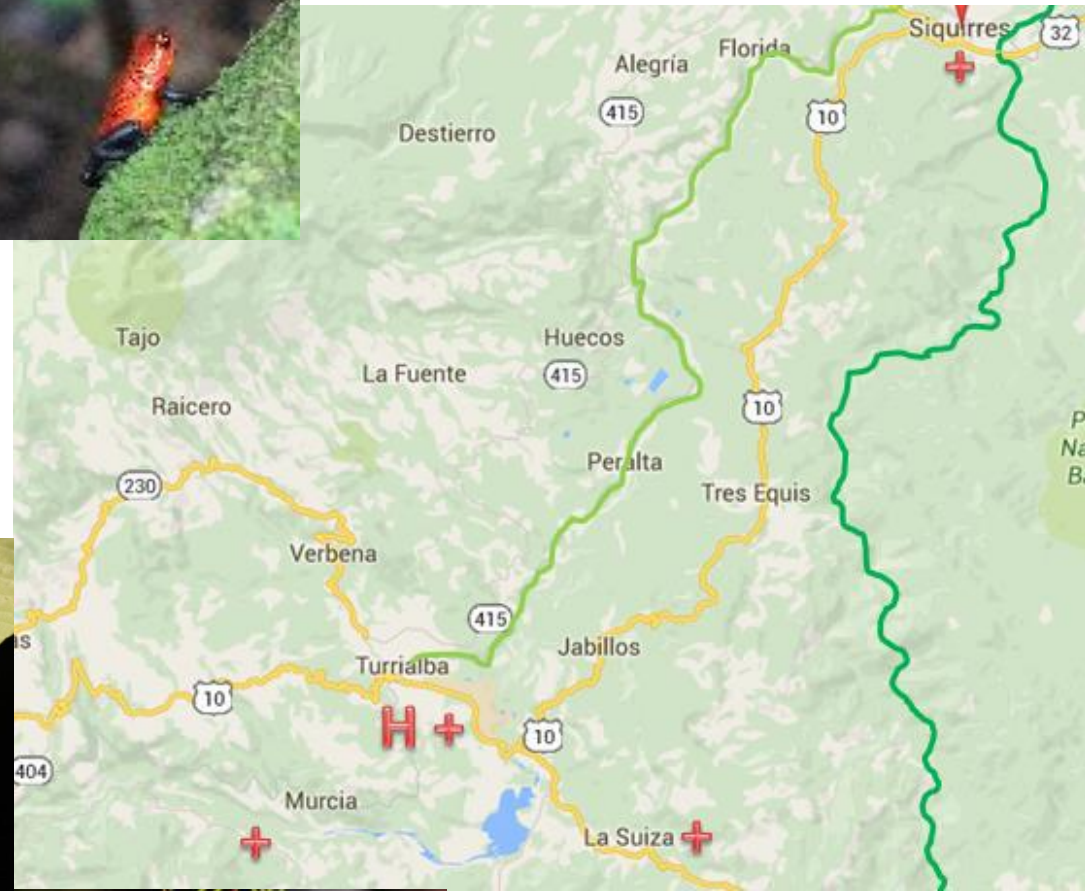
Week 3 – Turrialba & Northern Slope

The final week of the expedition was based out of the towns of Turrialba and La Virgen, north of San Jose.

The characteristics of the rivers were narrower, winding, and jungle lined. We paddled sections and tributaries of the Rio Pacuare and the Rio Sarapiquí.

This is an area that gets significant rainfall and has high levels of humidity. We experienced some incredible thunderstorms and fantastic sunsets behind the distant Volcanoes of the region.

Examples of flora and fauna in the region:





6th August to 7th August - Turrialba Arrival

Arriving at the Interamerican Hotel, we were greeted by our helpful host Patricia, who has hosted kayakers for many years in her homely hotel. Unfortunately, the expected boating company was absent, partly due to the damming of the Rio Reventazon, one of our prospective rivers! Sad news.

As a gentle reintroduction to whitewater, we set off on Sunday to the Rio Pejebaye, the namesake of a fruit we had sampled in San Gerado. Two of the team were still feeling the remnants of Chirripo illness, but the rest were keen to get back on the water. Due to a miscommunication with the driver, we put on slightly below the desired put in, missing 500m of Grade 4. Nevertheless, the first half of the river was a narrow jungle run, with half-light diffusing through the overhanging trees, with a gentle paddle out to finish. Alas, when unloading boats, it became apparent Jake had failed to miss all the rocks, as indicated by the sizable dent in the nose of his boat. Fortunately, his (understandable) unhappiness softened along with the dent when a few litres of hot water managed to undo the damage. Dinner was had by all in a local soda, El Sol, where 'Salchipapas' (chips with sausage slices) was discovered, much to Joe's enjoyment. With our white-water appetite whetted, we were looking forward to the famous Pacuare the following day!

8th August - Rio Pacuare (Grade 4)

With all the team finally well enough to boat, the 5 of us saddled up and set off for the popular Rio Pacuare, one of the most renowned rivers in Costa Rica for its enjoyable white-water, beautiful scenery and incoming waterfalls.

Somewhat apprehensive due to the guidebooks warnings, along the lines of "due to a landslide after the book was written, these two rapids are now highly dangerous", we talked to a local raft guide who assured us that in the 10 years since these had now smoothed out into runnable Grade 4.

Given that this was the hottest day we had paddled, pleasure was taken by most to paddle in only rashvests, meaning each rapid became a refreshing plunge pool.

The river was pleasant, being enjoyable whilst not too challenging, with Helen showing off her rolling skills early on to 'cool down'. The impressive Huacas Falls was the most impressive of the various waterfalls that cascaded into this run, nestled at the bottom of the crux rapid of the river. However, despite the reputation of the river we felt the Rio General had more to offer in terms of white-water and wildlife - the raft convoys going down the Pacuare may have had something to do with the latter.



A tasty casado en-route home with peach té frío prepared for another evening of Scrabble and crosswords, where the plan to rerun the pretty Pejebaye was formulated, after which we would move onto the town of La Virgen.

9th August – Rio Pejebaye (Grade 3/4)

The whole group set out to run the Pejebaye with everyone, as it was a pleasant easyish run. This time, having learnt from our mistakes, 3 of the group put on at the correct place, and had a fun blast down the 500m Grade 4, of a rather more technical nature than the General's difficult bits.

After meeting the other 2 below, we set off through the jungle, but shortly Helen wasn't feeling quite up to the challenge, so ducked out in favour of a pleasant riverside read. The rest of the group carried on down with Helen's boat in tow.

All was well and dandy, until the last rapid just around the corner from the takeout. Here Jake, (perhaps unwisely...) was towing the boat down the 10m of Grade 3, when BAM! hit a poorly placed rock and flipped upside down, and proceeded to bash the riverbed with his GoPro case, sadly leaving it worse for wear i.e. completely broken. Along with the previously damaged boat, it was clear the Pejebaye and Jake didn't get along. There was now to be a distinct lack of video footage for the rest of the trip

10th August to 14th August - La Virgen

In search of water we headed north of San Jose to the Heredia region. La Virgen is a small town consisting of one main road and sprawling farmland along the Rio Sarapiquí, home to a few thousand people. It was previously a haven for watersports enthusiasts but an earthquake and subsequent landslide in 2009 drastically flattened the valley changing the course of the river forever. As a result, watersports tourism declined in the area. Currently there are still a couple of businesses operating out of La Virgen and we spent a week at the Rafting Sarapiquí Outdoor Centre (SOC). This small rafting outfitter is conveniently located at the edge of town alongside the river at the take out for the Upper Sarapiquí (Grade 4) and the put in for the Lower (Grade 3).

The guys at SOC were fantastic and made us feel right at home. We had river shuttles at our beck and call, and grandma Mercedes who cooked us breakfast each morning and gave us lessons on how to make traditional Costa Rican tortillas.





David spent many an evening telling us stories of growing up and life in Costa Rica. We took a trip to a local farm and drank from fresh coconuts and farmed sugar cane. Later that evening David showed us how to make a local beverage of sugar cane syrup with his homemade mangle and we sampled a shot of home brewed sugar cane spirit (wickedly delicious).

The weather here was much hotter and humid than in other areas we had visited and gave a distinct hot wet rainforest vibe. All of this provided an excellent paradise for wildlife with poison tree frogs and unfortunately mosquitoes in abundance.

Rio Sarapique (Grade 3/4)

The paddling began with a run of the pleasant yet still exciting Lower Sarapiqui, and was followed by a run of the Upper with 3 members on the 12th. Unfortunately, on this Upper run, Joe became very badly pinned, requiring rapid and advanced rescue from Jake and Will. Training and forethought about equipment are what stopped the situation being much worse, but it was a harrowing experience for all. The day after we needed a day off, both mentally and physically, allowing us the chance to explore a nearby nature reserve where we managed to see a wild Sloth make his weekly decent from the canopies.



11th August - La Virgen Snake Garden

One afternoon after paddling the Lower Sarapiquí, we spent some time at the La Virgen Snake Garden, a collection of reptiles and amphibians.

<http://www.snakegardencr.com/>

The centre's two American Crocodiles, prevalent in many Costa Rican mangroves and beaches, were 10 and 8 foot respectively. Although neither moved much from their positions submerged in the enclosure pool, and despite the fence separating predator and prey, we felt apprehensive turning our backs on these fellas.

The remaining residents included several turtle and terrapin species plus a variety of snake species native to Costa Rica. Despite being labelled as non-aggressive and non-venomous one particular snake earned a bad reputation after repeatedly launching itself at us as we walked past the enclosure.

Half way around we came face to face with the infamous Terciopelo (fer-de-lance). This is one of the most venomous and aggressive snake species in the world. The two chaps seemed non-plussed by our presence however they are allegedly everywhere in Costa Rica and are absolutely unidentifiable in forests, scrubland, grass, soil, river banks and generally anywhere you might put your feet. You would not see them coming. We hadn't seen any in the wild luckily, but no doubt they were lurking at every turn camouflaged from the human eye.

After regaining our wits, we enjoyed the larger python and boa constrictor species who now seemed more friendly than our Terciopelo nemesis.

We headed back to SOC grabbing dinner on the way back through town. Later that evening Helen Ally and Will wandered the grounds of SOC for a darkness nature walk, seeing bats and frogs. Thankful for yet again managing to evade the Terciopelo for another day we retired to bed satisfied

The final paddling day included Jake and Will doing the Rio Volcan (Continuous grade 4) - David's favourite river in the whole of Costa Rica.



The Volcan could more accurately be described as a single, half-hour, 3km Grade 4 rapid. A very intense run, this was the hardest thing Jake had paddled by a decent margin.

Following this morning dash, Ally joined the two for a final run of the Lower Sarapiquí.

We spent our final day with David and his family with a barbeque by the river, before travelling back to San José. We truly experienced Pura Vida to its fullest!

~ 23 ~





15th August to 17th August – Returning Home

The last couple of days were the dreaded return journey, although a late café visit in San Jose provided excellent tea and cake. We arrived safely back in the UK feeling content after paddling some of the most beautiful and challenging rivers we had ever paddled and experiencing first hand magnificent wildlife and Costa Rican way of life. PURA VIDA!!



FINANCES

The planned budget for the trip was around £2,000 per person.

The breakdown of accounts are as follows:

Item	Cost
Flights	£ 5,175.00
Transport (In country)	£ 1,777.25
Accommodation	£ 1,632.00
Personal expenditure	£ 325.71
Equipment	£ 312.96
Food	£ 206.37
Recreation Activity	£ 53.80
Total Costs	£ 9,483.10
Cost Per Person	£ 1,896.62

The highest expense was flights to and from Costa Rica. We were restricted by the flight paths and companies we could use due to the need to transport 5 large kayaks.

The next highest expense was transport and accommodation which is comparable to UK prices. Costa Rica is a rich country and so the cost of tourism and living is higher than in other countries.

However we did manage to stay under budget, we opted for cheap local eateries or cooked in our accommodation to reduce costs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This expedition was only made possible due to the financial aid and support supplied by Imperial's Exploration Board. Special thanks are given to Lorraine Craig and Phillip Power for helping us coordinate and organise our expedition from the very early stages.

Thanks to Omar, for being our guide, fixer, transport, translator and generally looking after us in San Isidro de El General.

Thank you to Patricia at the Intercontinental Hotel in Turrialba. You helped to arrange transport and made us feel at home during our stay. We hope Juicebox the dog isn't missing us too much.

Thanks to David and the team at Sarapique Outdoor Centre (SOC), for showing us the treasure to be found on the Sarapique and its tribs.

<http://costaricakayak.cr/home/>

Special Thanks to Grandma Mercedes at SOC for teaching us how to make traditional tortillas, and for feeding hungry paddlers 3 square meals a day during our stay. Gracias!

A special thank you to the Costa Rican people we encountered during our stay, for always being willing to help out five gringos with a basic grasp of Spanish with such enthusiasm, curiosity and generosity.

PURA VIDA!

All Photographed contained in this report taken by Helen Cinnamond & William Eldred

CONCLUSION

The expedition to Costa Rica was a success; a large amount of kayaking was done, independently and self-sufficiently. All members of the group developed their skills, both on and off the river.

I not only thoroughly enjoyed my time in Costa Rica, but I came back a much better paddler. Kayaking outside of Europe is not possible within Imperial College Canoe Club, and it was only with help from the Exploration Board that I was able to do so. Being able to paddle on white water in different parts of the world improves one's skills, opens up new opportunities and styles of white water, and encourages exploration.

The expedition also provides challenges off the river; my organisational and language skills are improved, as well as my willingness to try out situations I have never been in before or may have been uncomfortable with in the past – talking to strangers with little Spanish for instance!

- Jake Reynolds

