



the
leap

MIDLIFE PROGRAMME

Leap to Costa Rica

TURTLE CONSERVATION + CLOUD FOREST EXPLORATION + BEACH BLISS

Costa Rica *Experience*

Costa Rica is a small but mighty country that has captured the world's imagination. Costa Rica isn't just beautiful; it's a testament to the power of preserving our planet.

LOCATIONS:

ARENAL + MONTEVERDE + SANTA TERESA

ACCOMMODATION:

3* HOTELS + PRIVATE LODGE

ENVIRONMENTS:

JUNGLE, CLOUD FOREST + BEACH

PROJECTS:

TURTLE CONSERVATION

TEAM SIZE:

12 PER DEPARTURE

SOCIAL:

BUZZY VIBES

FITNESS:

AVERAGE

STAY LENGTH:

12 DAYS

Reserve your place

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Holding over 5% of the world's biodiversity and leading the change in conservation, it embodies the why behind protecting our natural world.

This adventure is about more than swimming in volcanic hot springs or zip-lining through cloud forests – though those moments will ignite your sense of wonder – it's about understanding why these ecosystems matter. As you hike to hidden waterfalls or unwind in Santa Teresa's laid-back charm, you'll see first-hand how Costa Rica's landscapes are intrinsically linked to its people's commitment to sustainability. The highlight? Experiencing turtle conservation efforts woven into your journey – providing a window into why protecting endangered species is vital for future generations.

This trip will reawaken your adventurous spirit while connecting you to something far greater: the why of conservation and the beauty of giving back.

NICARAGUA

*CARIBBEAN
SEA*

COSTA RICA

Monteverde Cloud Forest

Hikes, Zip Wire Challenge
+ Hanging Bridges

2 Arenal National Park & La Fortuna

Volcanoes + Hot Springs

1

San José

Arrival / Departure

4

Cirenas, Nicoya Peninsula

Turtle Conservation

5

Santa Teresa + Tortuga Island

Pacific Beaches, Waterfalls,
Yoga + Snorkelling*NORTH PACIFIC
OCEAN*

PANAMA

Costa Rica *Itinerary*

Day 1 San José *Arrival*

You'll begin your adventure in San José, checking into a charming hotel just 20 minutes from the airport. After gathering as a group, you'll have time to relax and recover from your flight before nipping out to a nearby local spot for a delicious dinner in one of the nearby local hang outs. Cerviche and pinto at the ready.



Costa Rica *Itinerary*

Day 2 Arenal National Park & La Fortuna

Volcanoes + Waterfalls

You'll be up early, thanks to the jet lag and the chorus of very noisy birds, ready to begin Phase One of your adventure. You'll head off to explore the stunning volcanoes, waterfalls, and hot springs of the Arenal Volcano National Park, all easily accessed from La Fortuna, where you'll stay for your second night.

La Fortuna is a charming town, dominated by the towering Arenal Volcano that provides the dramatic backdrop for numerous hikes and adventures. Your first stop will be a beautiful waterfall, where you'll have the chance to swim in a crystal-clear jungle swimming hole, complete with a thrilling Tarzan swing.

Afterward, you'll head toward the volcano for a hearty two-hour hike (with a gentle incline) to explore old lava beds and catch breath-taking views of Lake Arenal below.

After a day full of adventure, you'll return to La Fortuna to freshen up before enjoying a delicious supper, reflecting on the day's experiences.



Costa Rica *Itinerary*

Day 3 Lake Arenal & Monteverde Cloud Forest

Hot springs + Hike

You'll rise early and be ready for a scenic drive around Lake Arenal, making your way to the hot springs, where you'll plunge into the mineral-rich waters to feel refreshed and invigorated. Afterward, you'll head off to the cloud forest to explore and fire up your adrenaline in Monteverde, perched at 4,662 feet (1,440 meters). This area is famous for heart-racing activities, coffee plantations, playful monkeys, and its iconic mist.

You'll stay in the small, traveller-friendly town of Santa Elena, brimming with hip restaurants and artisan shops. From here, you'll explore the cloud forest, home to over 100 species of mammals, 400 species of birds, and more than 2,500 varieties of plants – 420 of which are orchids alone. It's a truly stunning natural wonder, so make sure your binoculars are ready.

On your first evening, you'll head off on a gentle hike to watch the sun set over the Pacific Ocean far below. Afterward, you'll enjoy a delicious supper at a local restaurant in town.



Costa Rica *Itinerary*

Day 4 Monteverde Cloud Forest

Zip lining adventure

Get ready for a full day of adrenaline as you sign up for the thrilling zip wire challenge. This is your chance to soar through the sky, high above the cloud forest, feeling the wind rush past you as you zip from platform to platform. The views are nothing short of spectacular as you glide through the treetops, looking out over the misty landscape below.

For the daring, you'll be encouraged to adopt the "Superman pose" and stretch out with your arms in front, as if you're flying. If that wasn't enough, you'll also have the option to try the Tarzan swing - a heart-pounding experience that will have you swinging through the forest like a true adventurer.

It's an experience that will get your heart pumping, but don't worry, all these activities are optional for those who prefer to take a more relaxed approach.

It's an incredible opportunity to challenge yourself and experience the cloud forest from a whole new perspective, all while having fun and feeling the rush of adventure!





In all this I think the Midlife Leap is very clever. We were able to experience a country, get under the skin of it and see it properly, feel comfortable without it seeming we were on a 'holiday'. Which we weren't.

Costa Rica *Itinerary*

Day 5 Monteverde Cloud Forest

Hanging bridges + Ficus trees

This day promises to be a magical day as you'll venture out on one of our favourite activities – the hanging bridges tour. As you walk high above the forest floor, the bridges will take you right into the heart of the cloud forest, offering an incredible perspective of this lush ecosystem.

With the help of your knowledgeable guide, you'll spot an array of fascinating wildlife and plant species, many of which are hidden deep within the forest canopy. The real highlight, though, will be the hummingbirds – tiny, iridescent creatures darting through the trees, their wings beating so fast they're almost a blur. It's a sight that's sure to take your breath away.



Later in the day, you'll head into another nearby forest to see the towering Ficus trees – massive and awe-inspiring, their roots twisting and turning in dramatic patterns. These ancient trees are an impressive sight and provide yet another incredible glimpse into the diversity and beauty of the area's natural wonders.



Costa Rica *Itinerary*

Day 6 Cirenas, Nicoya Peninsula

Transfer + Turtles

In the morning, you'll leave Monteverde and head down to the Nicoya Peninsula. After stopping for lunch, you'll catch the ferry and then drive out to find Hacienda Ario - a 4,700-acre family-owned coastal ranch on the Pacific Coast. This stunning property is home to mountains in primary forest, fertile river valleys, rolling hills, and mangrove forests along a 3.5 km stretch of pristine, untouched beaches. It's a truly breath-taking place, made possible by the vision of Nathaniel Grew Parkinson, who purchased the ranch in 1973 with the goal of preserving the land through conscientious, responsible, and sustainable stewardship for future generations.

Mr. Grew's relentless desire to transform the ranch into an "educational campground" for students, scientists, families, and individuals inspired his daughter, Caroline, and her husband, Tucker, to start Cirenas (Center for Investigation of Social and Natural Resources) in 2008, which continues to carry out this mission today.

The result is a stunning lodge, from which you'll have the chance to explore and contribute to their projects, which vary depending on when you visit. In May, you'll help prepare the turtle hatchery for the upcoming season of Olive Ridley, Black Turtle, Hawksbill, and Leatherback turtles who return each year to nest on this beach. You'll also contribute to their permaculture projects, which aim to make the ranch self-sufficient.

Upon arrival, you'll take a gentle walk around the ranch to get your bearings before enjoying a delicious supper, reflecting on the beauty and purpose of this incredible place.



Costa Rica *Itinerary*

Day 7 Cirenas, Nicoya Peninsula

Turtle conservation

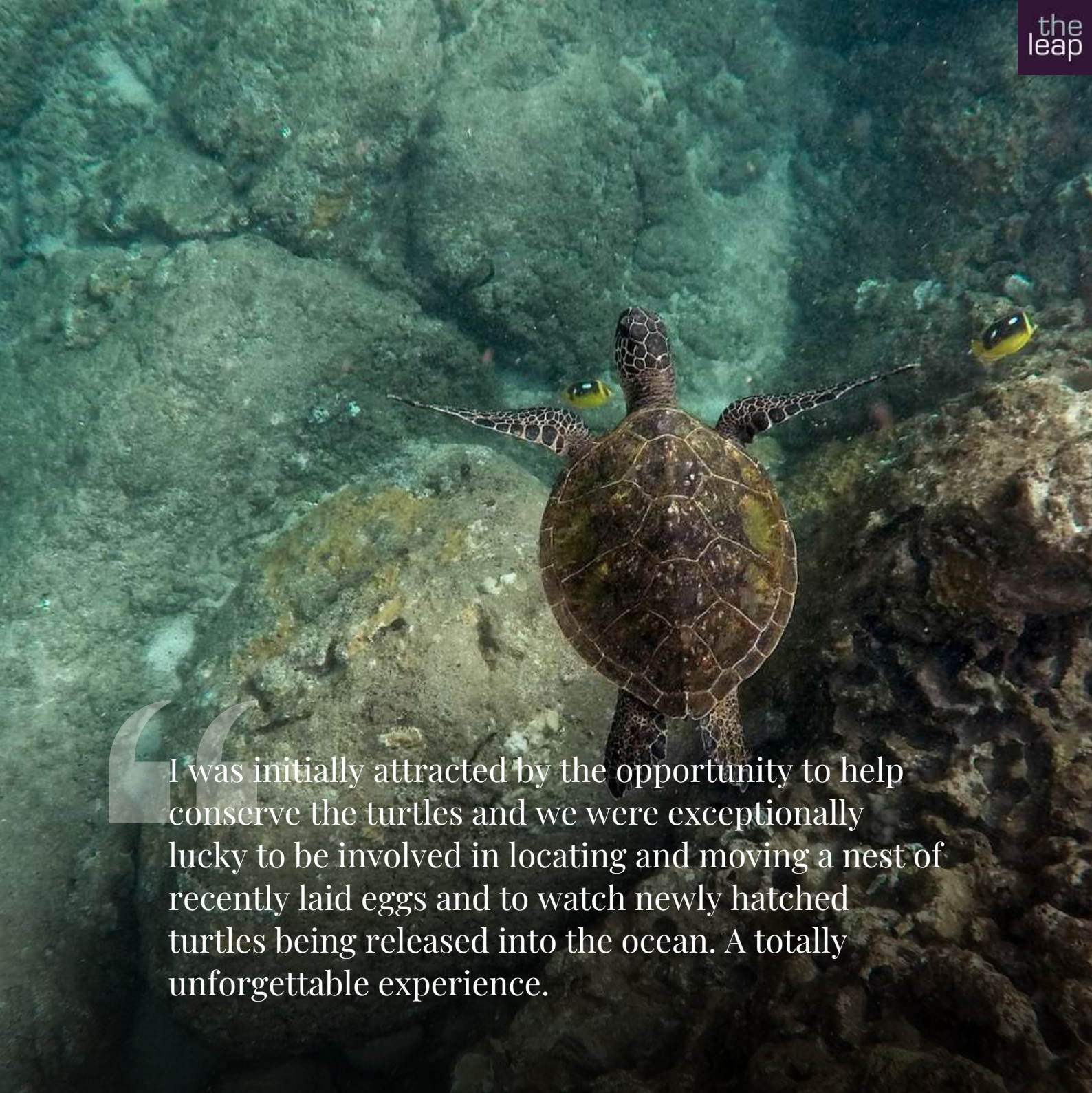
This is a full day dedicated to volunteering, as you'll immerse yourself in the important work at the turtle sanctuary and contribute to the permaculture projects at Hacienda Ario. You'll spend the day working hands-on to support the conservation efforts, including helping to maintain the turtle hatchery, monitoring nests, and ensuring the safety of the eggs and hatchlings.

Depending on the time of year, you may also assist in relocating eggs to safer locations or protecting the beaches from poachers, all critical to the survival of the Olive Ridley, Black Turtle, Hawksbill, and Leatherback species that return to nest here.

Throughout the day, you'll also engage with the ranch's permaculture initiatives, which aim to create sustainable, eco-friendly farming practices to support the ranch's self-sufficiency. You'll learn about the challenges and successes of growing crops in harmony with nature, and how these efforts contribute to the overall health of the land. Interwoven into your volunteer work, you'll enjoy gentle hikes around the ranch, exploring its varied ecosystems. You'll wander through primary forests, along river valleys, and across rolling hills, gaining a deeper understanding of the diverse habitats that make this place so special. These walks will give you a chance to connect with the land, observe the local wildlife, and appreciate the incredible natural beauty that surrounds you.

By the end of the day, you'll feel a true sense of accomplishment, having contributed to both the preservation of endangered turtles and the sustainable future of the ranch, all while soaking in the tranquil beauty of this unique corner of the world.



A large sea turtle with a brown and black patterned shell is swimming away from the viewer over a rocky, algae-covered seabed. Several small, yellow and black striped fish are swimming around the turtle. The water is clear and blue.

I was initially attracted by the opportunity to help conserve the turtles and we were exceptionally lucky to be involved in locating and moving a nest of recently laid eggs and to watch newly hatched turtles being released into the ocean. A totally unforgettable experience.

Costa Rica *Itinerary*

Day 8 Santa Teresa

Jungle hike + Jakera

You'll spend the morning at Cirenas, where you can either complete your ongoing projects or head out on a hike to further explore the ranch and its stunning landscapes. Afterward, you'll transfer to Santa Teresa, a cool, laid-back town known for its hipster vibe, where beautiful people gather to embrace yoga, healthy living, and surfing.

To fully immerse yourself in the beach vibe, you'll be staying at Jakera, a charming guesthouse run by your host Chris and his family. You'll arrive in time for lunch, giving you plenty of time to explore the town, take a refreshing swim, and simply unwind on the beach.

Afterwards, you'll enjoy a delicious supper before heading to a salsa dance class at Jakera, where you can embrace the rhythm of the local culture.



Costa Rica *Itinerary*

Day 9 Tortuga Island

Yoga + Sea safari

You'll start the day with a peaceful session of yoga, allowing you to stretch, centre yourself, and take in the beauty of the surrounding landscape. It's the perfect way to awaken your body and mind before a day of adventure.

After yoga, you'll embark on a thrilling full-day sea safari to Tortuga Island, known for its pristine beaches and vibrant marine life. As you cruise across the sparkling waters, you'll feel the excitement build for what's ahead.

Once at Tortuga Island, you'll don your snorkel gear and dive into the crystal-clear waters, exploring the colourful coral reefs teeming with tropical fish, sea turtles, and rays. The underwater world here is nothing short of spectacular, offering a truly immersive experience in Costa Rica's rich marine biodiversity.

After snorkelling, you'll head to Spider Monkey Island for a well-deserved lunch. Relax on the island's serene beaches, where you can swim, sunbathe, or simply unwind as you take in the views. The island's peaceful atmosphere and stunning surroundings make it an ideal spot to recharge before the journey back. It's a day filled with natural beauty, fun, and adventure, leaving you refreshed and connected to both the land and sea.



Costa Rica *Itinerary*

Day 10 Santa Teresa + Montezuma

Waterfall hike

You'll begin the day early, eager for an unforgettable adventure as you set off on a stunning 12-kilometer hike that will take you through some of Costa Rica's most beautiful and untouched landscapes. The trek starts at the Tango Mar waterfall, where you'll be surrounded by lush forest and the sound of rushing water, setting the tone for the day ahead.

As you hike, you'll make your way through dense jungle and along pristine, deserted beaches, with each step offering a new view more breath-taking than the last. You'll pass by hidden plunge pools tucked away in the jungle, perfect for a refreshing dip to cool off and take in the serenity of your surroundings.

The remote beaches along the way will offer moments of solitude, where you can pause, soak in the beauty, and perhaps even spot some local wildlife. The hike culminates at the iconic Montezuma waterfalls, one of Costa Rica's most stunning natural features, hidden deep in the jungle. Here, you'll have time to marvel at the cascading falls, take a swim in the pools below, or simply enjoy the peaceful atmosphere before starting your return journey.

This full-day hike will leave you with unforgettable memories of Costa Rica's natural beauty, from its diverse wildlife to its secret waterfalls and serene beaches. Simply stunning.



Costa Rica *Itinerary*

Day 11 Santa Teresa

Take it easy + Rejuvenate

Today is your chance to unwind and enjoy a completely free day, where the only agenda is doing exactly what you want. Whether you choose to saddle up for a relaxing horse ride along the beach, feel the rush of the waves as you try your hand at surfing, or indulge in a rejuvenating spa treatment (or two), the choice is yours. If you're in the mood to explore the local shops, you'll find plenty of unique treasures to take home as souvenirs.

Alternatively, you can simply take it easy - whether that means lounging by the beach, reading a book, or enjoying the peaceful surroundings without a care in the world. This day is all about you and your own pace - relax, recharge, and soak in the beautiful environment in whatever way feels best for you.



Costa Rica *Itinerary*

Day 12 San José

Transfer + Departure

After an unforgettable adventure, you'll begin your journey back to San José, where you'll catch your international flight home.

The morning will be yours to savour a final glimpse of Costa Rica before you head to the airport. Whether it's reflecting on the amazing memories you've made, sharing stories with fellow travellers, or simply soaking in the last moments of this beautiful country, it's a time to appreciate all that you've experienced.

As you board your flight, you'll carry with you the memories of a truly transformative journey through one of the most biodiverse places on Earth.





It was a chance to leave the husband and kids behind, to experience a little bit of what kids do while travelling and to spend quality time with girlfriends, old and new.

Costa Rica *Staying & Food*

Accommodation

You'll stay in comfortable 3-star hotels in San José, La Fortuna, Monteverde, and Santa Teresa, such as the Santa Elena Hostel or similar.

Cirenas offers a rustic-chic volunteer house that adds to the spirit of the adventure, blending style with simplicity and offering breath-taking views over the jungle. Accommodation is in shared rooms with ensuite shower rooms, and please note that private rooms are not available.

Meals

Supper in San José included

Breakfast and supper in La Fortuna included

Breakfast only in Monteverde included

All meals at Cirenas included

Breakfast and lunch at Jakera included

Project *Background*



Our Costa Rica trip is coordinated by the dynamic Chris Patterson, who, together with his wife, family, and team, has created the Jakera Jungle Surf Camp on the Pacific coast. Since the 1990s, he has combined travel, Spanish courses, and community-based conservation.

Chris collaborates with Cirenas, a leading NGO for turtle conservation, where guests help protect nesting turtles and maintain hatcheries. In addition to turtle conservation, Chris has initiated a variety of community projects that you'll have the opportunity to support and he ensures that all his guests are involved in meaningful work that benefits both the environment and the local community.

With deep local ties, Chris offers an authentic, off-grid adventure that connects guests to conservation efforts. Through these projects, you'll make a real impact while gaining insight into Costa Rica's culture and environment.

Costa Rica *Dates & Costs 2026*

26TH JAN 2026	12 DAYS	£3200
10TH MAY 2026	12 DAYS	£3200

INCLUDED:

- Pre-departure briefing
- Leap T-shirt
- Airport pick-up and return transfers for team flight
- Safety and induction briefing on arrival
- 24-hour emergency back-up, management and support by UK and in-country team
- All volunteering projects as described
- Project-to-project transport
- Accommodation as described
- Food as described
- Entrance fees to all activities

NOT INCLUDED:

- International and internal flights
- Private transfers to and from the airport if you do not arrive on the main team flight
- Travel insurance and medical expenses
- Food and accommodation if away from the programme
- Alcoholic drinks and some soft drinks
- Some meals, as described in the itinerary

Costa Rica *Nitty Gritty*

What to Pack?

Clothes

In addition to your normal holiday packing, please take:

- Dark long sleeved t-shirts and trousers for the night work at the turtle sanctuary
- A jumper for cooler evenings in the cloud forest
- Walking shoes or sturdy trainers for slippery terrain

Equipment

- Towel/sarong
- 1 pair of working gloves – a pair of sturdy gardening gloves will do the job
- Water bottle
- Plug adapter – USA style

Toiletries & Medical

- Basic everyday toiletries
- Sun cream/after sun
- Insect repellent – containing Deet
- Antibacterial spray/cream for open wounds.
- Rehydration powders
- Savlon
- Antihistamines
- E45/Sudocream
- Immodium
- Mediplasters
- Personal Medication: Bring extra supplies, know the generic names of your medication, and ensure you can manage allergies (e.g. carry an epipen if necessary).

“

It was all I had hoped for and with much more. I felt I had a glimpse of a gap year which was exactly what I had wanted. I loved staying in the hostel at Monteverde, testing my nerve on the zip wires and finding I could do it. A great mix of fun and learning.



Reserve your place

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